

## Monday, July 14th

Eleven, twelve, thirteen. A lucky number? Sofia wasn't sure. Fact was, it hurt a little bit. But it was a sign of her twins were alive and active; exactly what she wanted most. If that meant a little bit of pain for her, she was happy with this.

"Are you taking the day off?" Sara sat next to her wife, dressed in a bathrobe, her wet hair secured under a towel.

"No, I get up in a second, only counted the kicks of our football twins. Or soccer? Whatever kind of sports they'll pick, it will be with kicking."

"You three are fine?"

"Yes. Thirteen kicks this morning, I feel like a football. They are worse than Susan."

"They're two."

"By the way they kick I'd guess they're boys. Then again, our daughter was a great kicker too, must be my womb. Maybe it looks like a football field to them. A soda stand, a corner, where you get popcorn, fries, hot dogs."

"We get a new picture soon. And an answer if we want."

"Do you want an answer?"

"I think I do."

"Then we should get it."

"Do you want the answer too?"

"Yes, we enter the critical phase of shopping. Blue or pink? All blue? All pink? Ten more weeks."

"Seriously? You want this blue and pink shit?"

"No."

"Mama!"

Both looked up. Susan came into the room, running to her mothers and climbed onto their bed, into their arms.

"Good morning, Sweetheart, how did you sleep?" Sara kissed her daughter.

"Good."

"That's good. We need to get you ready for your grandmother, she will pick you up soon."

"Mama sleep?"

"No, your mama will get up too. The babies in her belly make her tired. Come on, we prepare breakfast for us. Give your mommy a kiss."

Susan kissed Sofia.

"Thanks my lovely daughter. I see you soon. Don't forget to kiss your other mother too."

Susan kissed Sara and snuggled into her arms.

"Not more than ten minutes or you will be late or have to hurry a lot." Sara kissed her wife. "We make you some eggs and bacon. Topped with tomatoes and peppers."

"Chocolate?"

"In your lunchbox. Together with fruits and vegetables."

"Meat?"

"A steak sandwich."

"That's real love."

"Make sure you're on time. Come on Honey-Pie." Sara picked Susan up and left the bedroom.

"You know you're not fully dressed, don't you?"

"I do, we'll have breakfast up here."

"Mama hun."

"You're hungry? Let's find something to eat for you. How about eggs? Blueberries?"

"Yeah."

To Sara's relief her daughter liked all kinds of berries as much as sweets. When she put a plate with various berries in front of her daughter, she ate it with gusto.

"Here you go, start with some cherries." Sara put the cherries without stones in front of Susan, who started eating right away. Always hungry, like her other mother.

"Ta."

"You're welcome. Now let's get started on the breakfast of your mom." Sara stroke softly over the head of her daughter. Her new life, getting up early, taking care of her daughter, looking after her wife and going to work. Happy and awake at five in the morning. In a few weeks they'd be six and...a lot of more work. Susan took a lot of time to look after in the morning, with twins around, they could probably forget their sleep. And why was she happy about this?

Sofia had been on time because she consumed half of her breakfast in the car, driving to the lab. Her desk required some of her attention so she was glad, her boss wasn't around to give her a new assignment. A few quiet days were more than good, especially with a whole week off coming up next week. A week up at Lake Tahoe. With her wife, daughter, son, his best friend and her best friend with his family.

"Are you going to steal my chocolate when I leave it here?" Juana sat down opposite of Sofia, a bag of chocolate bars in her hands.

"Can't promise."

"Great. I'm going to put them into a safe place."

"Your locker? I need less than ten seconds to bust the lock."

"I keep it close to me."

"Not too close otherwise it will melt - unfortunately not in my mouth."

"My last bag melted in your mouth."

"I'm pregnant, I'm three people, so I need a lot of chocolate."

"Are you also doing three times the amount of paper work?"

"No, my babies are too young to work, it would be illegal, you should know this."

"While chocolate isn't bad for your babies?"

"No, it's fruits. Or calcium." Sofia held out her hand. "Please? Pretty please?"

"Sofia, Juana, I've got a case for you." William came into the room.

"Sorry Blondie, no time for chocolate." Juana took the folder and put the bag of chocolate in her backpack.

"No, you really have no time. A four days old boy was abducted, an hour ago, hurry."

"Shit." Sofia got up. So much for her quiet day. An abducted baby needed their attention ASAP. Every minute was important. It made the chocolate vanish from her mind.

It took them less than a fifteen minutes drive and they were at a nice Mediterranean house in Hollywood with a small but very well looked after garden. Here were Mister and Mrs. Lester, the parents of Adam Lester, the four days old boy, who was missing, waiting for them. The parents of an abducted child.

"Good you're here." Kyle greeted them.

"What happened?"

"Mrs. Lester left baby Adam alone in the garden when she went inside to get herself a coffee. The garden is surrounded by a fence, there're two ways inside here: the house and the gate at the garage. According to the witnesses, it was locked, when we arrived, it was open. I think somebody busted it."

"The same somebody, who took the baby. You know what this reminds me of?"

"I do, but this seems to be different."

"Why?"

"We have a ransom note." He handed Sofia a white sheet in a evidence bag.

"One hundred thousand dollar by tomorrow or you will never see your boy again." Sofia read. This wasn't like the cases they had over two years ago, when babies were abducted and nobody left a ransom note or any other clues behind. This seemed to be about money.

"Are they rich?"

"They're doing okay."

"Can they afford one hundred thousand dollar?"

"Mister Lester said, they will get the money, a mortgage on the house, empty the accounts. I tried to tell him, it's not a good idea to pay, that he should let us worry about it, but he didn't want to listen. He wants to pay so they get their son back."

"I can understand him. If anybody had Susan, I'd do anything to get her back."

"Luckily your mother is with your daughter and nobody will get their hands on baby Sue as long as the Captain is around ...or if somebody tries, she'll kill this person slowly and very painful."

"I won't work the case against her, on the contrary I'd let all the evidence vanish."

"Hey Sofia, look at this." Juana called from the gate.

"On my way." The blonde walked over. "What have you got?"

"Scratches around the lock, fresh ones. It's how they came in. Or he. She. Shall I start on the inside of the garden or the outside?"

"Start on the outside. Kyle, can you canvass the area, we need traffic camera videos, private videos, anything that tells us, who helped themselves into the garden. They took the boy, they had to vanish with him fast, they had a car. Parked close by."

"I'm on it."

"Okay. I'm going to talk to the parents, I want to know how long she was in the house, where he was."

"I've got their statements."

"Let's see if they give me the same." It wouldn't be the first time that parents staged an abduction because they harmed their child. Sofia had cases like this before, even when the baby kidnapper were in Los Angeles over two years ago, a father tried to make them all believe, his daughter was kidnapped

while he killed her. Because she cried and demanded love. When it came to sick actions, people knew no limits.

"Mrs. Lester, I need to ask you a few questions." Mrs. Lester was around the same height like Sofia, in her mid-twenties and also blonde. Dyed. Sofia could see the dark roots, which reminds her, she had to dye her hair before they took off for their vacation.

"I talked to the police already. Why don't you look for my son?"

"My colleague is doing exactly this while we're speaking. Did somebody break into your garden the last days? Did anything go missing?"

"No, why?"

"There were signs that somebody picked your lock."

"Is that how they got into the garden?"

"We believe so, but to be sure, we need some answers. Tell me about what you did before you walked into the house. Where was Adam?"

"In his buggy. I thought it's good for him to be outside. We spent three days in hospital, he never got fresh air there. The garden was supposed to be the perfect place for him."

"Where was the buggy?"

"Under the tree."

Sofia looked at the orange tree. It was on the direct way to the gate, all the kidnapper had to do was sneak in, grab the boy and leave. Ten yards one way, done in half a minute. The gate and fence were high enough to shield him from views, there was no window on the side of the house, he could have been inside the garden already, waited for Mrs. Lester to go inside.

Sofia looked around. The bushes weren't very high but thick leaves provided a good place to hide. So did the hedge, that divided the meadow from the flower bed. Or the other corner of the house. They had to check the whole garden.

"Where were you? When you were outside."

"I sat on the sun lounge in the sun, tried to get my complexion back."

Yes, no view to the gate, around the corner of the house. And not the best place to overview the rest of the garden. But why should she have picked a place like that? She felt safe. Now she would never again feel safe in her own garden.

"Did you check on your son before you went inside?"

"No, he...he was asleep, I didn't hear anything so I assumed he was fine. I should have never left him outside alone. It's all my fault."

"You couldn't know somebody was around."

"You are pregnant."

"Yes." It was more than obvious, not a question. Sofia couldn't hide her belly, even when she wanted.

"Do you have more children?"

"A sixteen year old son and a daughter, sixteen months."

"Do you leave her alone? In the garden?"

"We left her alone in the garden for a moment when she was a baby and slept, yes. And we still do it. Your own garden is supposed to be safe."

"You are lucky nothing happened."

"I know." They had the dogs around, nobody could walk into the garden and take Susan away without them noticing. Plus there was no gate to the garden, the only way inside was through the house. Or over the fence and it was three yards high. And again, there were the dogs.

"How long have you been inside?"

"Two minutes? I put the kettle on, made the coffee and went back outside."

Sofia saw the coffee mug, it lay in the grass, next to the empty buggy. Dropped in shock. "Where was your husband?"

"Upstairs in his office. He works from home, only drives once a week into the office Downtown."

"Did he hear you scream?"

"No, his office is to the other side of the house, the windows are closed because he has the air-condition running. I ran upstairs, hoping he took Adam out of the buggy and I didn't notice it."

"I'd like to see his office."

"Why?"

"I assume whoever took your son knew you were at home, he might also know your house. I'd like to know what he knows." And check the alibi of your husband, make sure he really couldn't hear or see something. But these words she better kept for herself.

"You think the kidnapper has been inside our house before? That we know him?"

"It's possible. Could you please show me the house?"

"Of course."

Sofia followed the woman into the house. Facing the garden was the kitchen and the living room, both having windows into the garden, not to the gate. A guest toilette next to the staircase. Upstairs were two bedrooms, a bathroom and the little office. The office window gave Sofia a view on the neighbor house, not the street, unless she stepped close to it. From the desk was no way to see, if there was a car or a person passing by. The house was built too close to the street.

"This is Adam's room." Mrs. Lester opened the door to the boy's room. A bright room, cartoon wallpaper, colorful carpet, a bed in the middle, stuffed animals everywhere. A photo frame on the wall, a photo of Mister and Mrs. Lester when she was pregnant, one when they were in hospital and one, that had to be taken today or yesterday. Them at home, in the garden.

"This photo looks recent."

"We took it yesterday when we came home. My husband has a photo printer in the office. We want Adam to have photos of important moments of his life. His first day at home."

The same Sara and Sofia did with Susan. Who was with Sofia's mother. Safe. At least the blonde hoped so. It was hart not to excuse herself, call her mother and check on her daughter.

"Did you have strangers over? Anybody rang your doorbell yesterday? Today?"

"No. Why?"

"Whoever took your son knew you were at home, means, this person has some knowledge of your family. Who knew you are back from hospital?"

"Everybody."

"Who is everybody? Your family?"

"Family, friends, my work colleagues. I posted it on Facebook, together with the photo."

"How many friends do you have on Facebook?"

"Five hundred or so."

Sofia stopped herself from shaking her head. How could a person have five hundred friends? Real friends. Know five hundred people. "Can only your friends see your photos?"

"I don't know. I have to check." Mrs. Lester pulled her cell phone out of her pocket and opened her Facebook profile. She showed Sofia the photo. The blonde wasn't a genius when it came to the social network pages, but she knew what a private and a public setting was. Mrs. Lester's setting was public, the whole world knew she was back home with her baby boy. The

whole world knew her garden. She had made it very easy for the kidnapper.

"Did you get any fingerprints off the gate?"

"A few. What about the buggy?"

"I collected more than a dozen. According to Mrs. Lester half of the family was here yesterday, most of them touched the buggy. I got the fingerprints and DNA the two of them, also from Adam and will get the fingerprints of the rest of the family. Which will take some time. Any word on the cameras?"

"Kyle found no traffic cameras on this road, he talked to various neighbors, if they had seen anything. Most times he speaks to house staff. They all saw cars passing by, nobody noticed a specific car."

"It was an expensive model, shiny, to fit into the neighborhood. Parked the car close to the house, got into the garden, took the baby and was gone. Or he was already in the garden, called an accessory when Mrs. Lester went into the house, took the baby and his helper waited outside for them."

"What about the father?"

"Was in the office, didn't hear or see anything. Before you ask, he has an alibi. He was on the phone when the baby was abducted."

"Which doesn't mean he has nothing to do with the disappearance of his son, we have no proof Adam really vanished at eight thirty-seven. It could have been earlier."

"Only when the parents have something to do with his disappearance. Which I haven't ruled out yet." Sofia stopped for a moment. "We had a case like this over two years ago."

"I read about it. The baby kidnapper, they even killed a pregnant woman."

"Yes and one father killed his own daughter, tried to blame it on the baby kidnapper."

"Right. You think this might be the same?"

"From what I saw in the house, the room, the way the parents talk about their son, I don't think so. But without any evidence we have to keep it in mind. Back then the father didn't strike me as a killer when I talked to him first. They know how to act without attracting attention, know what they're supposed to show and say."

"Of course."



"I'm off to see the rest of the family, get the fingerprints, some information how happy the Lesters are to be parents. Brandon is on his way to help you."

"Okay. You look after yourself? The twins?"

"Yes, I will. Lunch and water is with me, don't worry."

"Good. Give me a call when you need some help."

"I'm pregnant and not disabled. Okay, I'm disabled, but it doesn't interfere with my job."

"You're a hell of a CSI because of your brilliant mind."

"Thanks, you're not too bad neither, former housemate."

"I learnt from the best. See you later."

"Later." Juana stayed for three months at Sofia's place until she found an apartment in a good neighborhood and for a price, she could afford. Also very good money for Sofia and Sara, they needed after the IV and for the new room.

Sofia entered the addresses of the family members into her GPS and let it find the best way for her to see them all without driving around in circles. Seven addresses to go to. She had called them in advance to make sure, they were at home or she got the addresses, where they were now.

Her cell phone rang.

"Hi Darling."

"Hey, I got the Amber alert..."

"It's my case."

"Are you fine?"

"Better than the parents."

"The baby boy is abducted?"

"Yes, there is a ransom note."

"So not like the case over two years ago."

"No. And yes, I do look after myself, I have lunch with me, will take a break and did only the easy work."

"Good. Who works with you?"

"Our former housemate. She gets better every day, one day she might be better than I am."

"Not better, only almost as good as you."

"I love you. What are you up to?"

"Taking care of some very curious children, we are having our lunch break before we continue to look for bears."

"Yogi?"

"Exactly. Susan is with your mother, they're playing on the playground in their garden."

"You called them?"

"Of course, I had to know she was fine when I got the Amber alert. Marie got it as well. Susan is safe with her."

"I know. Nevertheless it's good to know she's fine."

"Definitely."

"Thanks for telling me, I worried about it too."

"Okay, I let you go back to work, call me when you miss me."

"Then I don't have to hang up."

Sara laughed. "I love you."

"Love you too. See you tonight."

"Can't wait. Barbecue?"

"What else would we have in summer?"

"Picnic on the beach?"

"Nice idea too. Unfortunately I doubt we'll have the time for it."

"We won't, I like the idea anyway. Bye Honey."

"Take care of my ranger." Sofia ended the call. How did Sara always know when Sofia was in need for a boost of love? To listen to the voice of her wife made her feel better all the time.

Two hours later Sofia was back in the lab with a collection of fingerprints and DNA.

"Curtis, office!"

With a sigh she put the evidence aside and went to her boss's office. "What can I do for you, William?"

"Sit down."

It was never good when your boss told you to sit down. It was the first part of telling you something, you didn't like. Slowly she sat down, realizing her back hurt. Maybe she needed a longer break.

"So?"

"How are you?"

"Very pregnant with all side-effects."

"Can you work the case?"

"Of course."

"Are you sure?"

"Why would I not be able to work it?"

"You are pregnant, it's about babies."

"At the moment my twins are very close to me, hard to abduct. And physically I might not be able to do all the work, my brain on the other side, is fit."

"I know. I worry about your health."

"You don't have to. I go to my doctor appointments, eat my vitamins, take breaks."

"Still you have pain."

"You try to walk around with a constantly growing medicine ball, you'd be in pain too."

"Okay, tell me what you've found out so far."

"A lot of fingerprints from the buggy, the boy was abducted from. I collected fingerprints from his parents and the family and friends, who were over yesterday. The parents posted a photo of them back home with their son on Facebook. It was a public post, so the whole world could see it. Juana found traces of a break-in at the garden gate lock, the kidnapper must have come in from there. We're not very sure if they came in when the mother went inside to get coffee or if he was there the whole time and waited for her to leave. It's..." Her cell phone was ringing. "Sorry." She took the call. "Hi Juana, what's up?"

"Some more information. I checked the garden area, the grass next to the corner of the house showed evidence of a person standing there for a while. "

"So he waited there for the best chance to take the baby. Any other trace?"

"No, I double-checked the area, no cigarette butts, no paper, no chewing gum. I even checked the wall of the house with a magnifying glass, no traces of clothes."

"Did you find anything helpful?"

"No traces, except for the lock. The surveillance people are set up, waiting for the kidnapper to call. I talked to Kyle, he went to the place, the Lesters are supposed to leave the money. Remember, they got only coordinates. It's Union Station. They're supposed to leave a black backpack there."

"All information are on the ransom note, do you believe, the kidnapper will also call?"

"The note says, they might call with further instructions."

"I don't think they will, they left all information."

"Better safe than sorry."

"Right. Kyle found the next traffic cameras to the house, unfortunately they're on Hollywood Boulevard."

"A lot of cars, we can narrow down the time, but the kidnapper could have gone the other way. Up or down Highland."

"He gets the videos from there too. Are you ready for some hours in front of the TV screens? Brandon wants to stay a little bit longer here, we haven't finished the garden. He says, the

kidnapper might have installed a little camera to see, when the baby was alone."

"Possible. Let him help him, I do the video work." This way she could sit on a comfortable chair, something her back would like.

"Okay, I call you when there's something new. Do you have news?"

"No, nothing. Sorry."

"Time is running. Child abduction section is informed."

"All right. See you later." Sofia ended the call. "You heard everything?" She put her cell phone on speakers so William could listen.

"Yes. Hollywood and Highland are busy roads, it won't be easy to spot the right car. Do you have any information how the car looked?"

"No. It's a good area, it has to be a new car, an old one would raise suspicion. I hope Kyle finds a neighbor, who saw a car, that didn't belong there. It's not a tourist route."

"The Hollywood Bowl isn't that far away."

"There are a lot of signs to the Bowl, nobody, who can read, would end up in this street and the house is too far away from Hollywood or Highland for somebody, who just wants to turn around. I think, they came from west, stopped, got the baby inside the car, drove on. Only a short stop."

"How about a parcel service? A faked UPS, DHL or USPS van? They always stop for a few seconds, leave something behind when nobody opens the door and some of them also pick up parcels. Hard to tell from a distance if the thing, the man has in his arms, is a small parcel or a baby."

"A van makes too much noise, Mister Lester's office is to the front, he might have heard something. I think it's a car. Parked close by, the man in the garden calls, gets the baby, leaves the garden, the car stops and off they go. When you walk past a man in a car, who is on the phone, you don't give it a second thought. The perfect cover. Number one is in the garden, number two pretends to be on the phone while he waits for the call."

"There could have been a person walking by when he and the baby came out of the garden."

"I'm afraid in this case, number two had taken care of this person. In a not healthy way." When they abducted a baby, they surely had no problems hurting people. Or killing them.

They expected a lot of money and people got killed for less money every day. Nowadays the life of a person wasn't worth a lot.

"Any news?" Shane asked in a silent minute.

"No. I haven't talked to Sofia since the one call earlier."

"Do you believe the men from over two years ago are back?"

"I don't hope so."

"It would be stupid, LAPD almost caught them."

"Almost? Well, it wasn't almost, but there are a lot of cities, to come back to the place, where had been less than three years ago, doesn't look smart to me. Then again, these people seem to work with orders, when they have clients ordering babies from a specific city, they deliver."

"How can you prove the baby is from Los Angeles?"

"The newspaper. The Amber alert. Adam Lester's picture is all over the city, the TV. When somebody ordered a baby from Los Angeles and gets him, they know, the baby is really from there. Although I have no idea what might be special about babies from this city. Or any other city."

"Maybe they're fans of Los Angeles."

"A very special souvenir."

"Human trafficking must be a lucrative business."

"It is." Sara remembered various cases from Las Vegas, that involved human trafficking. Most times people from Mexico or South America coming into the United States, hoping for a better life. She doubt that most of them got a better life.

"Is there like a list of children, who are most likely to be abducted?"

"Not that I know of. Why?"

"Just wondering. Sofia keeps you updated?"

"As far as she's allowed. She can't discuss an ongoing investigation with me."

"Oh please, baby kidnapping? She needs to talk to you, you both worry about Susan."

"Susan is with her grandmother. Do you believe somebody comes close to our daughter without the captain noticing? Or that she lets anybody takes Susan away?"

"Not without killing this person first."

"Exactly." It was good other people thought the same. Helped her to relax. "Besides, it's a case with ransom."

"Does it make sense to go out in public when there's a ransom note?"

"It's in the eye of the beholder. It can add some danger, the kidnapper might get nervous. The problem is, when the baby doesn't get returned to the parents, the police lost the hours between the abduction and the not picked-up ransom money."

"Or the money is picked-up and the kid stays away."

"Another possibility. I assume the police had good reasons to do what they did."

"Yeah. When is the ransom delivery?"

"I have no idea and if I did, I wouldn't tell you."

"Why not?"

"Because if Sofia tells me anything, it's confidential."

"So she did tell you something."

"No." Sara got up. "Time to go back to the kids. We haven't found Yogi yet."

"I get you all a date with Bambi."

"Nice idea." They found a fawn, that was injured and kept it in a safe area close to the ranger's office. In a few weeks it should be strong enough to go back to the forest. For today, it could make some children very happy when they were allowed to look at it. Maybe feed it.

By six in the afternoon there had been no call from the kidnapper. Adam Lester was still missing and his parents close to a nervous breakdown. Sofia checked on all videos, she got from Kyle and found various cars, that could have something to do with the abduction. A list of possible license plate numbers was sent to the police, they'd check the owner.

Juana didn't find many traces, there were no other fingerprints than of the Lesters at the gate, which made them believe, the kidnapper wore gloves. The neighbors hadn't seen anybody entering or leaving the garden, nobody noticed a car, that waited on the street close by. None of the private surveillance cameras picked up the street or the Lester residence.

"Go home."

"Don!" Sofia looked up surprised.

"You've been here since seven this morning, eleven hours. Don't start with you took breaks, had lunch or anything else. Go home, see your wife, our daughter. You need some time to rest."

"We haven't found anything."

"You won't find anything, you're tired. The only thing you'll do is endanger your own health and the health of the twins. Go."

"What if..."

"Don't argue with me. I will go straight to your mother and your personal doctor. Home. Now." He pulled her up. "I take you."

"All right."

"Why do you always need to be threaten?"

"Because I'm stupid although I promised to be better this time. I was. This case...if it was Susan, who was abducted, I wanted everybody to go over their limit."

"You did go over your limit, but you endanger not only yourself but also the twins when you do. Not to mention Sara, who can't live without you. If something happens to you, I doubt she wants to carry on without you."

"She wouldn't leave Susan alone, she loves her."

"She loves you more than anybody else."

"She wouldn't leave Susan alone." Sofia repeated. There was no way her lover would do anything to herself as long as she had Susan and Steve to look after. Neither would Sofia. She believed. But then, you never knew what you would do when you are in the situation. Some things were not predictable.

The first thing Sara did when Sofia entered their bedroom to get changed, was pull her into her arms and kissed her. There were a lot of things on her mind, a lot of things she was about to say, but first she needed to feel the lips of her wife on hers as much as the other woman needed hers.

"Mama!" Susan cheered from the bed, where she sat and looked at a colorful picture book. Carefully she climbed off the bed and walked to her mothers, pulling on their shirts.

"Hi Susi."

"Come here, baby." Sara picked their daughter up and turned, so the girl was between her mothers. "Your mommies are both with you."

"Did you have a nice day with your grandmother?"

"Yeah."

"You played a lot?"

"Yeah. Im."

"You went for a swim? Wow. Your grandparents have a nice pool for you, right? Did grandma swim with you?"

"Pa."

"Grandpa went swimming with you, how nice."

"Eri, Lou, Jo."

"You all went for a swim? Wow." Sofia looked at Sara. "I had no idea my parents had all the kids over."

"Me neither but daycare was very busy today, when Marie came along to see if she could leave Susan there, she found out there were too many kids and not enough nurses. So she took the three with her. And they'll be with her for the rest of the week."

"Wow. Mom is busy."

"I'm sure if Jules and Greg ask her to keep the kids until it's time for kindergarten or school, she would happily take them."

"With our twins she'll be busy."

"She told me today, she wants to have them over once a week. Or switch houses with the two of us, so they can look after the kids and we get some sleep. Your mother is amazing."

"I know. This grandmother thing...I think she likes it more than being a cop. Which is scary. She is the captain."

"She is. Your grandma is the captain, Susan."

"Ma."

"Yes, grandma is the police."

"Poish."

"Yes, police." Sofia smiled. It was cute when Susan tried to say words, she couldn't say yet. She came up with a lot of versions of words, only her parents and the closet friends understood. So was a crocodile an 'ile' while an eel was an 'ake', a snake.

"Nana lo."

"You love your grandma? That's good. Your grandma loves you too. And your mommies love you sooo much." Sara showed the biggest distance, she could manage with Susan on her arms. "We missed you a lot."

"Yes, we did. And we're so happy you're here." Sofia kissed her daughter. "You have no idea how happy I am that you're here and your grandmother looks after you."

"Time for your barbecue."

"Our barbecue." The blonde smiled. "I want to sit next to you."

"Are you asking me for a date?"

"Yes."

"We're married."

"So? I don't take you and being with you for granted. Is that wrong?"

"No." Sara kissed her wife. "I love you."



"Love you more. And our baby daughter. Come on, mommy needs to sit and to eat."

"Are you hungry Susan?"

"Yeah."

"Then we really have to start the barbecue." Sara kissed the tip of her daughter's nose. Time to forget the day and concentrate on their evening together.

When the barbecue was running and the first steaks and a corn cob on it, Sofia leant back and took a sip of her non alcoholic beer. It gave her almost the same feeling of her usual barbecues.

"Where is Don?"

"With Tanya. They want to go to the movies today."

"Date night? Also nice."

"Hi moms." Steve came with Lea and Jenny in the garden.

"Hi son, how are you?"

"Good. How are you and the twins?" He kissed Sofia and hugged Sara.

"We're fine. You're a lucky boy to have two girls follow you."

"Follow him? I live here." Lea grinned. "Can I help you?"

"You can get the salad out of the fridge."

"Okay. Plus some coke."

"Don't forget chips." Steve remembered her.

"No chips before dinner."

"You sound like my mom."

"She's a wise woman."

"I love my oldest daughter." Sara sighed happily. Lea was a sensible daughter. A shame she wasn't their real daughter.

"How was your day?"

"Busy. Mel had a lot of work for me. She asks if you're all right and I brought some papers for you. The stuff Don needs to sign."

"Oh, for the twins. Thanks. I hate to say it, she is useful sometimes."

"She's peaches."

"What does that mean in plain English?"

"She's cool. You like her too."

"Kind of."

"Mom, mom lies. Again."

"She doesn't want to show her soft side. You know her. Jenny, how was your day?"

"Quite okay, I had to look after my little brothers and sister."  
"A babysitter day? You can continue here."  
"I will." Jenny picked up Susan. "You look happy."  
"Hun."  
"You're hungry? Let's have some more apple sauce."  
"My poor daughter will turn into a vegetarian." Sofia shook her head.  
"Your daughter likes healthy food, which is very good."  
"She likes French fries too."  
"We have them too. Later, with your meat."  
"I found some berries, any little girl up for some berries?" Lea came with strawberries, the salad and coke back into the garden.  
"Yeah." Susan's eyes started to shine.  
"I knew it, my baby sis loves berries. Here you are, Cuty."  
"Ta."  
"You're welcome. Scooby, if you try to steal the berries, I tie you to the tree and you have to watch us eat."  
"You had dinner already, we take you out after we ate. If you're nice." Steve said. "Or do you want to walk with them?"  
"I'd love too, but I'm afraid I can't make it around the reservoir anymore. Your siblings are very heavy."  
"Or the chocolate you eat all the time."  
"Cheeky boy."  
"He's right on the chocolate." Sara agreed.  
"I ate so many blo...fruits today. The whole time."  
"Keep doing that, it's good for you. And the twins."  
"So are burgers and fries. Fatty food. Energy."  
"There's fat on the steak." Steve turned the steaks. "What about the fries?"  
"Are in the oven."  
"Let's watch them before they turn black and we can't them anymore. Jen?"  
"I'm coming with you." Jenny got up and walked with Steve into the house.  
"They'll be so busy kissing, the fries will be deep black." Sofia said.  
"Trust your son, when it comes to fast food, he's reliable." Lea took a sip of her coke.  
"How are you? Being with a couple."  
"Most times okay."  
"Not all the times."

"Sometimes happy people annoy you when you're not happy."  
"I can understand that." Sara pulled Lea into her arms. "You know you can come over without Steve? When you need a place to be alone...or more, when you need a place to do whatever you fee like."  
"Thanks. I look forward to our week in Tahoe."  
"All we need is a hot chick to join us. For you."  
"Good luck with that."  
"You never know. Maybe tomorrow you cross the street and see her."  
"Then her boyfriend appears and takes her away in his car."  
"A positive attitude. Reminds me if my wife." Sofia chuckled.  
"A realistic attitude."  
"How about a trip to WeHo? We could spend a day there, go to some cafes and restaurants."  
"I tried that. nothing happened."  
"Don't give up. I managed to marry Sara, nothing is impossible."  
"Thanks, Darling."  
"You have to agree, when we first met, the idea that the two of us get married would have been impossible."  
"For a good reason, you were a nightmare."  
"No, you were a jealous bitch."  
"While you were a bitch in heat."  
"Bit?" Susan looked at her mothers.  
"Great." Sara rolled her eyes. So much for not swearing in front of their daughter. "Have a little BIT of water, Susan."  
"Bit. Mama?"  
"Yes, your mama takes a little bit of water too."  
"And soup for her mouth." Sofia mumbled.  
"Shall I get you some with a special smell? Taste?" Lea asked amused.  
"Funny. Why don't you look after the steaks, I'm starving."  
"Sure." The doorbell rang. "I also open the door, Romeo and Juliet will be busy with the fries. Or so."  
"One could think you're jealous."  
"One could think of something else."  
"And bi...a little bit unstable. What do you think, Honey?"  
"I think we care about our stuff and stay out of the lives of our children and adopted children."  
"We're mothers, it's our job to interfere."  
"To a certain degree."

"It's much easier when they're small. Susan wants us to interfere all the time, you want your mummies with you, want to tell them everything, don't you Susi?"

"Mama."

"Yes?"

"Eat." Susan put a strawberry into Sofia's mouth.

"Thanks. You take care of your mother." She kissed her daughter and pulled her into her arms. Her baby girl. Safe and happy with them. The parents of Adam Lester were full of fear, they didn't have a nice evening in the garden. Maybe they would never be able to enjoy their garden, their house. No matter if they got Adam back or not. Somebody took their son away while he was in the garden, how were they supposed to feel safe again?

The barking of her dogs got her out of her thoughts. Lea came back and was followed by a man, a woman and a teenage girl.

"The new neighbors." Lea introduced.

"Good evening, we're sorry to disturb your barbecue." The woman said. "We moved into the house opposite of you and wanted to introduce ourselves. This is my husband Salomon, our daughter Lauren and I'm Anna. Your daughter let us in."

"Hi, you're not disturbing anything, have a seat." Sofia said. "I'm Sofia, my wife Sara and our daughter Susan. The nice girl, who let you in, feels like a daughter to us, but unfortunately she isn't. She's the best friend of our son, Stephen, who should be here any second."

"We don't want to..."

"It's okay." Sara gestured to the chairs. "Have a seat."

"We have some cake for you."

"Perfect, we can all eat together. Or are you on a welcome marathon?"

"No. We said hello to the people to the left and right of us yesterday, today we wanted to meet you. We share a garden fence." Anna said.

"We do." Sara looked at the fence. They had barely heard anything of their latest neighbors, never saw them in their garden because the fence was too high and solid. It kept their privacy, kept their garden safe.

"You're pregnant."

"Yes, getting into week thirty."

"Really? I had guessed you further."

"No, I look more pregnant because there are twins inside."

"Congratulation."

"Thank you."

"Anna is a doctor, when she starts to attack you with a million questions, please forgive her." Salomon took the hand of his wife. "She can't help, when it comes to medicine."

"It's my passion and I know how to separate work and pleasure."

"Sometimes."

"Do you have your own surgery?" Lea asked.

"No, I work at Silver Lake Medical Center."

"And you come from another part of the city?"

"No, we're not from Los Angeles. We moved here last week from Nebraska, McCook, at the south border."

"That's a difference."

"We hope Los Angeles is different, it's why we moved."

"You came to the nicest neighborhood."

"That's what many guide books said. Plus it's close to work. I didn't want a home twenty miles away and have to fight traffic every day."

"A wise decision in this city." Sara added some sausages to the barbecue. "Oh, there is our son with his girlfriend. And the fries."

"Eve!" Susan cheered.

"Yes, there's Steve. He has dinner for you."

"Eve!"

"Fries, hot and delicious."

"Thanks son. These are our new neighbors, Anna, Lauren and Salomon."

"Pleasure to meet you." Steve sat down next to Lea. "Peter and Paul sent a text, they want to meet us later at the reservoir."

"We take the dogs for a walk, they can join us. I've to be back home around ten, work starts early tomorrow."

"Tell me about it. Four more days until it's real holiday time."

"I get some more plates." Jenny said.

"We really don't want to interrupt your dinner plans." Anna tried again.

"You don't."

"Okay then, let us get some meat too. Lauren, could you get the steaks out of the fridge? There should be some salad as well."

"Sure."

"I can give you a hand." Lea offered.

"Thanks. We can also get the beer."

"Lauren!"

"It's the age." Sara smiled. "How old are you, Lauren?"

"Seventeen."

"Definitely the age. Were we any better?"

"We were less obvious."

"True."

"Okay, we drink it while we're away. Later."

"And you call me cheeky, mom." Steve complained.

"You are cheeky and we wouldn't want you any other way."

Sofia blinked at her son.

"Mom needs the biggest steak, a lot of sauce on her fries and some salad." Steve prepared a plate for his mother. "Oh and she needs at least two slices of cake. One for herself, one for the twins."

"I love my son."

"Enough to buy me a new Playstation game?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"You've got a job for that."

"I had picked you as a high school student." Salomon wondered.

"I am. A poor high school student, whose parents make him work during the holidays so I can buy my own car."

"A very good idea, you learn to appreciate things more, when you work for them."

"Parents talk."

"Stephen." Sara reprinted her son. "I'm sorry, sometimes he is very cheeky. He got this from his mothers."

"My perfect mothers." He blinked at her. Cheeky. Why were teenagers cheeky when they were honest while adults were brave when they said the truth?

"Ouch." Sofia held her back. She felt like she was eighty and not forty-one.

"Are they kicking again?"

"No, but my back hurts, my foot feels like it belongs to an elephant in dancing shoes and I need to pee; again. Maybe I should sleep on the toilette." The blonde got up and left the room.

"Nothing I can do to help." Sara sighed. She couldn't go to the bathroom for her wife, couldn't take the weight of the twins off her. It was bad to feel helpless and useless. All because they

wanted another baby and she, Sara, refused to get pregnant. Why did leave all the work to her wife? It wasn't fair.

"I tell you, the next time I see a doctor, I ask for a catheter. This way I don't have to go to the toilette every five minutes."

"I wish there was anything I could do for you."

"Love me."

"I love you."

"Don't call me fat."

"I never called you fat."

"Don't complain about my mood."

"Honey." Sara pulled her wife into her arms. She couldn't say she never complained about the blonde's mood swings. She did. "Come here, lay down, I give you a foot massage."

"Really?"

"Yes."

"Oh, I love you." Sofia laid down on the bed and closed her eyes.

Sara smiled, sat next to her wife and started to softly massage her right foot. "Why don't you treat yourself with a spa afternoon at Tahoe? Massage and everything, by somebody, who knows what to do and what is best for you?"

"You."

"Not when it comes to massages. I do my best, but you can do much better."

"Nothing and nobody is better than my wife."

"Thanks. Would you like to talk about the case?"

"It reminds me so much of the baby kidnapper, although the ransom note suggests somebody wants money."

"The parents are wealthy or famous?"

"Not that much, Hollywood has a lot of people, who are richer. They want one hundred thousand dollar."

"Wow. Do you believe, they get the baby back?"

"I hope so."

"But you have doubts."

"We both have been long enough in the game to know, you can never trust criminals. When they have Adam back in their arms I believe it's only the money they wanted, before that very moment, I'm suspicious."

"So what are you going to do?"

"We haven't found the car, the kidnapper used. Too many possibilities, the police is running down license plates and owners. The kidnapper left barely any evidence behind."

"How did he or they know the baby was alone in the garden?"

"We found evidence, somebody stood behind the corner of the house. When the mother stepped inside, he took the baby and left. His accomplice waited in the car and they were gone in less than thirty seconds." And when she had looked around the corner, she had seen the man. It could have been her death sentence.

"It's scary. Thirty seconds and your baby is gone."

"Nobody has thirty seconds with my mom around."

"I know, nevertheless, I checked the locks twice today and feel like getting her into our room to make sure, she is where she belongs." When she did it, Sara felt stupid, a little bit paranoid and at the same time, very relieved to see, their place was safe. Susan was safe.

"Me too. For a moment I even thought the new neighbors could be kidnapper too. We don't know them and they were here, with our baby."

"Kidnapper don't introduce themselves with cake and we were around all the time."

"True. I like them."

"They seem to be nice. You were very nice, inviting them to stay. You're a very good host, a welcoming person."

"Which can be bad when people have bad intentions."

"For that you don't leave them alone with your property or your kids."

"Isn't it sad we have to be this suspicious all the time? Do you think people were different one hundred years ago?"

"Maybe. Or more likely because of the missing information possibilities. When you lived in Los Angeles, you had barely any chances to hear what's going on in Beijing, Paris or Cape Town."

"True." Sofia sat up and pulled Sara into her arms. "I have no idea how long I can continue to work. The twins make it more difficult than Susan."

"You stop when it's too hard for you."

"I doubt I can do more than another month." She hated to say these words. When she got pregnant, her plans had been to work until week thirty-six or seven. Now, just getting into week thirty she thought about quitting.

"Then you stop in the middle of August. It's okay. We can manage three months with less money. The room downstairs is



rent out the whole time, I'm working and you get money from all of us - which goes directly to your accountant."

"To make him happy. Why can't I be pregnant like this in winter? You're away for ten or twelve hours in summer, I'll miss you when I'm home alone."

"You go over to your parents and let them take care of you and our daughter."

"Or Susan and me come with you to the forest, sit on a blanket in the shade, watch animals, wait for you to finish."

"You can visit me, yes." Sara kissed her lover. It was time to go to sleep. She had to get up at five to be in the forest at quarter past six. Another long summer day lay ahead.

## Tuesday, July 15th

Annoyed Sofia looked at the time. Awake. Again. She hated it when she didn't get the sleep she needed. One of the pregnancy side effect. Why were side effects always bad? Why couldn't she have a side effect like she dropped into bed at ten in the evening, sleep solid until five with deep relaxing dreams, wake up with a happy smile on her face and feel like it was the best day of her life. Instead she missed out sleep, her back hurt and she was tired.

"Pain?"

Sara's voice was calm nevertheless Sofia could hear the worry. Her wife heard her tossing and turning, knew she had been awake for a while.

"The back. I have no idea how to lie down, it's impossible to lie on my belly for obvious reasons, the sides aren't any better and the back is pure pain."

"Anything I can do?"

"Turn the hands of time forward, like eight weeks and then I can go in labor and give birth to our twins, which makes me lose like a ton and my back will not hurt anymore. What if all I can do next week is whine and annoy you?"

"I love you and when you whine, you have a reason for it. You're pregnant, you have all reasons to complain."

"Complaining and whining don't change a thing."

"No." Sara kissed her wife. "I can understand you anyway, it's difficult to be in a good mood when you're in pain and can't change it. Come on, time for the shower. Let me wash your back, maybe the warm water eases some of the pain."

"We have no time for more than a wash, right?"

"I'm afraid not. Tonight we can make some time for a bath, have candles in the room."

"Worst thing is, I don't feel like sex. Am I sick?"

"No, only pregnant."

"Not too long ago I had barely anything else on my mind and now I'm not interested in dancing between the sheets. My hormones are a nightmare. They annoy me, the must annoy you too."

"I'm a lot of things, annoyed of you isn't one of them. Most times not." Sara smiled and kissed her wife.

"Do you love you annoying wife?"

"I always love you. No matter what."

"That' my wife." Sofia took Sara's hand to let her pull her out of bed. On crutches she walked with Sara into the bathroom. A quick shower before a new day of work started. She hoped a good day lay ahead.

"Any news on the baby?" Sofia sat next to Juana.

"No, the kidnapper didn't call, the parents are going crazy."

The blonde wasn't surprised. Deep down she had known this would happen. They knew what they had to know, any further contact would make it more dangerous for the kidnapper and they weren't stupid. They left the scene with barely leaving any evidence, they seemed to know what they were doing. "The ransom delivery is at ten, is the police already at Union Station?"

"Yes, there is an officer undercover as a booking clerk, a few will be there as traveler and the ordinary security is replaced by LAPD officers too. Unfortunately they didn't have a job for us, we have to wait."

"We are CSI not cops. When I was a lieutenant, I didn't want the CSI on scene until it was secured. We'll be around, out of sight, get the evidence that they have for us. Mostly, we'll be there when Adam gets back to his parents."

"They get him back, right?"

"I do hope so."

"How do you feel? You look like you haven't slept a lot."

"One of the side-effects of pregnancy. Less sleep, a lot of pain and no idea how to lie down comfortable. Two more months. Two and a half."

"You'll get there."

"Apparently women survive being pregnant. I have an alive example living close by. Jules got into labor earlier than expected, I found myself hoping for the same. Two weeks earlier wouldn't be a big problem for the twins, but a big help for me."

"Aren't children more work when they're out of your womb? Now you don't have to feed them, clean them up, they don't cry."

"When you see it this way, yes, they're less work now. After seven months sharing my body with two babies I want it back for myself. I want a bladder bigger than a peanut. Whenever we go to a crime scene, I worry if there's a toilette around, if my

babies kick me too much so I can't continue with my work or they have anything else, that makes me look like an idiot."

"You're pregnant, not an idiot."

"For some men there is no difference."

"Some men are idiots. Anyway, I have some evidence left to work on, you might want to see Kyle, he has the video surveillance of Union Station on his computer. We are asked to observe, report suspicious behavior. Might be the best place for you."

"The fat pregnant woman."

"Yes." Juana rolled her eyes. Why comment anything on this? They had been through this a couple of times.

Sofia was sitting in front of a dozen surveillance screens, watching all levels of Union Station and the outdoor surroundings. Mrs. Lester walked into the station, a black backpack on her right shoulder. Slowly she walked down the hallway to a bench a little bit away from the rest. There she sat down, pushed the backpack as far under the bench as possible. Staying there for a minute, she pretended to read a magazine before she got up and walked away, leaving the backpack behind. Now the most delicate part of the action started. Waiting for the kidnapper, figuring out, who sat on the bench because of the backpack or just to have a rest.

The first people heading for the bench was a young couple. Not the kind of people Sofia had first on her mind when she thought about baby kidnapper, then again, you never knew who was behind a crime. Some people killed you with a smile. The couple unfolded a city map, pointed to various points on it, talked about it, kissed and got up.

The next one on the bench was an elderly man, who put his chin on his walking stick to rest and watched the people walking by. With him sitting above the backpack Sofia took the time to watch the people passing by. It was likely the kidnapper was somewhere around, watching the bench like they did. He, she or they wouldn't strike before being more than sure nobody was around watching. The officer who was at the ticket office sold another train ticket, the security men walked around, didn't pay much attention to the bench. Was it wrong? After all, people usually were more than sensitive when it came to backpacks left alone at places like Union Station.

She spotted a man, who leant on the wall around twenty yards away from the bench. He was hidden behind a newspaper. Was he one of the kidnapper? Screening the scene, looking for cops? Or just a traveler, who waited for his train or bus to come. What about the woman sitting on a bench in the middle of the hallway. She had a perfect view to the bench, the entrance and most of the hall. Didn't she look nervous? Her eyes were roaming around.

"Do you see anything interesting?" Juana came into the room.

"What do you make out of the woman in the white skirt? She seems to be nervous."

"Looking for somebody?"

"Appears like. Could be a friend or lover. Or screening the area for police."

"The bag is still where it was left?"

"Yes, at the moment the old man sits on it. The bench."

"Did he make any attempts to pick up the backpack?"

"No. He sits there, watches the people."

"As long as he sits there, the kidnapper won't come."

"We have to wait. What about the newspaper guy?"

"He hides behind it, I saw him too. Might be our guy, waiting for the old man to get up. After all, he can't go there, push the man away and take the backpack without anybody noticing it."

"Look at the man in the black suit. He sits only a few yards away, sat down after Mrs. Lester sat down on the bench, in fact, he walked into Union Station when she walked in. He could be our man too. Watched her from the beginning, waiting for the perfect moment."

"Did Mrs. Lester report seeing any people she knows?"

"If so the police didn't tell me. The chances are high the kidnapper is a friend of the family, but I doubt he or she would be stupid enough to show himself."

"So far these people have been everything but stupid."

"That's why I doubt they'll be it now. Look, the old man is moving. The backpack is still at its place. Let's see who comes next close to it. Five minutes are over, the kidnapper can't wait too long, otherwise the risk is higher, somebody reports the backpack and then it's gone. We should see somebody coming for it soon."

They waited for another fifteen minutes when Sofia's cell phone rang. It was Kyle.

"We have to move in, somebody reported the backpack."

"Are you closing the whole area? As you would when it was a bomb alarm?"

"No, we let our security guys recover it."

"Do you think the kidnapper knew we are watching?"

"I have no idea. Fact is, we waited for almost half an hour and nobody came for the backpack. Now we have to get it otherwise people get nervous. Sorry."

"Yeah. Did they call the Lesters?"

"No, no calls, neither to the cell phones nor to the landline."

"I wonder what went wrong."

"Whatever it was, I'm afraid Adam won't be back today."

Sofia hated that she agreed with him. With the ransom money not being collected their chances of a happy end got smaller. Much smaller.

Sofia worked on running the faces of people, who were at Union Station this morning on her computer. Maybe the kidnapper were there, something tipped them off and they didn't collect the money. If so, they had to be on video. A work, that took a lot of time and didn't always got the results, you hoped for.

When her cell phone rang she took it as a welcomed possibility to get away from this job.

"Curtis."

"Sofia, it's Lynn. I need you in Los Feliz."

"Why?"

"Another baby was abducted."

"When?"

"An hour ago."

"That was when the money was left at Union Station." Was that the reason why the kidnapper didn't get the money? Were they busy with kidnapping another baby? Was the ransom request nothing more than a diversionary tactic? With the police focused on the ransom money they had their hands free.

"Yes. I talked to William, you and Juana are supposed to come over. We assume the kidnapper could be the same."

"We're on our way." Sofia ended the call and dialed Juana's number. "Hey, another baby was abducted. We need to go to Los Feliz."

"Are you serious?"

"I don't joke about things like this. Meet me ASAP in the garage."

"I'm on my way."

She got up and her cell phone beeped. The Amber Alert on the baby. Natalia Alvarez, seven days old. A cute little Mexican-American girl, dark curls, brown eyes. Would one of her babies look like this? A boy with dark curls?

"Oh cutie, where are you and who took you?" She said to the picture. Stroking over the photo she put the cell phone back into her pocket before she pulled it out right away. Sara got the same alert. *Hey Honey, it's my case. No news on the other baby, the money wasn't picked up. Talk to you later. Love you.*

It was all she could tell her at the moment. When she took her lunch break later, she'd call Sara and talk to her. And to her mother, to hear what Susan was doing. When she thought about it rationally, whoever kidnapped the two babies, wasn't interested in Susan. Her daughter was too old, they looked for babies under a month. But she also knew, there were more kidnappers out there and toddler, especially little girls, could be sold to a lot of people. Human trafficking was a branch of trade, that made millions every year. Just in this country.

With Juana following her in another car she was off to Los Feliz five minutes later. Sara had responded to her text, that she read the Amber alert too and that Sofia was supposed to make sure, she and the twins were fine. She expected a call at lunch time.

The address they got guided them to a small shop in the Franklin Hills in Los Feliz. They passed the Shakespeare Bridge, turned left on St. George Street and found themselves two minutes later at a small supermarket.

"Hey, what happened." Sofia asked Lynn, who greeted her when she opened the door.

"Mrs. Alvarez went into the supermarket to do her shopping. When coming to the section with the frozen food, a very narrow one, she left buggy with the baby to get the food. When she came back, the buggy was empty and the baby was gone."

"Please tell me there were witnesses."

"No."

"Video surveillance?"

"Yes, have a look." Lynn opened the tablet and gave it to Sofia.

"I got it from the owner."

The blonde waved Juana to her and together they watched the video. First an empty supermarket aisle appeared, a few seconds later a woman with a buggy came into sight. The

woman parked the buggy close to the shelf, said a few words to the baby inside and walked away. A few seconds later a man in black clothes and a black baseball cap appeared, opened a big black sports bag, pushed something on the face of the baby for a few seconds before he picked up the baby, placed it into the sports bag, closed it and walked away. All in all it took less than half a minute.

"That's all?"

"Yes."

"What about other cameras?"

"We have him leaving the supermarket with the sports bag, he didn't purchase anything, nobody checked on him. We lose him when he steps out of the supermarket. He turns right, walks west."

"I want to see the other videos."

"We get them all. On none of them we can see the man's face. He must have known where the cameras were."

"Black clothes, black baseball caps, black shades. Where is the nearest street traffic camera?"

"Hyperion."

"He left in the other direction."

"I know. Okay, I try to get witnesses. The problem is, there's a gym next door, men with sports bags are not unusual."

"He didn't walk far. Nobody walks with a baby in his bag a long distance."

"He put something on the girl's face...he didn't suffocate her, right?"

"No. My money is on chloroform. He made sure the baby didn't cry while he carried it in the bag." The blonde stopped. "You know it's the same morderus operandi the baby kidnapper over two years ago. They did the same, we found chloroform tissues at some scenes."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes." Sofia sighed. "Juana, do me a favor, start working the scene, I have to call Brandon, he has to get us the files. If I am right, the same men, who abducted the babies around Christmas 2011, are back."

"Okay, what makes you think the same men like 2011 are back?"

Sofia had called Don, as he had worked the cases over two years ago with her. Back then a woman was killed so that the



cases were handed over to homicide. When she called him today, telling him, the same men seemed to be back, he came over to the supermarket right away. With him was his boss, captain Rock, who sat next to Sofia, demanding answers while Don talked to the mother of the abducted baby.

"You watched the video, the man was prepared, he seduced the baby so it couldn't cry in the sports bag. It's the same what the men 2011 did. I don't believe in coincidences, when it comes to crime."

"So you believe they are back? What about the ransom note?"

"A diversionary tactic? It worked. We were focused on the delivery, waited for possible calls. It gave them time to plan another abduction."

"They didn't pick up the money because they weren't interested in it. Knew, we'd be around, watch the back."

"Exactly. As sad as it is, it's much easier to abduct a baby out of a supermarket or a garden than collect ransom money and escape with the police being involved."

"The chief won't like it. Neither will the mayor."

"I couldn't care less what the mayor likes, what is worse, the poor parents will fear for their children. From the cases back then we didn't find a single baby. These people are professionals and they're very, very good."

"You can't work the case, Sofia."

"Why is that?"

"You're pregnant. They killed a pregnant woman the last time, when they see you on the news..."

"I'm seven and a half months pregnant, my twins are not developed enough to live outside my womb. Not without a lot of medical attention, which will draw attention to them. I'm safe."

"Are you sure they can tell you're only seven months pregnant?" Who didn't know the blonde was pregnant with twins could think, she carried one baby and was not too far away from labor.

Sofia wanted to ask, if she looked that fat, that anybody could think, she was about to pop out a baby any minute. Remembering she spoke to a police captain, she sucked the comment up. "I'm sure they know how women look, who are close to delivery. Like I'm sure, one of them is a doctor. They have to deliver perfectly healthy babies, when they cut out the baby, Cherry found no evidence, that it was hurt. Plus, the first

baby was abducted out of a hospital by somebody, who blend in perfectly. A doctor is comfortable in a hospital, knows all the right answers in case somebody asks him, what he's doing there or if he could give some medical advise."

"A doctor, a security expert, as they got through alarm systems, an internet expert, somebody who lives around the area. Probably also somebody, who knows how to race cars, in case they have to escape." Rock added to the list. "A lot of people."

"When they're working world wide they need a big group. Human trafficking is a big market. I wonder if they do more than abducting and selling babies."

"Like doing the same with toddlers and teenagers?"

"More teenagers like toddlers and I don't say that because I've got a toddler at home. But to take Susan as an example: she knows who her parents are, she does not understand when somebody tells her to be quiet or else so it would be risky to have her around other people. You also can't say, you gave birth to her a while ago, unless you move to a new place and nobody knows you. There's always the risk that she might ask one day in public, when you're surrounded by friends or colleagues, where her mommies are.

A teenager, on the other hand, understands the threats you make. Knows to be quiet in public so there won't be any punishment. Plus I believe, a lot of teenage girls get abducted and sold to men as sex slaves. It's more likely somebody orders a fifteen years old girl for that an a two years old one. At least, I hope it, which sounds wrong."

"I understand what you mean and I agree. Your daughter will be fine."

"She's with my mother, I doubt somebody gets her away from her."

"Not without a bullet in their head. Okay, I don't stop you any longer from doing your job."

"Juana does the work in the supermarket. According to the surveillance video, the man left the supermarket and walked west. I'd like to follow him, get a feeling for what he did."

"I get you protection."

Sofia wanted to argue, she was fine alone but she stopped herself again. It was protocol that an officer was with the CSI. She was there to secure the evidence, the police was there to protect the scene and the CSI. That included the CSI, who used to be a cop, too.

A look on her watched told her, it was lunch time. She went back to her car, sat down and got the sandwich out, Sara made her in the morning. Salad and chicken. There wasn't much time for a long break, but a few minutes would be enough and make her back stop complaining all the time.

"Are you taking a break?" Sara greeted her wife when she called her.

"Just as we're talking. How are you?"

"Busy, the forest is packed with people."

"Asking you a million questions."

"Breaking rules. Some of them got the Amber alert, they all have an extra eye on their children. You can see, they don't let them run away very far."

"Smart people."

"The two cases are related to the ones two winters ago?"

"I'm sure about it. I'm bringing Greg into the case, he worked them back then. Don is already here."

"He has been personally involved in the case, they came after Jules."

"We all have been personally involved because they came after Jules."

"True. What if they come after you this time?"

"I'm not pregnant enough. Don't worry."

"I always worry about you."

"Will you worry less when Greg and Don are around?"

"Yes. How is your back? And your foot?"

"Both hurt."

"Honey..."

"I will see a doctor, as soon as I've got the time for it. Latest tonight when I'm home."

"Alison?"

"Yes, I called her. She's the only doctor I know who I can see after work without sitting in the ER for hours. She's on duty today until midnight, I'm supposed to give her a call when I'm done with work and on my way to Hollywood Palms. If Steve looks after Susan, would you come with me?"

"Of course. Are you sure you can continue to work until then?"

"I am. I take breaks and they don't let me do any hard stuff. Half of the morning I sat in front of TV screens. Juana works in the supermarket, where the baby was abducted, I'm about to walk around the neighborhood, with an officer by my side, and

see, if I can find any witnesses or evidence of where the man went to."

"You're canvassing the neighborhood?"

"No, I'm following the evidence. And it will be better for me to walk around than sit the whole day. Yes, I will sit down whenever I feel like it. Nobody chases me."

"Good. I love you and my highest priority is to know you're fine. If I have to, I will chain you to our bed until you go into labor."

"Nice ideas are coming up."

"Push them aside."

"Bugger. When will you come home?"

"It can take some time, I don't expect I'll be back before six. What about you?"

"The same? With many breaks."

"I will tell Greg and Don to look after you, tell them, you're in pain."

"No, you won't."

"Yes I will. I love you and when looking after you upsets you, so it will be."

"You can be a nightmare."

"And your most wonderful dream come true."

"You are my most wonderful dream come true." Sofia saw Rock coming towards her car. "I have to go, send me a text when you have another break, I want to hear your voice again."

"Okay. Take it slowly, I want you in my arms tonight."

"There's no other place I want to be. Love you."

"I love you too."

Sofia blew a kiss into the phone before she put it back into her pocket. "Captain?"

"You're having private phone calls during your shift?"

"No, I have private phone calls while I'm on my lunch break. The wife worries."

"Does she have a reason to?"

"She's my wife, she doesn't need a reason to worry. I'm pregnant, working, a case with baby kidnapper, she knows about the case in December 2011."

"A former CSI. All right, ready to start your little walk?"

"Still waiting for my officer."

"Right here."

"The captain comes with me? How comes?"

"I want more details, you're my best source. Come on and when you need a break, you tell me. Sending you to the lab won't work anyway, right?"

"Right. I'm not made to sit in a lab for the whole day."

"Thought so. Where would you like to start?"

"Well, he left the supermarket." Sofia got out of the car and went to the entry/exit of the supermarket. "From here he turned west and walked away." The blonde looked up the road. "There are around a dozen buildings on the each side of the street before another street meets this one. I doubt he walked this far, in the case yesterday, the kidnapper was most likely picked up by somebody in a car. I think the same happened here. Or a car parked here and waited for him. You can stay here for a few minutes." Sofia looked at the cars. "They chose the victims, did the same the last time. Stalked them for a few days. Which means, they already picked the next victim. Victims."

"They must have been back for a while."

"Yes. I didn't have the time to look in the FBI database..."

"They haven't been active in the USA since they left Los Angeles. I checked it."

"You did?"

"There is a reason why I am a captain."

"Because you're very good at what you do."

"Exactly. So, where do you want to start."

"There." Sofia pointed to a house across the street. It wasn't exactly across from the supermarket, it was two houses up the street.

"Why this one?"

"Family house, the mother is at home, the kitchen window faces the street."

"How do you know that? Do you know the people?"

"No, I'm also very good at what I do." Sofia smirked.

"And confident."

The blonde continued smiling and walked towards the house. After she ring the doorbell it took a few seconds until a woman appeared there. On her rid hip she had a baby and a toddler hid behind her left leg.

"Hello, I'm CSI Curtis, this is captain Rock, we're sorry to bother you during your lunch preparation, we have a few questions for you."

The woman looked at Sofia's belly and her body language changed from defensive to open. "What is this about? I've seen police around, was somebody hurt?"

"About an hour ago a baby was abducted from the supermarket. We suspect a man dressed in black with a black baseball cap and shades to be the kidnapper. You didn't happen to see somebody fitting this description walking up the street? I noticed your kitchen window faces the street."

"Oh my god, that's horrible. I thought this is a safe area." She looked at her two kids. "Yes, I saw a man dressed in black, but he didn't have a baby with him."

"Did he carry a sports bag?"

"Yes, he did...wait, you don't think he put the baby in there."

"I'm afraid so."

"Oh my god!" She pulled the baby closer to her.

"Did you see where he went?"

"He...he got into a car."

"Can you remember the car?"

"A black one."

"A model?"

"No, sorry. Oh gosh...it was a black car...a sedan? I don't know. I'm so sorry. The poor parents. I wish I could do something."

There were a few things she could do, she was their first and best witness. "Can you describe the man?"

"He...like you said, he wore black clothes, a black cap, shades ... and...I don't know. I didn't pay attention, I was busy with my son and preparing the vegetables. Oh god. How ...who .... you will find the baby, won't you?"

"We hope so. Did you see the car drive away?"

"Yes, after he got in there...he put the sports bag on the backseat...then he got onto the passenger's seat and the car drove away."

"Did you see the driver?"

"No, the windows were colored."

"Where did the car go to?"

"Up the street. I didn't see the license plate, never paid attention to it. It was just a man, who seemed to come from the gym, getting into a car." She sighed. "I wish I could do something for the parents."

"You helped us already." Sofia handed her card over to the woman. "Please, you can think of anything else, you can call

me. Any information, no matter how small it seem to be, anything can help."

"Of course. I hope you find the baby soon."

"We do our best. Would it be all right when an officer sees you later, maybe you can remember a lit bit more after the shock. He would also bring you photos of cars, maybe you remember the car, he drove."

"Of course."

"Thanks for your help." Sofia turned and left the stairs with Rocks. "A black car. We could get the video tapes of the nearest traffic cameras, check the cars with the cars we have from the videos of yesterday, maybe there's a match."

"How many hours do you want to spend in front of the computer?"

"As many as needed to find these guys."

"You have AVI guys for this kind of work."

"And they can start on it while I'm here. Later I help them, with my cute little belly I'm a little bit limited to the kind of work I'm doing."

"You do amazing work. How did you pick the house? It wasn't pure luck, was it?"

"No." Sofia smiled. "See the window? Handicraft of children, very young children. The car has children seats and there're toys in the front yard. The window is open, you can see a fridge when you look closely, it was the best shot I had."

"And that's the reason why one day I'm going to get you back to LAPD and make you a captain."

"I'm not ready to ride a desk." Not ready. Did she just say one day she would go back to LAPD and become a captain? Sit on a desk and supervise people working the streets? Until now she refused to think about it, now she did. Apparently.

"Another child is missing?" Shane handed a coffee to Sara.

"Thanks. Yes."

"How?"

"The girl was abducted from a supermarket."

"Did the mother not look after it?"

"No, she left the baby alone for less than a minute to get something from a narrow aisle. Yesterday it took less than thirty seconds for the kidnapper to strike. Think about it, when you're a father and leave your child out alone."

"The missus hasn't started about starting a family and I don't want to put the idea in her head. It's too early."

"Well, you have the same girlfriend for over a year, I think that's pretty good."

"She's perfect."

"The perfect girlfriend, sounds very serious."

"It is. Like this baby kidnapper thing. What happened to the ransom money of the first baby?"

"Nobody collected it. I think it was a set-up, get the attention on the backpack with the money and have all the time to kidnap another baby."

"It worked perfectly."

"Unfortunately. And they were quite sure, the abduction had nothing with the cases back then to do because of the ransom note."

"These bastards are smart. They are the same like three years ago?"

"Likely."

"Why are they back?"

"You make a lot of money with babies. And apparently it's easy. Too easy."

"I think it's easy to judge these mothers, say they didn't pay attention, it's their fault the babies are gone, but when you're honest, you can't look after your child twenty four seven. There will always be minutes when you don't watch because you're not a prison guard and even they are not there to watch all the time. Or is Susan supervised all the time?"

"No, there are minutes, when she is alone. In the house, in the garden. Although our garden is safe, nobody can get in without the dogs noticing it."

"But she is alone and so were these kids."

"Yes." Sara swallowed. It was true, Susan was alone just like these babies were.

"So, what is Sofia going to do?"

"Work the case. As good and fast as she can."

"She didn't catch them back then."

Sara gave him a look, that let the hell freeze. Did he question the skills of her wife? Did he doubt she was capable of catching the kidnapper?

"Sorry."

"She won't let them get away again. No matter what." Which should sound like assurance actually felt bad. No matter what



meant, Sofia would work this case without thinking twice about her own health, about what was best for herself. It was why she loved the blonde and it was, what scared her more than anything else.

An hour later Sofia was grateful for entering the supermarket to see Juana. She had talked to all people, who were at home and lived on the street.

"Hey, did you find anything helpful?"

"I watched all videos from the time, he was in here. He didn't pick anything up, didn't touch anything. What did you find out?"

"Not much. Two people saw him, a black car waited for him two doors down, took off west. None of them remembered the license plate, all we have it's a limousine, colored windows."

"Was he alone?"

"No, he got onto the passenger's seat."

"I can't believe he places a baby into a bag and walks away. What if something happens to the baby? When he bumps into something with the bag?"

"They'll be prepared for that, have a blanket in the bag or something else for protection. These babies are their income, it's in their best interest to keep them alive and well, otherwise they might not get the money. As sick as it sounds, when it comes to taking care of babies, I don't think we have to worry. A little comfort."

"Great, I'm not sure the families are happy about it."

"No. All right, what did the mother say?"

"She left her daughter alone for less than a minute, has been in here at least twice a week, always leaves her there. Knows the owner, knows most people, who are in here. Of course, she's blaming herself."

"They knew about these routines, watched her before. I bet she has the same shopping days for ages, same times. It's what they did back then, learn about their victims, know exactly when they are where. Means, he was waiting for her in the car, followed her, waited for the moment when she left her daughter alone, took the baby and left immediately."

"Did they leave no evidence behind the last time they were here?"

"They are very good. Too good to not be involved in law enforcement one way or another."

"One of us?"

"My money is more on former CSI or cop, not somebody, who is still active. They move around too much."

"How much time do we have until they leave?"

"Two weeks. Top. They took two babies within two days, maybe they're on a tight schedule."

"You think, they might have already left the city?"

"Depends on how many babies they want."

"One part of me wants them gone so no more babies are taken, the other part wants them around so we can catch them. Yes, they might take another baby, but we can't get them and get the babies back to their parents, when they're gone."

"I understand what you mean." Sofia groaned and held her belly.

"Are you fine?"

"Yeah, it seems to be sports time. First I thought they're becoming football player, now I think they might also be good break dancer."

"Is it normal they hurt you this much?"

"Susan was the same, this time the kicks are double because there are two babies inside me. The last two, that's for sure."

"Sure." Juana grinned.

"Four kids are enough. My poor parents have to look after them all the time."

"As far as I know they enjoy your kids a lot."

"They do. And they look after Susan, which comforts me a lot. Mom would never leave Susan alone in a supermarket, she barely leaves her out of sights when she has her at home. It's something else I tell myself all the time."

"Susan will be fine." Juana took Sofia's hand.

"Yes. The eyes of an eagle and the ears of a lynx, that's who is around her. When I was young, I hated my mother for that. Now I love her for it. Time have changed."

"You're a mother yourself, you know what fear is. As a child you're fearless, nothing can happen to you. Now you know the truth, have seen a lot of evil."

"Yes." Sofia sighed. She had seen a lot of evil and every day she saw more. Would she be able to work in law enforcement until her retiring day? Or would she - like her wife - draw a line at one point and look for a new challenge? A new job, that had nothing to do with violence and murder.

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"Hey, I've got the folders of the missing babies from back then." Greg slipped onto the passenger's seat of Sofia's car, in his arms a lot of folders. "Five babies were abducted in less than three weeks back then."

"I remember every single one of them. Molly Whitemeyer was kidnapped from the baby ward, on December fifth, it was the first case. Made Hollywood Palms rethink their security system. Trevor Henderson was abducted on the sixth from Hollywood Hills, the next day a pregnant woman was killed at the Hollywood Reservoir and her baby was cut out. According to Cherry it survived the surgery. Then Mario Santiago was kidnapped from Los Feliz on the twelfth. Five days later Henry Morrison was abducted from Bel Air. On the nineteenth they tried to abduct Eduardo Bell, but the Rottweiler of the family saved him. Then they were gone."

"In between they came to get my wife." Yes, his wife. Since one month Jules and Greg were married. It had been a big wedding with over one hundred guests. Jorja and Eric held the rings, each of them one, Louise and Susan were in charge of the flowers. They didn't have a honeymoon, the week at Lake Tahoe next week was a kind of a honeymoon replacement. For the real honeymoon they didn't have the time. Not yet.

"They did and you moved into our place, which was nice. I look forward to the week with you guys. After we have caught these guys and lock them away for good."

"We will get them."

"When they keep to their rhythm they abduct another child soon. Tomorrow."

"And they will go after pregnant women."

"Don't look at me like that, I'm not far enough. But you're right, when they have the same rhythm, they'll be back soon. And they have not a special area of the city. Although they only abducted babies from the west districts and north of the Santa Monica Freeway. The apparently good areas."

"Their clients requests upscale children, possible good DNA. All parents wants successful children, when they have successful parents, it's more likely the children will be the same. It's not a guarantee..."

"But good enough for them. I did some research, over two thousand eight hundred babies were born within the last two weeks in Los Angeles. One third of them live in the areas the

kidnapper have stroke before or might stroke because it's one of the better areas."

"Too many to give police protection to them. The chief of police and the mayor will hold a press conference later. Tell parents to look after their babies more than usual. Also warn pregnant woman not to walk around rural areas alone."

"Rural areas like the Santa Monica Mountains? Greg, these people came to your door, they come to people's house. Women are nowhere safe."

"When they say it like this." Greg ignored the fact Sofia was right, ignored the pain about the knowledge somebody came to his home to kill his wife and steal his babies. "They create a panic, which can lead to danger for the pregnant women and their unborn babies. Preterm birth rates will get up."

"I know. We need to find them."

"We will."

"Okay, I go back to the lab, work with what I have and see if I can narrow down possible next victims." Around one thousand. Even when she did manage to contact them all, how could she protect them? With the parents more alert, the kidnapper might needed some more time to strike again, but they would try it. It was their income. When they don't deliver the ordered babies, their clients won't be happy.

"Sofia, I want an update on the case." William greeted Sofia when she came back into the lab. When her boss waited for her, she knew it was serious.

"What do you know?"

"A baby was abducted from a supermarket while the ransom money for the other baby wasn't collected. These cases are connected to the cases in December 2011."

"I think so."

"We didn't catch them back then, we need to catch them now. Soon. Like in today. What do we have on the kidnapper?"

"They drove a black limousine, I want to check traffic cameras in the area, none of the witnesses saw the license plate."

"You want to look for all the black limousines in the area? How much time do you think will that take?"

"A lot, but it's the only chance we have. I want these guys as badly as you do."

"The mayor and chief of police are giving a press conference today, they want me to provide information, that will assure the

citizen of the city, we will end this kidnapping cases as soon as possible."

"They want results."

"So do we."

"Can I go to the videos?"

"Sure."

"Thanks." Sofia forced a smile on her face and left. Time to find these bastards on camera, nail their asses and close the case. She didn't let somebody get away twice, did she?

Sofia had only checked the first two cameras for the time of abduction when her cell phone rang. It was Don's number.

"Hey, any news?"

"Nothing. What about you?"

"I'm working on the cameras, getting the license plates of all black cars, that drove on Hyperion around the time of the abduction. Don, listen, I'd like to get us some help."

"More cops and CSIs? I'm sure our bosses are okay with that."

"No, I thought more of...the FBI."

"Say again."

"You heard me."

"The FBI?"

"Yeah, you remember the guys we worked with in spring? They were quite all right. You said so yourself after you worked with them in San Francisco."

"They were."

"I'd like to tell William to call them. We need them on this one, they can't get away again."

"Okay, talk to your boss, shall I talk to Rock. If we want the FBI here, she has to invite them."

"I can do it too, if you want."

"You will lose credit."

"So? It's not like she's my boss. Besides, it's not bad to ask for help when you can catch a killer that way."

"You're right. Let me know when you talked to our bosses."

"I will. Talk to you later." Sofia ended the call and got up. Time to bring her idea to her boss. It wasn't like she liked the idea of having the FBI all over her case, but it was more important to catch the kidnapper than have her ego happy.

"William, do you have a minute?"

"Did you find something new?"

"No." She closed the door and sat down. "I think we need help. Big help. The FBI. Remember the team, that was here about the case, that brought Don to San Francisco? I'd like the have them here. They're from the Behavior Unit."

"You think they can help us?"

"Yes. They were a big help in Frisco and worked with the cops and not against them or on their own."

"The call has to come from LAPD."

"I know. I wanted to know if you're okay with it before I call Rock."

"Whatever it takes to catch them."

"Then I do the call." Sofia pulled her cell phone out of the pocket and dialed Rock's number. "Hello captain, are you still investigation the kidnapper case?"

"I am. Why?"

"I talked to William about the case and I think, it would be very helpful to include the FBI. The Behavior Unit."

"Are you having somebody special on your mind?"

"The same team, who was here in spring. For Feds they were more than fair."

"I remember them, agent Hotchner is the team leader. What do the involved officer say about your idea?"

"Detective Flack is okay with this, I haven't talked to anybody else. You're the captain, it's your decision."

"It is. I'll talk to the chief, but I'm sure he won't have anything against it, after all, it will calm the citizen down when they hear about the FBI involvement in the press conference."

"Takes pressure off LAPD and gives it to the FBI."

"Yes. I let you know what happens."

"Thanks. Good luck, captain." Sofia ended the call. "Rock will contact the chief and then call the FBI."

"Then let's hope they will be here soon."

"And that no more babies will be abducted."

Sofia closed her eyes and took a deep breath. This wasn't good. All the pain. Not only from the kicks of her babies. She felt nausea, dizzy and like she ran a marathon. Rock hadn't called her back, she had no traffic cameras left to check, the license plates of the limousines she saw, were sent to the police for check-ups. Thinking about check-ups...

"William, can I take an hour of private time? I know the timing sucks but...I don't feel too good."

"Shall I call a doctor?"

"Actually it's what want to do, see a doctor."

"Do that and let me know what's going on."

"Thanks. I'll be back soon." She got up, stopped, held her belly, groaned and closed her eyes. Not good at all. Carefully and as yet fast as possible she got to her car, sat down, took another deep breath and started the car. When she was on the road, she decided to make a call in advance to announce her arrival.

"Oh no, not the mailbox. Hello doctor Bendler, it's Sofia. I know we wanted to see each other tonight, but I really do not feel good and am on my way to the ER. I'm not sure if you or another doctor is the one to talk to...shit...damn pain... anyway, I'll be there soon. Bye."

She got her concentration back to the streets. What was wrong with her? With her babies. Were they at risk? Maybe she had to see a gynecologist and not doctor Bendler.

The way from the parking place to the ER felt like a trip to hell.

"Hello I'm Sofia Curtis, I'd like to see doctor Bendler or somebody else...I'm in pain, the world spins, I feel dizzy and nausea."

"Are in labor?"

"No, it's ten more weeks." The room spun, Sofia tried to grab the reception desk, but her hands couldn't hold her anymore and she slipped down on the floor. Then her world turned dark.

When she woke up again she found herself in bed, an annoying beeping next to her head. To her left was an EKG, an infusion was there too and the needle in her arm. She was on something.

"Hey."

Surprised she turned. To her right was no other than her wife, looking worried, with traces of tears on her face.

"Hi."

"How do you feel?"

"Like I was ran over by a train. What did happen?"

"You lost consciousness. Honey, why didn't you tell me?"

"I didn't want to worry you. And I believed I'd be fine until I see doctor Bendler. After I felt not good I decided to go to the ER, let them check me and go back to work...I have to call William..."

"He knows about you, I called him. Work isn't important right now, you are."

"Do you know what happened?"

"Stress, exhaustion, your temperature was too high too. Your body couldn't cope. It's in big stress with the twins, apparently the case was too much and it took a break."

"Are the twins fine?"

"Yes. You were checked by a gynecologist and your personal doctor. Everything is fine, all you need is some rest."

"Can I go home?"

"Doctor Bendler will be back in an hour and check on you. If your vitals are okay, you can go home. Home, not back to work."

"I need to call William. Or Don. The FBI might on it's way and..."

"Did you listen to what I said?"

"Yes, I can go later."

"You need to relax. Or do you want to risk our babies lives? Because if you do, I'm not sure I want to go with you to Tahoe next week. Like I'm not sure Susan is in good hands when she's alone with you."

"What?"

"Apparently your highest priority is work and not the well-being of our children."

"That's bullshit."

"Is it? When you worry most about calling your boss to hear if the FBI is on its way instead worrying about our twins, your priorities are clear. And they're not the same I have." There was a lot of anger in Sara's voice although she kept it low and calm.

"Honey, the twins, Susan, Steve and you are my highest priority."

"Then act like it."

"The kidnapper are back..."

"Which is bad, very bad, but to be honest, I am selfish and if I have to choose between you helping arrest baby kidnapper or not endanger our twins, I take the twins. Which also means, I choose your health over somebody else's well-being."

"Okay." Sofia took Sara's hand. "I'm sorry. You are right. As usual. I'm sorry."

"Didn't this scare you?"

"Of course."

"Then why are you thinking of going back to work today? When Alison called me, I thought somebody stabbed me with a knife right into my heart. It didn't matter she told me you're fine and not at risk and neither are the twins, the thought of



what might have happened scared me. You could have lost consciousness on your way to the ER, drive into another car, kill yourself, other people."

"I'm not very smart."

"You act the same way I did a few years ago."

"Not an excuse. Did you call my mother?"

"No."

"Can we not tell her?"

"You want to lie to your mother?"

"Not lie...can we tell her later? I don't want her to worry."

"You don't want her here, don't want her to punish you."

"That too."

"I won't tell her, it's up to you if and when she hears about it."

"Thanks."

"Oh, I don't do that for you, I do it for the twins, they don't need more action, You know, you were lucky to fall not onto your belly."

"I think I tried to grab something, held myself up...didn't work out."

"No."

"When I'm allowed to leave, can we go to the restaurant across the street? I could need some food."

"Deal." Carefully Sara pulled her wife into her arms and kissed her. "Please don't scare me like this again. You're the most important person in my life, I can't be without you. I love you. I'm so much in love with you."

"Your wife isn't the best wife, is she?"

"She's the only one I want."

"And you're the only one I want." Sofia held her belly. "They're active again. Guess that means my strength comes back. Or they're hungry too and want me to eat. The nurse didn't happen to leave a chocolate bar in the room, did she?"

"No and you won't get chocolate, you get something real. Rice, chicken and vegetables."

"I suppose I'm not in a position to argue." The blonde smiled.

Lea dropped on the sun lounger and closed her eyes. Safe place. Safe garden. Scooby and Rantanplan dropped next to her, happy they weren't alone anymore.

"I tell you guys, today home and work were even. Even shitty. I'm glad I'm here, even when we are all alone and Steve has a date with Jenny and won't be here for the next hours. We have

the garden to ourselves and will have a little barbecue later. After a walk around the reservoir. I don't think anybody else is home." Scooby sighed heavily like she hit the nail. They were alone, nobody cared about them. Poor, poor dogs.

"Oh for fuck's sake!"

Lea looked up. The voice came from behind the fence. It sounded like...what was the name of the new girl again? Lauren.

"Are you okay?"

"Nail through the finger."

"What?" Shocked Lea sat up. "Shall I call a doctor?"

"My mom is a doctor, it's not that bad. I need a beer."

Lea saved herself the comment, that the other girl wasn't old enough to drink alcohol.

"You don't happen to have the barbecue on? I'm starving, there are some steaks left and I have no idea where mom left our barbecue."

"I planned to use it later. If you have meat, I turn it on now."

"Deal. I'm over in a minute or two. Just need something for my finger."

"Okay." Lea got up. "Time to start the fire. You might get some treats earlier than I've thought." She petted Rantanplan's head. It was a good decision to come here, luckily she got her own key a while away. As their daughter by heart she needed a key.

Less than five minutes later the dogs started barking and Lea knew, the doorbell rang. They were a good alarm system. After she told them to sit down and be quiet she opened the door. Lauren leant on the frame, a bag over her shoulder and a bandage around her finger.

"Hi."

"Hi, your dogs sound scary, very angry."

"They are angry when people ring the bell, it means they're strangers. Come in, the barbecue is running."

"Perfect."

"How did you hurt your finger?"

"The combination hammer, nail and my hand didn't work out the way I planned. I tried to built a bench."

"Ouch. Are you sure you don't need a doctor?"

"Mom will look after it when she's back home. It's a cool house." Lauren looked around. "You do not live here, right?"

"No, my parents wouldn't like that."

"Would you?"

Lea thought about it. "Yes. I like it here. A lot."

"Apparently they like you to be here too...where are they?"

"Not home."

"You have your own key?"

"Yes. I can come and go as I please and my plan was, to relax a little bit, take the dogs out for a walk and start the barbecue. The order got rearranged now, which isn't too bad. I can relax while we wait for the steaks and the dogs won't leave the garden as long as there's food around."

"And beer."

"You seriously brought beer?"

"Sure. Nothing fits better to a steak. Oh, please don't start the underage discussion. If you don't like beer, I don't make you drink it and I have no intentions to get drunk. My parents allow a beer or two when we have a barbecue."

"Hey, I'm not complaining."

"Good." Laura sat down, looked around. "A cozy place."

"A safe haven."

"With two protective dogs."

"They're adorable when they like you, when they think you're danger, they'd go for our throat."

"Are you trying to scare me off?" The other girl cocked her head.

"No, I try to warn you."

"Do you think I'm a threat?"

"If I would I hadn't let you in."

"Good." Lauren smiled.

When Sofia finished her chicken risotto with vegetables she leant back. Better. Much better. Her feet were on an empty chair, Sara sat next to her, her left hand softly caressing the back of her wife.

"How do you feel now?"

"Almost like new born. The twins are happy too."

"Good." Sara pulled a Mars bar out of her pocket. "Dessert."

"Nothing says 'I love you' better than chocolate. Thanks."

"So you prefer chocolate over a kiss?"

"No." The blonde bent over and kissed her wife. "I love you."

"And the chocolate." Sara pulled her cell phone out of her pocket and handed it over to her wife. "Why don't you call Greg or Don, ask for any news while I organize us another drink."

"Are you sure?"

"You want to know what's new, you can't go back today, but you can let them tell you, what is going on. Otherwise you have all these questions on your mind and can't relax."

"Gosh, do you know how perfect you are?"

The brunette smirked. "You can thank me later for everything. I have a few ideas, what you could do."

"Really?" Sofia's grin was dirty. "How?"

"I tell you then." Sara kissed her wife and got up to get them something more to drink. There was no reason to leave already, they had a nice table and to sit down for a little bit longer, was good for Sofia.

"Sofia how are you? I heard you're in hospital." Don's voice was full with concern when he answered his cell phone.

"I'm fine, they let me out of hospital but I'm not supposed to work today anymore. Sara took me to a restaurant, we had an early dinner and will stay a little bit longer."

"What happened?"

"Too much stress, exhaustion, I didn't sleep much the last nights. Doctor Bendler, Alison, said I can go back to work tomorrow when I feel good. Just have to take it slow. Slower than I already do it."

"You should take a few days off."

"I'm having a week off soon."

"Maybe you need your days off now."

"Don, I'm fine. Take today off and come back tomorrow. With more breaks and less hours." At least that was her resolution for now.

"What does Sara say about this?"

"She doesn't agree completely."

"I'm not surprised about this."

"Yeah, she worries, just like you do. So give me an update on the case and I will go back to being a good patient and relax. What happened with the FBI? Will they come?"

"Actually, they're on their way already, will arrive late tonight. The same guys I was with in San Francisco. They have the files, work on them already."

"Good. Any other news?"

"No, Greg and Juana work on the evidence, some of the license plates were checked, so far not hit. Sofia, we have everything under control; as much as you can it in this case."

"Okay."

"Okay?" Don's voice was surprised. That was too easy.

"Yes. I got the warning of my body and of my wife, it's okay. The rest of the day is family and not work."

"Good. I see you later."

"Later lover boy." She ended the call

"Lover boy? Did I miss something?" Sara kissed the hair of her wife and sat down with the glasses of orange juice.

"My secret affair with Don? Now you know it. We're going to have twins together."

"Only you and Don?"

"You might be allowed to look at them sometimes."

"I remind you of that when they're crying in the night. Oh no wait, I won't be there, you'll be with Don. Tanya and me can sleep...I'm going to share my bed with a hot Latina. Lucky me."

"Am I this easy to replace?"

"Well, you replaced me first."

"Right. The FBI is on their way to L.A., help us with the case."

"Good." Sara took Sofia's hand. "Your parents don't expect us back until seven, right?"

"Right."

"Why not send them a text it will be a little bit later? We could go to the movies. Have another two hours for ourselves. Popcorn and chocolate inclusive. Not fair towards your parents, but I'm sure they'll be fine with it if we told them."

"I like the idea." Sofia smiled. A movie with her wife, holding hands, enjoying some time alone. It had been ages that they were out to watch a movie.

"Lea?"

"Captain." For a second Lea tried to hide the beer bottle in her hands, when she realized, it would look ridiculous. Marie had seen the beer, there was no need to hide it. "Hi Susan, how are you?"

"Lea." The girl ran to her.

"Did you miss home?"

"I thought Sofia would be back home."

"No, they're all out."

"Could you look after Susan? Marc and me have an appointment."

"Sure. Are you hungry, baby sis?"

"No, she had dinner already." Marie eyed Lauren up. "I have no idea who you are and I won't comment on the beer, but if you hurt my granddaughter, illegal drinking is least of your problems. Am I clear?"

"I've no idea what you're talking about."

"Don't." Marie warned. "Lea, thanks for looking after Susan. Do you have plans for Friday? The best KISS revival band is in WeHo. Want to go?"

"Of course!"

"Tell your parents you're out with us."

"I will. Thanks."

"You're welcome. See you Friday."

"See you, say hello to Marc. Wave goodbye to the Captain." Lea and Susan waved Marie goodbye. "Okay, you stay with us, baby girl. Shall I let you walk around? In your baby cage." She set Susan in the little fenced area.

"So you're the babysitter now?"

"Yes, I'm allowed to look after my little sister."

"Allowed?"

"Absolutely. The Captain doesn't trust people easily with her granddaughter."

"She tried to scare me."

"You should take her serious, she was a police captain and...I think she can make you suffer big time when you upset her. When Sara and Sofia wanted to adopt Steve, she pushed various buttons so it happened within months, in record time."

"So? Anyway, why would I hurt Susan?"

"I have no idea what she meant by that, anyway, she won't rat us on the beer. Unless we end up drunk and Susan gets hurt. Which will never happen, am I right, you little walker?"

"Johnny Walker?"

"Better."

"Did you ever try it?"

"No."

"It's good stuff."

"Your parents let you drink whiskey?"

"I don't need a permission to drink."

"You're too cool and grown-up for that?"

"I'm not exactly a person, who asks for everything. Sometimes I take what I want. Like this steak." Lauren stabbed the steak with her fork and pulled it off the barbecue. "Steak time! And time for another beer? Want one too?"

"I take the steak."

"Okay."

"Lea!"

"Yes Susan? Oh, you have a book? We'll read it later. Let me finish my steak first, we can share the potato salad."

"You act like a mother."

"Thanks. Susan is the warm-up training. In two months the twins might be here and then there'll be a lot of work. I look after you, we can go to the beach and the zoo. Your baby siblings don't enjoy this."

"Lea."

"Yes Darling."

Susan started crying.

"All right, all right, I come and get you." Lea took Susan in her arms and sat down with her. Immediately the girl was quiet.

"All you want is sitting on my lap, you are so spoiled."

"Or she loves you too much."

"A nicer version. Do you love me, Susan? Do you? Do you?"

"Are you a kind of Dori?"

"Bite me."

"Why would I do that? Or would you like that?"

"No."

"Are you sure?"

"Bite your steak, it's what we started the barbecue for."

"Bo-ring. But tasty." Lauren leant back and watched Susan and Lea for a few seconds. "Do you have a boyfriend?"

"What? Me?"

"How likely is it I ask this question Susan? Of course you."

"N-no. Why?"

"Just wondering? What about a girlfriend?"

"No."

"Did you ever kiss a girl?"

"Why do you ask these questions?"

"Why do they make you nervous?"

"They don't." Lea dropped a piece of steak. before it could touch the grass Scooby had caught and swallowed it. "That was my steak! Bad, bad dog. Susan, tell Scooby off."

"Doo! Doo!"

"Yeah Doo did something bad, he stole my steak. Do you want some potato?" The girl shook her head when she was offered the potato. "Okay, no potato. How about berries?"

"Yeah."

"Okay, I get you some. Do you want to go to Lauren until I'm back?"

"No, I'm not good with babies."

"All you have to do is hold her."

"They always cry when I hold them."

"Wimp." Lea took Susan on her arms and walked with her into the house. They found a bowl with berries in the fridge and took them out to the barbecue.

"I put another steak on it, do you also want one?"

"No, I stick with the salad. Okay Sue, you can have berries now. You, not the dogs. Do you understand me? No berries for Scooby and Rantanplan. Okay?"

"Ay."

"Good."

"You are good with babies. Toddler. Children. Whenever you call them what. Do you want children later?"

"Yes. One or two."

"Housewife or working wife?"

"Working."

"No rich husband, who brings home the money and you spend it in the mall?"

"No, I can earn my own money for shopping."

"Independent."

"Yes. Tell me, why did you move to Los Angeles?"

"Because my family doesn't fit into a small village."

"How comes?" It was time to turn tables. Instead of having Lauren ask her all kind of questions, Lea wanted answers now. Lauren's parents told a few things about their place in Nebraska yesterday, but never mentioned why they moved.

"Well, obviously my dad isn't my biological father." Lauren smiled. She was a Caucasian girl, blonde hair while Salomon was an African American man. There was no evidence they were blood related. Anna was a Caucasian woman with brown hair, another man had to be Lauren's father.

"I figured that out."

"My biological father took off after he got mom pregnant, she gave birth to me, continued with her university time. I was the most time with my grandparents. Dad lived next door, he and mom saw each other often when she picked me up and he worked on his car; he's a mechanic. They fell in love, the people in the village weren't that happy about that. A black



man and a white woman with a baby. They stayed anyway. Then I got older and it was better to leave the village."

"Why? Did you make too much trouble?"

"Yes."

"Why? What did you do?"

"What do you think I did?"

"I have no idea. Drove drunk with the horse-drawn carriage?"

"Funny girl. No, I got drunk with a friend and during that, I kissed her and she never said she didn't want me to kiss her and do some other things with her until she sobered up the next day and told her parents. They weren't happy, accused me of raping their daughter and my parents decided, it's the best when we leave to a place, where people are not stuck in 1880. So we came to Los Angeles."

"Would you have stopped when she had asked you to?"

"Of course. But she liked what we did. At least that night. Mom knew I'm gay, she never had a problem with it, the people around us had. Like they had with dad and her being married."

"Narrow-minded people are a nightmare. I can assure you, in this place, in this garden, you won't meet them."

"I thought so. After all, the house belongs to two lesbians. They're cute together, you can see, they're in love."

"They're addicted to each other."

"And awaiting twins. Was it Sofia's turn to be the pregnant one?"

"No, she was also pregnant with Susan."

"Really? She looks so much like Sara."

"Sara's DNA, Sofia was the surrogate mother so to speak. This time it's Sofia's DNA. They all have the same father."

"Except for your boyfriend Steve."

"As you know, he's not my boyfriend. He's Jenny's boyfriend, my best friend."

"Did you ever kiss him?"

"I kiss him whenever I see him. Like the people in South America do. And I also sleep in his bed. All platonic."

Lauren grinned.

"It is platonic." Lea repeated.

"Oic?" Susan looked at Lea.

"Platonic. It's...never mind, try an easier word. Berry."

"Bey."

"Berry."

"Bey."

"Ber."

"Ba."

"I give up." Lea tousled the hair of the toddler. "You will get there."

"Lea?" Lauren asked.

"Yes?"

Instead of an answer the older girl bent over and kissed Lea softly on her lips. With a deep red face Lea pulled back.

"What the...what are you doing?"

"If you don't know what I was doing, you need to lean what it is." Lauren pulled Lea in her arms and kissed her again. This time Lea didn't pull back immediately, responded the kiss for a second or two before she pulled back. "Now you know what I was doing."

"I...why...?"

"Now you kissed a girl. How did it feel?"

"Are you trying to do the same with me than you did with the girl in Nebraska? I am not drunk."

"I know you're not drunk and I stopped when you pulled back, didn't I?"

"Why did you kiss me at all?"

"Because you wondered how it feels like to kiss a girl, how it tastes and because you don't want to kiss boys."

Lea wanted to protest, wanted to tell Lauren, she was wrong, it was a fantasy and she made it up as an excuse. But she couldn't. The other girl was right and whether she thought about kissing Lauren or not, every word she said was true.

When Sofia and Sara came home they found Susan asleep in her bed and Lea sitting in front of it, reading a story to the girl.

"Hey." Lea smiled got up and left the room. "Marie dropped Susan off a while ago, Marc and she had an appointment."

"They did?" Sofia asked surprised. "I had no idea about it. Thanks for taking care of Susan."

"My pleasure. I used your garden to hide. My parents were very annoying today and I was happy for a good reason to stay away. They called an hour ago, I told them, nobody was here to look after Susan except me. Bought me free for the evening."

"Where is Steve?"

"Out with Jenny."

"They left you alone?"

"Sofia, they want some time for themselves. It's okay with me. As long as I can hide here."

"You can hide here as long as you want. Did you have dinner?"

"Yes, barbecue."

"Barbecue? Alone?"

"Uhm, no." Lea's face turned slightly red. "Lauren came over, her parents were at work and she had some steaks left."

"Sounds good."

"Why?"

"Because it's more fun to have company and she seemed to be a nice girl."

"How comes you came home at the same time?" Lea changed the topic.

"We...didn't come from work."

"Not?"

"No." Sofia sighed. "I didn't feel good this afternoon, went to the ER and fainted there. Too much stress, exhaustion. The doctor let me go under the condition that I had to relax and not go back to work today. Sara and I had an early dinner, then went to watch a movie because we thought, Susan is with my parents."

"Are you okay? Don't you need to stay there? Make sure the babies are fine?"

"I'm all checked out and allowed to stay at home, don't worry. We treated ourselves with a movie, feeling a little bit guilty for leaving Susan with somebody else."

"No problem, I like looking after her."

"She likes you. So, do want to crash here?"

"I'd love to, but I think I go home."

"Shall we drive you?"

"No, I walk. A little walk doesn't hurt. See you tomorrow and Sofia, you might want to take tomorrow off and rest."

"You sound like Sara. Don't worry, I'll be fine." Sofia hugged the girl. "See you tomorrow?"

"Yes. We have a Playstation date."

"Only you and Steve?"

"No, Tanya will join, maybe Don so we can play in teams. Jenny visits her grandmother tomorrow for two days."

"Right. Then I see you tomorrow, tell your parents you stay over."

"Okay. See you tomorrow." Lea waved and left.

With one last look at Susan asleep Sofia went into her bedroom. "Lea left, her parents expect her back. I told her to stay over tomorrow. It's Playstation time."

"She is a good babysitter and we need to thank her properly for looking after Susan. I'm sure she had better things to do."

"No, she was fine. Had a barbecue with Lauren."

"At least fun while watching Susan. They do get along quite good."

"It seems so yesterday. That's good, Lea can use a friend since her best friend is away with his girlfriend sometimes."

"Yeah."

"You are aware of the fact you have to tell your mother what happened by tomorrow? Otherwise she might find out any other way and that's something, you don't want."

"No, you're right." Sofia sighed. It was better to tell the captain than let her find out.

## Wednesday, July 16th

The night was a little bit better than the last, Sofia slept more, which could be because of the medication she took. Or the exhaustion. Fact was, when she woke up because the twins were active again, she felt a lot of better than the day before.

"Good morning, how do you feel?" Sara kissed her wife.

"Good."

"Do you say this because you want to go to work?"

"I say it because it's true. The twins are active and so am I."

"Don't be too active, you heard what the doctors said. You need to rest and look after yourself."

"I will. With the FBI on board I have less work left. Another reason why I asked to invite them."

"My smart wife."

"Anybody else could have never get your attention. You are attracted to smart people, need somebody, who can challenge your mind every now and then. My cute little geek." The crying of their daughter got their attention.

"Well, it sounds like our daughter wants us around. Why don't you get dressed and I see, what I can do for her." Sara kissed Sofia.

"Okay. I love you."

"I love you too and I love that there are only four more nights before we leave to Tahoe. One week no work, away from Los Angeles and right in a nature paradise."

The blonde smiled. "Me too."

"Well, we have to pack too." Sara kissed Sofia again. "I have a look what Queen Susan is doing." The brunette left the room and went to Susan's room. Standing in her bed, the toddler was still crying. "Hey Susi, how are you? What is wrong?" Sara picked her up and kissed her daughter. "Did you have a nightmare? Miss your mothers? I'm sorry we didn't put you to bed last night." With every second on Sara's arms the girl cried less and less. "There you are, it's not that bad, is it? Come on, we change your diaper and then we get you some breakfast. Your mother will take you over to your grandmother and when she's smart, she tells her what happened yesterday. Your mommy was in hospital and has to look after herself more."

"Mama."

"Yes, your mama. A smart woman, who sometimes forgets her own well-being is more important than her work. The problem

is, your other mother is or was the same, you're likely to end up like us. Or you're lucky and come after your dad, he is more sensible when it comes to these things."

"Dada."

"Your dad will look after you soon. We are all busy but we love you and next week you'll spend a lot of time with us. We might be even able to go swimming in the lake. I'm so glad you love water as much as I do." Sara changed Susan's diaper, cleaned her, dressed her for the day and took her into the kitchen.

"Breakfast is all set up. Amazing how much time you have when you don't spend hours in the bathroom to get ready for the day. All the make-up you save when you're married. No need to look like a supermodel anymore, you're hitched."

"And your wife doesn't care how you look?" Sara asked sweetly.

"No, she loves me even when I wear no make-up at all. Isn't she a lovely person?"

"You are lucky to have her."

"I know." Sofia kissed Susan. "Good morning, Sweetheart."

"Mama."

"Yes, your mama is here. Oh, look how gorgeous you look and how good you smell. Are you hungry?"

"Can you feed her then I can dress myself."

"Sure. Come on, we're having breakfast. I made scrambled eggs and toast."

"Mama."

"Yes, mama is here and she will get you some breakfast." Sofia placed her daughter into her baby chair. The sign for the dogs to get ready. Susan sitting in this chair, getting something to eat, meant, a few extra treats for the dogs, as the girl always dropped food. And somebody had to do the hard cleaning job. It was hard to be a dog, that why they called it a dog's life.

One hour later Sofia was in the police department after she told her boss three times she was fine and good to work.

"CSI Curtis, how are you?"

"Agent Jareau, it's good to see you." Sofia stopped and look at the other blonde woman when one distinctive change hit her right away. "You are pregnant."

"Baby number two, yes. Week twenty-one."

"Congratulation."

"Thanks. You remember doctor Reid?"

"The smartest person I've ever met. How are you?"

"Good, thanks."

"Our team leader, special agent Hotchner would like to talk to you. If you're good to work again. Your colleague told me what happened yesterday."

"I am. Have to take it slowly. No chasing after suspects, a lot of breaks and no overtime. Guess I'm not the best help, am I?"

"I'm pregnant too and I'd like to think of myself as an important part of the team."

"You are important. I mean it's true that during pregnancy a woman..."

"Spence? Sometimes it's better to keep your answers short." Agent Jareau interrupted her colleague.

"Sorry."

"Brilliant with what he does, still learning on the people skills?" Sofia smiled.

"Yes."

"I think I know somebody, who went through the same things."

"How did it end?"

"I married her."

"Oh, there's some hope for you left." The blonde agent slapped the shoulder of her colleague. "Let's go and see the rest, we don't have time to waste."

Sofia followed them to a conference room and sat next to Don and agent Jareau.

"Here is the folder with the last information of yesterday, do me a favor and start slowly." He stroke softly over her belly.

"I will."

Agent Hotchner entered the room. "Good morning." His eyes fell on Sofia. "I'm glad you're back, CSI Curtis. We need everybody to end this nightmare as soon as possible. I read the case files, we need to find out how the kidnapper know about the babies and how to get them. I'm sure they have picked their victims before the delivery day. So, how do they know them?"

"We didn't find any connections." Don said.

"We have to look closer. Reid, JJ, you are on the files. Morgan and Rossi, you go and talk to all victims, see if they remember anything else. Blake and I will visit all abduction and killing scenes."

"What are we supposed to do?"

"I want you with us, detective Flack, you know the city. CSI Sanders and his team are still processing evidence. I'd like you to re-watch all evidence, see if you find anything, that connect cases with each other."

"Okay."

"We meet again here at six tonight. Have a successful day."

"Looks like you are going to have a quiet day. Good for the babies." Agent Jareau said to Sofia.

"Yes, it will make my family happy."

"Not you."

"I'm not a desk person. One day, I can handle." Sofia got up and held her back. If she really stayed the whole day in the lab she would need several breaks to stretch and move.

"How are you?"

"I'm fine, I'm in the lab, you don't have to worry."

"You take breaks?" Sara didn't give up easily. Only because her wife was in the lab, it didn't mean she took care of herself.

"Yes and I am not the only pregnant one on the team, agent Jareau is carrying around a baby too. So we both get each other away from the desk whenever we think it's time for a break."

"Now that makes me relax a little bit more. So the FBI sent you to do paperwork."

"Yes, I'm busy with the evidence."

"Did the vending machine run out of chocolate already? With two pregnant women around."

"Not yet."

"I'm surprised."

"What about you, ranger? Do you look after yourself?"

"Yes, I'm surrounded by children, who think, whenever they need a break and eat something, I have to eat too."

"Kids are so damn smart."

"They are. Listen, I..."

"Sorry, I'm getting a call, wait a sec." Sofia interrupted her wife and changed to the incoming call. "Curtis."

"Hey, it's Kyle, we have another missing child. This time in East Hollywood. Got a pen?"

"Yes." Sofia wrote down the address. "I'm on my way."

"Okay, see you soon."

"Bye." Before she switched off her cell phone she remembered her wife on the other line. "I'm sorry Honey, Kyle called, another baby was abducted. I have to go."



"Are you sure you can handle it?"  
"I take Greg and Juana with me, don't worry. I love you."  
"Love you too. Take care of my wife and my babies."  
"I will." Sofia ended the call and looked at Juana. "Another baby was kidnapped."  
"Oh shit. Where?"  
"East Hollywood."  
"Damn it. I get our kits, you get the car. And call the FBI?"  
"I talk to them." Sofia went to the office where agent Jareau and doctor Reid were. "Another baby was abducted. Are you guys coming?"  
"Did you call the others?" Agent Jareau asked.  
"You have their numbers, you can call them while we're on our way."  
"Spence, can you call them and stay here? It's more efficient when you stay, you read about ten times faster than I do."  
"Okay."  
"I drive." Sofia turned around and left the room. There was no time to waste. "Juana is on the way to get our kits."  
"Are you sure you are good to go? After yesterday."  
"I am fine, I'm pregnant and not sick."  
"And edgy."  
"Sorry."  
"No need to excuse. Team Pregnant is on the move." Agent Jareau pulled her cell phone out of the pocket. Time to call her team.

Sofia, Juana and agent Jareau arrived ten minutes later at the address Kyle gave Sofia. A car park of a supermarket. They found Kyle with another officer and a crying man at a black Sedan.

"Mister Javier, these are CSI Curtis and Smith and..."  
"Agent Jareau, FBI. What happened, Mister Javier?"  
"I...I only left the car for a second to pick up some meat I've ordered. Conrad was asleep, I didn't want to wake him up, he had difficulties sleeping the last days, figured, I'll be back before he even notices the car stopped...he was gone!" Mister Javier started crying again.  
"How long were you in the supermarket?"  
"Five minutes."  
"And when you came back?"

"Conrad, he was gone. The car door was open, his seat and he were gone."

"Did you lock the door?"

"Of course, I parked the car in the shade under the tree, I cracked a window open so there was fresh air coming inside the car and I locked the car."

"Are you sure about that?"

"Of course I'm sure. Somebody took my son. Why are you not doing anything?"

"We are doing something. CSI Smith is already working on your car, the AMBER alert is out and we'll get surveillance footage."

"I saw the news, Conrad isn't the first baby to be taken. You didn't find any of the other babies. What makes you think, you can find him?"

"We're on the case since yesterday and we hope, we are going to find these men soon. And return the babies."

"What makes you better than the police? Just because you're pregnant it doesn't mean you have a special connection. I love my son as much as his mother did and..."

"Did? What happened to his mother?"

"She died. Joranda died while giving birth to our son."

"I'm very sorry."

Sofia, who stood silent next to agent Jareau and Mister Javier, swallowed hard. Losing his wife by giving birth to his son and a few days later his son was abducted. He was robbed of the two people, he loved most. He lost his entire family.

"Conrad is all I have left."

"We do everything we can to get your son back to you."

"Did somebody know you planned to come here today?" Sofia asked.

"No, we...my family is from Delaware, my wife's family is from Seattle. We have no family here and I'm afraid, the way I behaved the last days, my friends didn't ask too many questions. When my wife died, I turned all their calls down, didn't want to anyone of them around. I didn't need their pity. Nothing they could do or say gives me my wife back. And now my son is gone too."

"You gave the officer a photo of your son, the photo is on the AMBER alert signs and there's also a TV news flash running as we're speaking."

That was new to Sofia too. Did agent Hotchner arranged this? Call the TV stations, sent them the photo? Less than half an hour and the city was told about what happened. Good for information, bad for their reputation.

"Sofia? Can you have a look at this?" Juana called from the car. "Excuse me." Sofia stepped to her colleague. "What have you got?"

"Fingerprints, two sets on the door handle, on the front door are no signs of tools. I need to get the car back into the lab, get the central locking out. But I think, whoever took the baby tampered with the central locking. You can buy jammers on the internet, that block the key signal from locking the car."

"They store the key information on the jammer, load it onto a blank key and then they can drive the car with their own key."

"Exactly. Just in this case they weren't after the car."

"Watch the father get out, 'lock' the car and when he is in the supermarket, they open the backseat door, take the baby and leave. Less than half a minute, the same with the other two babies. They're very good prepared and very fast."

"Nobody pays attention when you open a car with something small in your hands. They all assume it's your car, you can get the baby out, into another and are gone. No alarm, when the baby doesn't cry you don't draw more attention to you than anybody else. A fast and safe way to get what you want. They know what they're doing."

"And get better and better. Something I don't like. What do you want me to do?"

"How about you get the surveillance footage of the supermarket and talk to witnesses? I've got the car, do the outside and oh, you can order the pick-up of the car. Thanks."

"Why do I feel like I'm the rookie and not the superior investigator?"

"Be a good mommy and do I asked you to do. Your wife will appreciate it."

"Don't use Sara or my babies."

"Why? It's working."

Sofia gave her colleague the evil eyes and went into the supermarket. Just because something was working it didn't make it better. "Excuse me, I'm CSI Curtis, I'd like to see the surveillance footage of the parking lot." She said to the security guard.

"You need to see the manager for that. Go straight through the supermarket to the white door that says PRIVATE, I give him a call and let him know you're on your way."

"Thanks."

"How far are you?"

"Week thirty."

"Wife is week thirty-five, we'll have a little girl. What about you?"

"Twins, we don't know yet what we'll have."

"Wow, good luck with them."

"Thanks." The blonde smiled and went to look for the manager. One of the good things of being pregnant was, most people were very kind to you and always had a nice word for you. Unfortunately her twins had nothing nice for her, only kicks. Today they must have hit all of her organs, they could reach and she was sure, they reached all of them.

The manager, a woman in her fifties, was waiting for Sofia and offered her her chair. "I'm sorry for what happened, we'll do anything we can to get the baby back to its father."

"We need the surveillance videos of the parking lot."

"We have only one camera outside, I got the video for you but I'm afraid, you can't see what happened, I checked it already. The camera aims on the wall facing the parking lot, but not the parking lot itself." She started the video. Sofia saw people come and go, but she couldn't see more than the hoods of the cars parked in the front row right in front of the supermarket. Mister Javier's car was twenty yards away, they couldn't even get a clue of who was close to the car.

"Is this the only camera you have?"

"The only one for the front outside. We have another one at the backside, which will help you even less."

"Okay. Can I have a list of the names of customers, who paid around the time the baby was kidnapped? They were on their way to their cars, maybe they saw something."

The manager sighed and thought about it for a moment. "I think the proper way is to let you get a warrant, which will cost a lot of time and as I understood, time is essential in abduction cases. I think it's in everybody's interest when you get your answers fast. I see what I can do. You need the credit card details?"

"That would be very helpful. Thank you."

"Give me a few moments, I need to get into our system to get these information."

"No problem." They needed witnesses and this was one of the fastest ways to get names.

"Wow, doctor Weinberg, what are you doing here?" Sara looked surprised when Jules stood in front of her. It was Wednesday, noon and her friend might were in her lunch break, but that wasn't long enough to drive to Angeles National Park and back in time.

"I have the afternoon off, my children are in daycare and I thought I have a look, what you are doing. After all we didn't see each other a lot the last days."

"Your doctor friends were more important than I was."

"Not true, you were welcome all the time."

"No thanks, I love my doc, the rest I don't want to see. Except for the cool cousin."

"Honey, you're so cute when you're jealous." Jules pulled Sara in her arms and kissed her cheeks softly. "I missed you. So did the kids."

"Am I interrupting anything?" Shane asked when he saw them hugging.

"Yes, you are." Jules said. "Come on Darling, we go for a walk, be alone."

"Oh doctor, you make me nervous." Sara took Jules's arm, blinked at Shane and left with Jules. "Tell me, what secrets do you want to tell me?"

"It's the other way around, it as always been in our relationship. You tell me all the things on your mind and I listen."

"Why not change roles? Tell me what brought you here?"

"Like I said, I have the afternoon off, the kids are at daycare and I liked the idea of being in the forest. The temperature is much nicer up here. Plus you are here and I really missed you and wanted to see you."

"Okay. What else?"

"You're a bad therapist."

"I'm not a therapist at all, I don't do active listening, I did interrogation."

"You know how active listening works. Try it again."

"If you don't stop with that I'll kiss you until you tell me why you're really here. Your husband will not like it when you come home with lipstick on your collar."

"You don't wear lipstick and you don't kiss me. Not like that. I saw the Amber alert. It was scary back then, they're much worse this time. In less than seventy-two hours they took three babies already and they will have more on their list."

"The FBI joined them."

"Greg told me so. Do you think they'll help?"

"It can't hurt to have more people focusing on the case. I personally never liked working with the FBI a lot."

"Why am I not surprised?"

"You know me too well after all these hours we spent alone." Sara took Jules's hand. "Greg and Sofia will find whoever is kidnapping the babies. They didn't win the last time, they won't lose again. You know our spouses, they're the best."

"I worry about Sofia, she's pregnant, the case is not only hard on her body with all the hours she works, it's also hard on her mind. I've been there, it can scare the hell out of you."

"Tell me about it. I'm so glad when we can leave to Tahoe."

"Me too. It's reason why I'm here. We didn't have a lot of time to prepare. I'm afraid our better halves are busy with catching kidnapper, we have to do the rest. Four children, six adults, two cars will get cozy."

"Two cars are impossible. We have two dogs too. Scooby and Rantanplan come with us, we can't leave them here, they're family."

"So three cars. One for the dogs in the trunk, one for all the buggies and other children stuff we can stuff in there and one for the luggage. Am I right when I assume you want your godchild with you?"

"Yes, Eric and Susan are in Sofia's - who will sit on the passenger seat the whole time - and my car. Same for the dogs."

"Greg and I take Jorja and Louise and the buggies with us. Are you sure Steve and Lea are fine driving the car up to Tahoe?"

"They have enough experience by now. They get the luggage."

"How comes Jenny is not coming with us?"

"Her parents didn't like the idea."

"While Lea's parents do?"

"They know us, they know Lea and Steve are best friends."

"So, we have the cars sort out, what about the rooms? Six bedrooms and four bathrooms for ten people."

"We put the little ones in one room the twins in another one, the rest of us get their own room. Steve and Lea can share a

room, they often do that. This is not a normal vacation, we don't have to take things like sheets, towels or anything else because we'll get a deluxe villa. I wouldn't be surprised when we find the fridge fully stocked. With premium food because Lou wants to impress us."

"Sofia."

"I might have to call his girlfriend. She'll punch the crap out of him."

"Aren't you a grateful person? We take some food with us?"

"At least enough for the first day. And everything for Susan and Louise."

"I'm sure Lou thought about them too."

"Am I supposed to like him for that?"

"Yes."

"I don't."

"Oh Sara." Jules laughed. "He has a crush on your wife, you should be the first one to understand him."

"My wife is mine."

"He won't take her away from you. Even when you weren't together, Sofia sent him away to be with you. He has no chances, never had. You were always her first choice. And I saw her marrying you, there is nobody else than you."

"I know. Jules, can I ask you a favor?"

"Honey, I'm your friend, of course you can."

"It's a professional favor. What do you think about Steve? Is he all right?"

"Yes. Why do you ask?"

"I'm his mother, I worry."

"To me he looks like a very happy teenager. You do everything right."

"Good. I want him happy, he had enough bad years. How about my adopted daughter? What can I do to make her happy?"

"She needs a girlfriend."

"How do you...?" Sara stopped and sighed. "Why am I surprised?"

"I don't know, you forgot how perfect I am? Remember the time when I told you that Steve and Lea will never be more than friends and you'll find out one day."

"Why did you know about Lea being a lesbian?"

"Honey, it's my job."

"Right. Find Lea a girlfriend. Not that easy. Plus her parents are not exactly open-minded."

"She needs a secret girlfriend?"

"Yes. Sofia and I took her to scene cafes a few times, unfortunately we didn't find a nice GF. I want Lea happy too."

"Zoe made her sad."

"Yes she did."

"Lea will find somebody who makes her happy. We all do at one point."

"I hope so too. Maybe she'll meet somebody at Tahoe."

"A vacation flirt?"

"You never know." Sara cocked her head. "Do you want to be my vacation flirt?"

"No. I want to flirt with you more than one week. I want to be your long time flirt."

"Baby, if anybody can be my long time flirt, it's you." Sara smiled and blinked at Jules. Like the therapist was the only flirt Sara didn't have to hide because her wife didn't mind them flirting. Well, maybe not didn't mind, but she was okay with it. Most times.

Sofia was back in the lab with the evidence Juana had collected so far, the surveillance video and the credit card information. She was almost through the information and wrote down a list of people, who were at the supermarket around the time Conrad Javier was abducted.

"How busy are you?" She asked Lynn when her friend picked up the phone.

"Depends on what you want me to do."

"I've got a list of names of people, who were at the supermarket when Conrad was abducted and could use an officer by my side when I talk to them. In case one of them is the kidnapper. They have to shop too. Especially baby food."

"I'm on my way. Did you eat?"

"An apple and a banana."

"Add a salad sandwich and I don't nag you. Sara packed you some."

"How do you know?"

"I know your wife. Five minutes, eat, get ready."

"Thanks." Sofia wrote down the last name and gave the computer the order to put the names in the best order for them to visit their possible witnesses. She had only finished her last bite of the sandwich when Lynn came in the room.

"Good girl, did also drink enough water? It's hot outside."



"I was outside today, I know it's hot. Water is with me. We have two dozen names, I sent the list to the hotline, in case one of them comes forward." Sofia's cell phone rang. "Curtis." She listened, pulled the list out of her pocket and crossed off two names. "Thanks. Keep me posted." She put her cell phone away. "Two of the people on the list just came to the PD, I hope a few more come forward, makes our list shorter."

"Who is at the crime scene?"

"Juana. Greg is with the FBI."

"You get the lab work and they do the leg work?"

"Kind of. I do whatever allows me to sit and rest, which is mostly the evidence and lab work."

"How are the twins?"

"Active and fine. All they want is more chocolate."

"They or you?"

"They are me. All we got for today was one bar of chocolate, that was gone for lunch. Maybe we can just stop..."

"No. Healthy food."

Sofia rolled her eyes. Did Sara force everybody to say the same things? Her wife wasn't much fun sometimes.

"This is the first address." Sofia pointed to a house on the left side. "A car is parked on front, they should be at home."

"Let's hope they're cooperative and don't give us any trouble about getting their information without a warrant."

"Babies are kidnapped, it should be more important to catch these guys."

"It should. You know how people are." Lynn stopped the car in front of the house and waited for Sofia to get out. The blonde had the feeling, it took her everyday longer to get in and out of a car. With all the weight she carried around, gravity did play practical jokes sometimes when she didn't pay enough attention.

Letting Lynn take the lead Sofia followed her friend to the front door and waited for somebody to answer the door.

"Yes?" A woman in her early twenties opened the door.

"Miss Ruiz, I'm officer Lynn Richards, this is CSI Curtis. We'd like to ask you a few questions."

"Did anything happen? Is it my boyfriend? Is it Frank?"

"No, it's about your shopping trip this morning. Did you watch the news?"

"No, I didn't, why?"

"A baby was abducted from the parking lot around the time you were at the check-out. Did you see anything when you went back to your car?"

"Oh my god, is this what was all over the news the last days? The same people abducted a baby today?"

"Yes. What did you see when you left the supermarket and went to your car?"

"I...I didn't pay attention, I was on the phone, talked to my boyfriend."

"Where did you park?"

"Second row."

"Did you see a car pulling up to another and getting something out it?"

"The baby? No, I was focused on the phone. I'm so sorry, I wish I could be more helpful."

Lynn gave her the police card. "Please give us a call in case you remember anything else, no matter how small it might be."

"Of course, I will."

"Thank you. And sorry to disturb you." Disappointed to get no helpful information they went back to the car.

"Well, at least she wasn't mad about us showing up out of the blue nor did she care about how we got her address. Who is the next one."

"A Mister Duness, he lives two minutes away from here."

"Let's hope he can give us some more information." With all these people on their list, one or two must have seen something. Even good kidnapper weren't invisible.

They were on their way to the fifth possible witness when Lynn's cell phone rang. "Richards." She stopped the car and turned pale. "I'm on my way. Oh and I bring a CSI." She dropped the phone on the floor, turned on lights and signals and pulled into traffic without really checking her rearview mirror.

"What happened?"

"We have a DB in Griffith Park."

"Why do they call you? You're on the baby case."

"That's why they called me. The DB is female and from what the officers arrived first at the scene told me, it looks like it was killed by a wild animal. Now from what I know about the wildlife in Griffith Park, there are no animals, that attack a woman during daylight and kill her in a messy way."

"You think more about a predator on two legs with a knife? Or a scalpel? Like at the Hollywood Reservoir? When the baby was cut out off the mother?"

"Yes."

"It was a pregnant woman too?"

"The ME has to confirm, my colleagues assumes she was. A lot of blood, an open upper front body."

"They stroke twice on one day, they never did that back then. It could be a copy cat killer. Somebody, who read about the cases back then and wanted the mother and the baby gone. No child support needed when there's no child and no mother, who asks for it."

"You think?"

"We had it the last time, the father, who killed his daughter because she annoyed him and reminded him of his wife, whom he hated."

"Right."

Sofia closed her eyes for a moment. Something told her, today it wasn't a family tragedy, today it were the kidnapper. They killed again. Like almost three years ago, they started with kidnapping and then turned to killing. Would they kill more than one woman this time? And what ideas did the FBI have?

"Is the FBI informed?"

"I'm sure they are, they run the show now."

"Let me call agent Jareau, just to make sure they're up to date."

"Since when are you so worried about the Feds feeling loved?"

"I'm part of team Pregnant." Sofia waited a few seconds and then agent Jareau's voice came out of the cell phone.

"Jareau."

"Hey, it's Sofia...CSI Curtis. We're on our way to Griffith Park, they found the body of a woman there."

"I've been informed about that. Are you sure you should go there?"

"Yes."

"My team is on their way too, I'm the only one left at the department."

"I'll try to represent team Pregnant in a positive way and keep you posted."

"Thanks. Make sure you and the twins are all right."

"I will. Talk to you later."

"You are cozy with the FBI."

"No, I'm cozy with my wife and get along with agent Jareau. Being pregnant connects."

"Looks like." Lynn stopped the car behind another black and white. "Are you ready for this?"

"Can you be ready to see a woman sliced open?"

"No."

"Exactly." Sofia opened the door and pulled herself out of the car. Was it just more difficult than the last time she did that? Five minutes ago. To her surprise agent Hotchner and Blake were already at the scene and another car was pulling in. Agent Morgan and Rossi and when she wasn't mistaken, Greg and Don were also on their way.

"Are you coming?" Lynn asked.

"Yes." From the car she could see half a dozen people standing around something. Or more somebody. A body. With every step they walked towards them she could see more details. The woman wore white pants, there was a lot of blood all over her. Around her. Brown hair. Flies.

Cherry was already there, kneeled next to the woman.

"This looks sadly familiar." Sofia said. "Was she pregnant?"

"Yes."

"Can you..."

"No, I can't tell you if the baby survived or not, for that I have to examine her at the morgue."

"Do you think this was done by one or more people?"

"Depends. I really can't tell you more right away."

"Okay." Sofia opened her kit and started to take photos.

"I collected some fibers already."

"Who found her?"

"See the man with the boy over there? The poor little guy will need some help to get over what he saw he and so might his dad."

Sofia looked at the man and the boy, who were talking with Agent Hotchner. The boy was maybe three or four. Sofia was sure, this afternoon was a day, he'd never forget. And she was sure he'd get a lot of nightmares.

"Hey." Greg put his hand on Sofia's shoulder. "Shall I continue?"

"I'm fine." Sofia paused. "But yes, it might be better when you continue. Lynn and I go back to talking to the people, who were at the supermarket. So far we didn't get many information and there are some we haven't spoken to."

"Sounds like a good plan. Better than working in the sunshine." She couldn't argue with that; not from a point of what happened yesterday to her. "Any news from the supermarket?"

"Juana finished with the car and is on her way up here."

"Okay." Carefully Sofia got up. "Wham!" Her world spun and Greg had to catch her before she lost her balance.

"Are you okay?"

"Yes, just got up too fast."

"Lynn, get her back into the car, please. Or...Cherry, do you think she should see a doctor?"

"Not if it's only because she got up too fast. It can happen, especially in her condition. Sit down for a minute, drink some water. You need a lot of fluids."

"Okay. I want you to take a break." Don said before Sofia could answer.

"I will sit in the car."

"Oh yes you." Lynn took Sofia's arm. "Come on, let me get the twins and you to the car."

"Don't treat me like I'm a great-grandmother."

"I treat you like a pregnant woman. We go to the car, have some water and when you don't complain I might find a Bounty somewhere."

"You have chocolate around?"

"Only when you not complain."

"Blackmailing is illegal."

"You will never find a judge nor a jury, who will blame me."

Lynn opened the passenger's seat door and pushed Sofia gently into the car.

"Can you take another five minute break?" Jules asked when she saw Sara coming back with her car. The therapist stayed the last three hours around the ranger station, read a book, savored the silence and the comfortable temperatures.

"Even fifteen. Are you bored, doctor?"

"No, I love it that nobody calls out for me, although I feel a little bit guilty for being here and not at home, a lot of works wait there for me."

"A little tip: work will be there when you come back home, it never does itself."

"I know."

"So, what can I do for you?"

"Greg sent me a text. They got another baby."

"The second today? I didn't get the AMBER alert."

"You can't. There's no photo of the baby - if it's alive."

"No." In shock Sara sat down. "They killed a pregnant woman?"

"Yes. In Griffith Park."

"Shit." Griffith Park was close to home, it was an area, where she and Sofia spent a lot of time, where the blonde walked around, sometimes alone. Well, not anymore as long as she was pregnant and these men weren't caught.

"He was called half an hour ago, no confirmation it were the same men, but we all know, it was them."

"I don't want Sofia being alone anymore. They could mistake her for a very pregnant woman and..." Sara swallowed hard. She didn't dare to say what was on her mind.

"She's surrounded by cops all the time."

"I'd love to lock her into the bedroom, the same we did with you."

"You didn't lock me in your bedroom, only in your dreams. I could always leave and go wherever I wanted to go. Well, kind of. With a bodyguard. Or two."

"You're a doctor, is there anything I can say or do to make her stay at home?"

"Yes."

"How? With what do I have to threaten her?"

"Not at all." Jules smiled. "She loves you, when you ask her to stay at home, she will because she doesn't want you to worry. But think carefully before you ask such a huge favor."

"I will. Thanks."

"Am I not always there for you with the best advises? Without you having to pay for it anymore. True love, Honey." Jules kissed Sara's cheek. "How can it be that the FBI and LAPD don't find them? There must be traces, witnesses. They can't be invisible."

"No, only damn good and careful. Professionals."

"So are Greg and Sofia."

"My guess is, they've set up a list with names and when they want to strike. No surprises, no spontaneous action. When they have planned to take six babies, they picked them already and know when to strike. I've never come across so well organized people than them."

"Skilled people."

"Yes. At least one doctor."

"A surgeon, who cut out the baby."  
"Yes. A cop, a forensic scientist, a computer expert, one of them is a local or lived here for quite a while. They'll have a few cars, a house big enough for all of them, standing alone so neighbors can't hear the babies crying."  
"Sounds like a big group with a lot of money."  
"You get a lot of money for a baby."  
"How do they get the babies out of the state?"  
"It's not the biggest problem to get a fake passport. Remember the time when you get one in high school? To be twenty-one?"  
"Of course."  
"They know people, who are even better."  
"Still, they are not invisible, somebody must have seen them."  
"Yes."  
"Some nightmares never end. Or come back."  
"Tell me about it, I know some of them."  
"Don't tell me Sam's back."  
"No. Whatever Marie told him, it works."  
"Good. Maybe LAPD has to recruit her. And you."  
"Marie's and my time with law enforcement is over, although I'd love to work with her."  
"You never worked with her in Vegas?"  
"Not as her daughter-in-law."  
"Interesting combination. Captain Curtis, CSI Sidle, detective Curtis and CSI Sanders. A dream team." Jules hugged Sara.  
"You have to go back to work."  
"How long will you stay?"  
"I leave now, pick the kids up. How about you come over for dinner?"  
"Sounds good. I hope Greg and Sofia can join us."  
"Let's hope for the best."  
"Actually, I insist that my wife joins me. She can't work twelve hours, yesterday should have been a warning." One, the blonde hopefully took seriously.

Sofia protested a lot, threatened her friend only to find herself back at the lab. Lynn decided it was better when she talked to the other people alone and Sofia worked on the evidence and information, they had collected so far. With two cases on one day, there was some work left to do.

"Weren't you at the last crime scene?" Agent Jareau came with two cups of peppermint teas into the room.

"They decided I'm better off here."

"You are. I bet the sight wasn't nice; especially in your state."

"Our state."

"Yes."

"Thanks for the tea."

"Figured you could use something hot and coffee is off the list."

"One of the bad sides of being pregnant."

"One of the many. Did they really cut out the baby?"

"Yes. They did the same the last time."

"But they never kidnapped two babies on one day."

"No, it's like they're on a hurry."

"Do you think we set them up?"

"I don't know, agent Hotchner was on the news, they know you're here. I'm not sure if they hurry to get all their orders done or if they planned this all. Have you come across any similar cases, agent?"

"Please, call me JJ."

"Okay, it's Sofia. Did you talk to your son today?"

"Every morning and every evening."

"It must be hard being away from him. And from your husband. I managed not being sent out of town since I'm with Sara. The idea of being away from her makes me feel sick. And I have no idea if I could sleep without her by my side. I barely did when I was in hospital after giving birth to Susan. The separation is the worst part of the pregnancy. Do I sound like a crazy addict?"

"More like a woman in love. It's hard being away from your family and it brings some trouble. My husband was a cop before he gave up his job to be with our son and me in Washington. With me being away, missing a lot of things I shouldn't miss, it can get hard. You're lucky to be here with your wife and your child."

"Children. I've got a sixteen year old son too."

"Really?"

"Yes."

"A big age gap."

"Steve is adopted. We wanted one more child, Susan has Sara's DNA, now we'll have two with mine."

"You need another one with Sara's DNA."



"No, four kids are enough. As wonderful as they are, they are not very cheap. And we want them to have everything they want."

"We have the same plans for our kids. This one will be the last one."

"When will you go into maternity leave?"

"In a few weeks. Will and I agreed on me staying home longer this time. So my children will remember me."

"Sara could say the same. I know she worries a lot. Especially now, with the baby kidnapper around."

"As we saw today, they kill to get the babies. You could be mistaken for a woman close to labor. Maybe another reason why your colleague brought you back here."

"Yes, the colleague is also a very good friend, a future godmother. I am surrounded by people, who care a lot."

"You can call yourself lucky." JJ stretched before she continued. "I made a list with information we have so far about the kidnapper. Not a long one. A black limousine was on both crime scenes, I checked on traffic cameras around the supermarket and I did find a black limousine driving on the street coming from the supermarket. When I called our magical computer expert Penelope she told me, the license plate belong to a woman, who lives in Malibu."

"That's a start."

"This woman is in her eighties. I doubt she did it. When a patrol car drove up to her place, they found her car in the garage, a white VW Beetle with a missing license plate."

"Wait, do we know the license plate of their car?"

"We know the license plate they used today. I checked the list of missing or stolen license plates in Los Angeles the last days. There are quite a few. I don't think they use the same license plate all the time."

"You might be right on that. Do the others...?"

"Yes, I sent them a message. I also asked some FBI agents to track the limousine down, so far they were able to follow it until Hollywood and Highland. It drove up north."

"Tinted windows?"

"Yes."

"You have a list with names of people, who were at the supermarket, maybe one of them saw the black limousine too. The license plate is given to all police officers in the city and surrounding area."

"You were busy."

"We are a big team now, it would be very bad for us when we don't come up with anything. I also asked our agents to check the area around Griffith Park for the black limousine. Or any other car, that was there around the time when woman was killed."

"Wow, you're the heroine of team Pregnant."

"No, I'm working with the evidence the others collect. We might be pregnant, might not be in fit physical condition but our minds are fit. Cases can be closed from the desk when you have a smart brain working it."

"Are you advertising riding a desk?"

"Making the best out of the situation."

Sofia's cell phone beeped.

"Sorry." She read the message.

"From your smile I can tell it's a message your wife sent."

"Damn, you are good."

"Only reading your body language."

"Does my body language also tells you what she wrote?"

"Something nice."

"Dinner at a friend's place. And the appeal to come home on time." Sofia sighed. Sara barely asked her to come home this way and she didn't want to disappoint her wife. The problem was, she had no idea how long it would take until she was ready to go home.

"Tell her you'll be there on time." JJ said.

"But..."

"Sofia, we are pregnant, we can't work as much as the others. Not only because it's the most sensible thing to do for us but also for our baby."

"Will you do the same?"

"I should."

Sofia cocked her head. "How about we call it a day together? Food is usually very good at our places."

"We have booked our hotel with dinner."

"You put hotel dinner above our dinner? Hotel dinner alone because the rest is still working."

"I don't want to crash your dinner party."

"You won't, I tell them I bring an extra. Or two in one body."

Sofia smiled. When she took JJ with her, she was sure to be back home back on time.

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Sofia took a look at her watch. It was after four, a lot of time for the ME to find some answers.

"How much do you like the morgue?"

"As much as anybody likes being in the morgue. Why?"

"The autopsy should be over. Or at least Cherry should be far enough to get us some answers. I want to know if the baby survived."

"I wonder the whole time if the baby is better off dead or if he or she will have a good life. A life built on lies. With rich parents, otherwise they couldn't afford the kidnapper."

"The question is, are we talking about parents, who love the child, did this because they can't have children on their own, or are we talking about perverts, who want children to make money with them."

"I try not to go there, when I do, my baby starts to protest. I can feel it." JJ held her belly.

"I hope our babies don't feel what we're working on. What will they think of the world? All this hate, violence." Sofia got up and opened the door for JJ. "Sometimes I wonder, if it's right to bring children into this world."

"There are a lot of bad things, things I don't want my children to experience. Then there are also a lot of nice things, things I want them to experience. Real love, the colors of the leaves in fall, a white Christmas, a day on a tropical beach, sunset and sunrise. All these magical moments, that make your life worth living. Imagine you had never met Sara, never woke up next to her, see her in the lying next to you in bed, in the morning, when the sun shines through the window on her face."

"Well, if I were never born, I had no idea about Sara, but being with her is worth living. She is my life and she is what makes my life as close to perfect as it's possible." Sofia's cell phone rang. "Hey Don."

"Hi, I just wanted you to know we have the name of the victim. Sharon Bowel. I spoke with her husband."

"JJ and I are on our way to the morgue."

"He wants to see her. Can you give me a call when Cherry is done and he can see her."

"I will. Later Don."

"Later Sofia."

She put her cell phone away. "The name of the woman is Sharon Bowel. Her husband wants to see her ASAP."

"Do you think it's a good idea?"

"The way she looked in the park? No. Cherry needs some time to prepare her in a way, that doesn't scare him."

"One day, two missing babies, two men, who lost their children and wives." JJ sighed.

"Boy, you just made it worse." Sofia opened the door to the morgue. The smell of bleach, death and blood greeted them and let Sofia grab immediately into her pocket and pull out a jar of menthol paste. Since she was pregnant, she couldn't handle the smell in the morgue without feeling sick and dizzy. "Want some too?"

"No, actually menthol makes me feel sick. Which is crazy, I love peppermint tea, but when I smell it very strong, like in a paste, it does the opposite. One of pregnancy's magic."

"As long as pregnancy doesn't make me hate chocolate I'm fine."

"I wish the time after pregnancy would make me hate all kinds of candies. Imagine how much faster you'd lose weight."

"Tempting...but no chocolate?"

"You can't have it all."

"That's kind of my problem, I want it all." Sofia opened the door to the room, where Cherry was. On the steel table was the body of Sharon Bowel. The usual y-section couldn't be done as the killer had cut her open already. Only the area from the two collarbones to the breastbone had to been cut by the medical examiner.

"Good afternoon agent Jareau."

"Doctor, how far are you with this poor woman?"

"I concentrated on the most urgent questions: the baby. There was a lot of blood, I sent it to DNA. I checked her womb, from what I can tell you at the moment is, it appears that the babies was removed in a professional way. A surgeon with the knowledge of a gynecologist. I think the chances that the baby is alive, are big."

"Did she have a chance?"

"Only with immediate medical treatment in a hospital. I can't remember a case where the mother survived."

"I recall a few cases of women, who had been abducted and killed for their baby." JJ said. "The babies didn't always survive."

"No, you need advanced medical experience to do this. Especially when you do it in Griffith Park, without x-rays or

any other help. Whoever did this, knew what he or she was doing. And did it a few times before."

"Do you think he or she did this before in hospital?"

"I'm sure it's where everything started, in medical school. But I'm also sure your person tried this on women outside hospitals. Women, who were pregnant and went missing because they were used as training objects. Your kidnapper get a lot of money for the babies, they want to be sure, whatever they do, will be a success."

"It's much easier to let a pregnant woman disappear. You choose one, who is separated from the child's father, who has problems with her husband. When she's gone, everybody believes she left to start new somewhere." Sofia said.

"Sadly true. We had these kind of cases. Women go missing, people think they left and in reality they're dead."

"Quite often you have the husband/boyfriend as the perp. Not in this case. Can you tell if she had a boy or a girl?"

"Not without the DNA tests. Her gynecologist can tell you this."

"We have to contact her or him." Sofia looked at the body. A few hours ago Sharon Bowel was alive, waiting for her baby, taking a walk in Griffith Park to get some fresh air. Somebody was waiting for her, maybe walked behind her until they were at a part of the park, where they were alone. There had to be at least two. Did they approach her from two sides? Were there even more around? Making sure, whoever cut out the baby had all the time needed?

"Sofia?" Cherry's voice got the blonde back out of her thoughts. "Are you okay?"

"Yes, just playing in my mind what might have happened this afternoon. There were two attacker, right?"

"It's my guess. She wasn't dead when they cut out the baby. For her own good I hope she was unconscious."

"One handles her, one gets the baby. They had to transport it, from what I saw the place, where we found her body was the primary crime scene. From there to the nearest car park or exit it's a ten minute walk. They needed a buggy. And a van to check on the baby ASAP."

"With medical equipment in case the baby was hurt. How do they choose the woman? I mean, when they choose the babies by hair color or eye color, they need to see it first. Or know the parents, know their DNA provides exactly what they want."

"When you take a baby, that hasn't been seen by anybody, there is no description of it." JJ added.

"I bet they get more money for them. More work, takes more time, more preparation, a greater risk of being caught." Sofia clenched her fist. "The last time they took a woman, who was at the Hollywood Reservoir, this time she was in Griffith Park. Why do they not attack the woman, when she's at home?"

"Probably at home are people around."

"She went to the park alone, there are times, when she's at home alone too."

"Did you check if they live in an area with a lot of street surveillance? Or attentive neighbors? You have more people sitting in their garden than being in Griffith Park. It's too hot to be there, there's no shade. And the Hollywood Reservoir is a quiet place during the week. I love it up there because of it."

"You better don't go there alone the next weeks." Cherry said.

"I don't plan to. Did you find anything out that helps us find the killer?"

"Besides the medical knowledge? A scalpel was used; just like the last time. Can't tell you anything about possible intoxication as I haven't got the results back. No defensive wounds, various traces of what I believe is the sand and some grass of Griffith Park. I cleaned the area under her fingernails, if we're lucky, she scratched whoever did this to her."

"Okay, you give us a call when you find out more?"

"Yes."

"Her husband wants to see her."

"I need to work a little bit longer on her, give me another two hours so I can prepare her. I won't be able to fix everything, but with a sheet on her upper body, it should be the okay."

"Don will come here with him."

"Then I'll call him when they can come here."

"I let him know. Thanks Cherry."

Sara arrived at Marie's and Marc's place at half past five to pick Susan up. Her daughter was waiting for her and started to laugh and ran towards her when she saw her mother.

"Mama! Mama!"

"Hello baby girl, how are you? Did you have a great time with your grandparents?" Was there anything better than seeing your daughter running towards you, over the moon to see you?

"She spent the whole afternoon in the pool, you have a fish in a human body." Marc said. "I think your DNA is very strong. Or loves Don water as much as you do?"

"He likes more the views he has on beaches." Sara grinned. She wasn't talking about the ocean view. "You know the best of the beach is the water, right?" Sara kissed Susan. "When we are at Lake Tahoe next week, you can be at the water every day. I'm sure there's a pool for you too."

"More important, there'll be some quiet time for you and Sofia. I heard the news about the last two cases. Two cases on one day, scary."

"Yes."

Sofia...?"

"Works on them but takes her breaks. And will be over at Jules's place in half an hour. It's where we'll go now." Sara threw the backpack with Susan's belongings over her shoulder.

"Thanks for looking after her."

"It was our pleasure. With every day I spend with her, I feel like I get a day younger. She gets more and more active, Marie and I have no time to age. We have to keep up with her and soon, we have to keep up with two more babies. Give us a few years and we'll be like twenty-one again."

"A fountain of youth."

"Yes. Shall I pick her up tomorrow at six?"

"Sofia doesn't start until seven. Six-thirty is early enough."

"What time will you leave?"

"Six. The long summer hours. And I finish at four, which gets me back to the city in time for the doctor appointment."

"I hope the twins are fine."

"So do I. And I want to know what they are."

"Tomorrow is the big day? Will we get the answer too or do we have to wait until they're born?"

"Depends on how your wife behaves." Sara blinked at her father-in-law. "Come on Susi, time to go. I see you tomorrow, say hello to Marie."

"I will. Bye-bye."

With Susan on her arms she walked back to the car.

"Mama. Ca."

"Yes, we take the car and go to Jules. You can play with Louise."

"Lou."

"Yes, Louise. And Eric and Jorja. Like next week. You'll have a lot of fun." She secured her daughter in her seat and gave her the stuffed cat, she had in the car all the time for Susan to play. "Hold on to Meow, make sure she doesn't fall." One more kiss and Sara was ready to leave.

It was only a five minutes drive to get to Jules's place and thanks to her own key, Sara let them in. "Hello, we are here!"

"Sara! Sara!" Eric came from the garden, wet hair and wearing nothing more than shorts.

"Hi big boy, are you all in the garden?"

"Yeah. Come, play?"

"Yes, we come and play."

"Susi play too." Eric took Susan's hand and guided her through the house into the garden. There Jules sat on a bench next to the barbecue, watching Jorja and Louise, who sat in the little pool.

"Hello, I see we're having a pool party."

"Yes, it's so hot, we all need some place to cool down. There are cold drinks and salad, I hope Sofia and her guest are home on time. I'm starving."

"It sounds wrong when you say Sofia and her guest and are not talking about me."

"You know this agent?"

"I do." Sara sat down and took off Susan's shirt. "Be careful Honey, don't fall into the pool." She kissed her daughter. "Agent Jareau was the one, I mistook for Sofia when I saw her sitting in a conference room. Same figure, long blond hair. The similarities and the fact I expected Sofia to sit in this room, made me call her Sofia."

"You didn't greet her with a kiss, did you?"

"No."

"Good, you're not supposed to kiss another woman - except me."

"Not sure Sofia agrees on that."

"We can ask her when she's here. Jorja, don't take the ball away from Louise, she had it first. Jorja! Little witch!" Jules got up and took the ball out of her oldest daughter's hands and gave it back to her youngest. "When you want to play with the ball and your sister, you are supposed to throw the ball back to her and not keep it. And Eric, if you need to pee, you go to the toilette, you know how to do that. Don't pee in the garden."



You're not a dog and even Scooby and Rantanplan don't pee into the garden."

"You sound a little bit stressed with the kids today."

"The hot weather makes them crazy."

"Marc kept Susan in the pool the whole day to cool her down."

"A smart idea." Jules rolled her eyes when Jorja started crying because Louise kept on the ball. "Take a deep breath and relax. They're kids, it's all normal behavior. Apparently children are God's gift."

"He's not invited anymore. His gifts are making a lot of trouble. Louise, if you push Susan one more time you go to bed."

"Stop trying to get the ball, Susan, get your own toy." Sara picked up some toys and brought them over to the children.

"Everybody picks one toy and stops taking the toy of somebody else. If you continue to fight you all go to bed and if you don't stay there, you won't get any candies the next days."

"We're not making any friends."

"Sometimes you have to be clear to get peace." Sara went back to the barbecue and turned the meat. "Do we need to prepare anything else?"

"Set the table. Do you want child or housewife duty?"

"The old Sara screams: housewife!"

"What does the new Sara say?"

"Let's listen to your old self, it will give you less stress."

"Coward."

"You're only jealous." Sara grinned and went into the house.

"Eric, can you help me, please?" Taking her godchild by his hand before he could answer. This way Jules had one child less to worry about and she could use the extra hand. When she had gotten all the dishes they needed the doorbell rang. "Can you look who's at the door, please? Only open it when you see Sofia, okay?"

"Yes."

"Thank you." Sara took the tray with the dishes and went back into the garden. "Eric gets the door. I told him only to open it when it's Sofia."

"It is your wife." Jules smiled.

"Good evening." Sofia greeted them when she stepped into the garden, Eric on her hand and JJ behind her. "This is agent Jareau, who prefers when we call her JJ. As you can see, she's the other member of team Pregnant, two months behind me. You met my wife Sara the last time you were in L.A. and the

beautiful woman next to her is Jules, the secret crush of my wife. And the kids. Eric, who opened the door for us, his twin sister Jorja, their sister Louise and our daughter Susan. As you can see she looks like Sara."

"Good evening, I hope you're fine with me being here."

"Of course. It's nice too see you again."

"Mrs. Sidle, you look good."

"It's Sara."

"Jorja, now it's enough." Jules got up, pulled her oldest daughter out of the pool, took away the ball, she stole Louise again and sat her onto the chair. "You stay there, no more playing for you and you won't get any candy today. You behaved very bad, I told you, the ball belongs to Louise." The girl started crying in anger. "If you don't be quiet I send you into your room and you'll stay there alone. Be quiet! Now!"

Sara raised her eye brows. This was the first time she heard Jules speaking up this loud and strict. Jorja was surprised as Sara was and looked in a mix between being scared and shocked at her mother.

"I hope the three of you will behave otherwise you will also be sit for the rest of the evening on a chair and will not get any candies. Play the way good children do or will not be treated like good children."

"Somebody needs a drink." Sofia said.

"No, somebody needs the children to listen what they've been told."

"Okay."

Sara pulled her arms around Jules and pulled her in.

"Remember this afternoon? While you were in the forest? The silence, how you enjoyed your time there? I want you to take a deep breath, close your eyes and go back to this place."

"I don't want to..."

"Jules, please. Just give it a try. For thirty seconds."

"You spend too much time with me."

"Not enough, my dear, not enough." Sara kissed Jules's cheek.

"Now, sit down, have a beer and relax. We take care of the kids. Oh, and don't give me this look, I know how you feel and it's really nice to be on the other side."

"Don't enjoy it too much."

"Too late." Sara pushed her friend on the sun lounger. "Okay kids, you heard Jules said. You be nice or you all end up on a quiet chair."

"You see my private life is a place of peace and love." Sofia sat down and pulled Susan on her lap. "You are getting heavier with every day, my dear. How was your day? Did you play with your grandparents?"

"Poo."

"You have to poo-poo?"

"No, she was in the pool." Sara answered for their daughter.

"Marc spent the day with her in the garden pool."

"Lucky baby."

"Hello little lady, are you Louise?" JJ asked Louise, who looked at her with big eyes, half hiding behind the ball in her hands. "You have a nice ball, can I have a look at it?" She held her hand towards the girl, who gave her the ball. "Wow, a very nice ball. Do you want to play?" Louise nodded. "All right, let's sit down and we roll it towards each other." JJ sat down with Louise and rolled the ball back to the girl.

"One more happy and secured. Eric, could you draw me a new picture? One of you and me on the beach?" The boy nodded and sat down at the table. "Now all four are quiet." She stroke over Jules's hand. "The steaks are okay?"

"In a few moments."

"Good. You stay where you are." Jules gave Jorja a form look.

"Until I'm telling you, you are allowed to move, you stay on the chair."

"Wow, if you were like this when we had our session, I had left you after the first setting. Or stayed because I would have been too afraid to go."

"Remember what Greg told you why you're Eric's godmother and Tanya Jorja's?"

"Yes."

"Now you know I was right."

"Soon we'll be on vacation and you can relax."

"Unless our better halves have to stay and work the case."

"I'm not going to stay at work." Sofia said. "My wife will kill me if I stay. And so might the twins. I'm sure the FBI can handle this, right JJ?"

"Yes, you go and have some family time."

"We need her husband too. Greg."

"When do you leave?"

"Saturday."

"Hopefully by then we've closed the case."

"Can we talk about something else?" Sara asked. "Something more positive? Like what we want to pack and how much we'll have?"

"I'd love that. JJ, your husband comes from New Orleans, right?"

"Yes, he does. You can hear it when he talks. My colleagues make fun of his accent all the time."

"They do have a strange accent there. We went there for the French Quarter celebration. My parents-in-law gave us the trip as a Christmas gift. It was great."

"I've been down there a few times, before Will came to Washington. Mostly for a few days only because my colleagues had no idea we were together."

"You kept him secret? Why?"

"Because I didn't feel like getting asked how my relationship is all the time. They are my friends, I love them and trust them with my life, but some things are private. Falling in love with a cop you worked with, is very private."

"True."

"Sara knows a few things about keeping a relationship private." Sofia grinned.

"Why? She didn't tell anybody about you and her?"

"No, it wasn't me she hid. It was her former fiancé."

"Who was my boss and that was why we kept it a secret. Otherwise one of us had to change teams."

"Looks like you did that anyway."

"Yes, I changed to team blonde. The best choice I've ever made." Sara took Sofia's hand and smiled. There were good reasons why she had been with Grissom and she didn't regret the time, but she had never been as happy as she was with Sofia now.

"Don called, he can't make it, the case takes too much time." Tanya came into Steve's room. "We have to play without him."

"Bugger, we need a fourth person for the games."

"One of your mothers?"

"They're over at Jules's place." Steve said.

"You don't have a nice guest downstairs?"

"He's okay, but not into video games." They had a house guest, who stayed in the room next to the living room.

"Damn it. Any other ideas?"

"What about Lauren?"

"No!" Lea answered quickly.

"Why not?"

"She...I don't think she likes video games."

"I'm sure she said she does."

"We shouldn't bother her."

"You're weird. Do you have her phone number?"

"No! Why should I?"

"Just a thought. I go over and ask her. I'll be back in a few minutes, get everything ready. I want the special dip for my chips." Steve took his cap and left the room.

"So, with which game shall we start?"

"How about you tell me what your problem with Lauren is?" Tanya smiled.

"Problem? Who says I've got a problem with her?"

"Your behavior. I might not be the psycho chick of the family, but I learnt a few things from my perfect cousin. You tried everything to make Steve not go."

"We don't know her."

"You met her Monday, Steve said she's nice. Since when do you not like other people?"

"I'm...it was supposed to be a nice evening."

"And it can't be a nice evening with Lauren?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because..."

"Yes?"

"It doesn't matter, he gets her. We should get the coke and chips. And his special dip."

"If you gave him one good reason not to get her, he would not get her. Did you and Lauren fight?"

"No."

"But?"

"Nothing. Forget it." Lea left the room to get the coke. She didn't want to explain why she didn't want to see the other girl. It was bad enough that she had to spend the evening with her. How was she supposed to react? After yesterday evening, it was awkward to be around her.

"We are four again, time to start the battle." Steve came with Lauren into the room. "Are we ready to fight?"

"Hello, thanks for the invitation."

"Hi Lauren. We are." Tanya lifted the huge bowl with popcorn.

"Who plays with whom?"

"I team up with my baby bro." Lea pulled Steve next to her.

"Together we're going to beat the crap out of them. Street Fighter is the first game."

"Of course we will, chick." He kissed her cheek.

"How good are you at Street Fighter?" Tanya asked Lauren.

"Not too bad. What's the prize?"

"Honor and proud."

"Not a lot."

"It's all what counts."

"Plus the winner can choose which pizza we order for the next time. Tanya is a vegetarian, she wins and we'll have a lot of healthy stuff and no meat."

"Fine with me."

"You had steaks on Monday."

"Yes, but I used to be a vegetarian, so there's no problem for me to have no meat. A good spinach pizza with a lot of garlic is always great."

"Hah, the perfect team mate. Come on, let's kick some asses."

"Good evening, I'm sorry to disturb your evening."

"You don't, come in." Sara stepped aside and let Anna inside.

"Can I help you somehow? Are you looking for Lauren?"

"No, actually I'm here to help you. If you like. Or your wife. Your son told me about what happened to Sofia yesterday, he worried because he was sure, she hadn't seen a doctor today."

"A smart boy. She didn't see a doctor, worked long hours and I have no idea how to put some sense into her head."

"How does she feel?"

"Apparently good."

"You don't believe her?"

"Sofia is the same like me, she tells you she's fine while she's bleeding from several wounds. I think, I can't really blame her, can I?"

"You can but it doesn't sound like you're the one to tell her what's best for her. Shall I have a look after her?"

"Don't you want to have a knocking-off time?"

"A doctor never has a knocking-off time."

"Sounds like the life of a CSI." Sara opened the door to her bedroom. "Honey, we've got a visitor."

"Who?" Sofia asked from the balcony, where she had made herself comfortable.

"Anna. Go there, have a seat, I'm with you in a second Would you like some beer?"

"Nothing with alcohol."

"Iced tea?"

"Perfect. Thanks." Anna walked to the Sofia. "Hello Sofia, how are you?"

"I'm fine. Are you missing your daughter?"

"No, I'm here because of your son."

"Don't tell me he did something."

"He worries about you, told me about what happened to you yesterday."

"Oh, I'm fine."

"Sara said, you tell me you're fine while you bleed from several wounds."

"Hah, go figure, my wife should be quiet."

"She also said this. Is it okay when I check a little bit on you?"

"I'm really fine. Want to check my pulse?"

"For a start." Anna sat down and took Sofia's wrist. "What did happen yesterday?"

"I didn't feel well, slept badly, drove to the ER to let doctor Bendler - the doctor, who made me her personal patient after she saved my life when I lost my leg - check on me. When I arrived there, I lost consciousness. According to the doctor it was due to too much stress and exhaustion."

"You are pregnant, it was the seventh month, right?"

"Yes, week thirty."

"I bet they are pretty active."

"Absolutely. Future break dancers."

"How often do you see your gynecologist?"

"Every two weeks. She keeps a close on me.. Old woman with twins."

"You're not old. The babies are fine, nothing happened to them yesterday?"

"No, they're fine. I fell on my fat ass. The first time I was glad it's this big and well...it helped me when I fell."

"Any dizziness?"

"Not today."

"How long did you work today?"

"From seven in the morning until seven tonight. Before you complain, I took plenty of breaks. Plus I was with the FBI all the time. Well, most of the time"

"The FBI? Your baby case?"

"Yes."

"I heard there were more babies taken today."

"Unfortunately."

"Even more important that you're fit and look after yourself. How about taking some time off?"

"Next week."

"Tomorrow?"

"I can't do that, like you said, two more babies were abducted today. One woman was killed"

"Okay, how about some desk work?"

"You paid her to say these things?" Sofia cocked her head when Sara came back with a tray and 3 glasses of self-made fresh iced tea.

"No, she can talk for herself. I do agree on what she said. You should step back."

"I can't and you know it."

"Work only eight hours. Let the FBI do the heavy work."

"I can try to work with JJ, she does most of the office stuff as she's pregnant too."

"Team Pregnant, perfect. Your twins will thank you for that. Also your wife and son, they worry about you."

"How are her vitals, Anna?" Sara asked.

"Surprisingly good for somebody, who worked this long. You shouldn't stay awake too long, Sofia needs her sleep."

"Baby sleep, not beauty sleep." The blonde grinned.

"No, you don't need beauty sleep, you can't get more beautiful." Sara kissed her wife. Her better half was the most beautiful woman on the world. Sleepy Beauty couldn't have looked more beautiful than Sofia after she woke up from her one hundred years of sleep.

"We beat the crap out of them, the next pizza is ours." Lea cheered when she came into Steve's bedroom. Tanya and Lauren left, their video games night was over.

"Of course we won, we're the best. Come here Baby, time to get into my arms."

"Gosh, you're such a macho. Do these lines work with Jenny?"



"Nope, she laughs at me when say things like this. My girlfriend doesn't take me serious."

"Good. I thought I picked the wrong one for you."

"You picked her for me?"

"Hey, who introduced her to you? Who told you, she likes you? Who invited her over? Your best friend, your big sister, your holiday company."

"The best woman in the world."

"Exactly." Lea slipped next to Steve. Again, they decided turning the couch into a bed was too much of a hassle, it was much easier when Lea stayed in Steve's bed. Luckily Jenny was cool about this.

"Soon we'll be in Tahoe, how about we borrow a kayak and cross the lake? How big is it?"

"Up to twelve miles wide, twenty-two long. A hell of a trip. We need some more muscles to pull that off. How about a paddleboat and we use it for some cool jumps into the water? And a picnic."

"Sometimes your ideas are perfect."

"Sometimes? Always."

"Not always, Your idea was not invite Lauren tonight. Care to tell me why?"

"Do I have to like everybody?"

"Oh come on, when you lie to me, do it better, do it in a way, I don't know you're lying. Or tell me it's not my business." He switched off the light and pulled Lea into his arms.

"Not your fucking business."

"See, much better."

Lea rolled her eyes. Better? Better would be when nobody mention Lauren anymore. And not invite her over.

"How long do you have to work tomorrow?"

"Not at all, I've the day off."

"Really? Lucky you. Any plans?"

"Well, my parents are on my neck about studying. They had plans for me to spend the whole day in my room with the books."

"Ouch."

"Yes. I told them I offered to look after Susan so Marie and Marc can have the day off. Between playing with her and looking after her I said I will look into the books."

"You use our sister as an alibi?"

"I'd rather babysit than learn the whole day."

"I do understand that. Mel has me works half of the day, we can take Susan out to the beach on afternoon."

"Nice idea." Lea paused. "She kissed me."

"What?"

"She kissed me. Lauren. Actually, she kissed me twice." She paused again. These scenes had played on her mind the last hours. Again and again. Like she was caught in a movie, that ran on iterative loop.

"When? Monday?"

"No, yesterday. When we had the barbecue."

"She just kissed you? Out of the blue?"

"Yes."

"Okay."

"No, not okay." Lea sighed.

"You didn't want her to kiss you? Did she force you?"

"No. To both. I think."

"You think."

"I don't know what to think anymore."

"We only know her since Monday...but I have to say, I like her. She likes barbecues, Playstation and fast food."

"She's out of the closet."

"Is she?"

"Yes, one of the reasons why they moved away from the town they came from. Her parent's marriage and her...sleeping with a girl, who complained about it the next day. Said, Lauren made her drunk in order to have sex with her."

"I can't see her doing that."

"Me neither. I think the girl was afraid of what her family and friends might say."

"So we have a seventeen years old girl, cute and blonde, exactly your type, a lesbian, she kissed you and you're not over the moon? What's wrong with you? Don't tell me you're still not over Zoe."

"Who is that?"

"Exactly. So, what's wrong with Lauren?"

"For a start, she's out of the closet. Means, her parents know about her being a lesbian, so she'll expect my parents to know too. Wants to hold hands in public. I don't want...I'm not ready to be out. Can you imagine what my parents would say? I'd be grounded for the rest of my life."

"No, only until you're twenty-one."

"Great."

"I get what you mean." He kissed his hair. "Beside that, do you like her?"

"She's...wow. I mean, did you see her brown eyes? It's like ... sad puppy eyes. And when she smiles, her whole face lightens up. And she likes fast food, Playstation and barbecue, as you mentioned."

"You do like her."

"I kissed her back. When she kissed me the second time."

"Yes!"

"No. I pulled back afterwards and told her not to do that anymore, that I didn't want it."

"And she was fine with that?"

"Yes."

"Sounds like she is really very nice."

"I have no idea what to do."

"This might sound old-fashioned, but how about talk with her."

"Maybe I need some time away. Tahoe will be good. Clear my mind."

"Yeah, I can distract you from the sexy blonde."

"You are not into blondes, they're not sexy for you."

"Nope, they're not."

"This should insult me, somehow it doesn't."

"Because you know, I love you. Time to go to sleep, you dream of Lauren and I dream of Jenny."

"I think I dream of Lou Lee, how he invite me to the premiere of his next movie. He likes blondes too."

"Yeah, he hits on my mom...the porn barbie cop."

"What?"

"That's what I called her the first time we met. I was very charming."

"You called Sofia a porn barbie cop?"

"And it wasn't the worst thing I said. But that's not a topic for now."

"Oh, it will be one tomorrow. Sleep tight, baby bro." She squeezed his hand and closed her eyes. It was good she told him what was going on. They didn't keep any secrets from each other and she always felt much better after talking to Steve.

"Somehow I have the feeling there are more and more doctors coming into my life. I wonder if that changes when I'm not pregnant anymore."

"The one, who you met for dinner won't and the one, who moved next to us won't neither." Sara kissed her wife. "Oh and the dentist also won't go away."

"I was afraid so."

"You like all three of them."

"No reason to see them all the time."

"Start acting responsible and you have nothing to fear. By the way, I'm glad to hear you found some fun in working inside. Team Pregnant. Your back double is a good influence."

"She's also a very good agent. It was okay I brought her over, wasn't it?"

"Yes. You know we like nice company."

"Good. Can you leave tomorrow at four?"

"Yes, I'll be at doctor Blumfield's office at five. Did I ever miss one of the appointments?"

"No." Sofia smiled. Sara let nothing get into her way when they had an appointment with doctor Blumfield.

"How are you dealing with the cases? You saw the woman today."

"It was worse than the last time. I felt like somebody ripped out my babies. Our babies. And it scared me. I know you don't want me alone outside anymore and I promise you, the only place where I go alone will be the garden. And to the car when Don doesn't start and finish with me. Nothing else. And." Sofia paused for a few seconds. "I think about getting into maternity leave sooner. Like in the end of the month or early August."

"Seriously?"

"Yes. It's getting more and more difficult to work and I don't want to endanger the twins or me."

"I'm glad you say so."

"We do need the money but..."

"Your health and the health of the twins is more important than money. It's priceless."

"Exactly."

"Thanks." Sara kissed her wife gently. "I'm really, really glad you decided to do this. You won't get bored at home, will you?"

"Unlikely. I'll catch up with all the paper work we ignored, prepare myself for labor, relax, spend time with Susan. And you never know, Jules gave birth to the twins before they were due, the same could happen to me. Make sure your cell phone is with you all the time in case they decided to come out during

the day. I want you with me when they come, you have to hold my hand and take all the mean things I'll say to you with a smile."

"It's always on and fully charged. And when there's no signal, my boss can reach me over the radio."

"Good. I want you there, you are in charge for the bellybuttons."

"What about Don?"

"I want him there too, he's the father. And I want two people to scream at."

"Your mother?"

"No! She can wait outside, otherwise we'll have the same trouble like the last time, but I want you and Don inside."

"You tell her!"

"Coward."

"No, I don't have a death wish."

"She loves you, she'd never hurt you."

"She loves you too, you can tell her. Besides, it's your decision and you're the pregnant one."

"Aren't baby decisions always our decision? Or do you want her there?"

"I want in the room, who makes you feel comfortable."

"Then it's our decision. You and Don. Will you love me after I swore at you?"

"I'm still in love with you and you said some not so nice things to me the last time. Like you never want to have sex again."

"That's a lie! Sex didn't get me pregnant, I was aware of that. I said to Don I never want to see him again, a little lie. It was his fault."

"My DNA."

"Your stubborn head. I remember that. She still has it."

"Or your stubborn head isn't bad either. There's a reason why she never stops whatever she wants to do. Stubborn as a mule."

"Can't be my influence, I'm a very sensible person. Remember, I'll stop working early."

"I believe you when I see you home and with your work cell phone switched off. And make me lunch for my long days, meet other pregnant women to gossip with them, start knitting."

"knitting? I doubt that will be my favorite past time when I'm at home."

"What a shame, you can do it on the couch, I don't have to worry and we might need the warm socks in winter."

"How about I greet you with a hot meal when you come home."

"Nice idea."

"You know what sucks a little bit?"

"What?"

"Actually, there are two things: first the fact you'll be gone the whole day and don't stay with me in bed until noon. Second, after labor we can't have sex together. Why does pregnancy include so much no sex time?"

"I have no idea. What I do know it, you are still very sexy." Sara's hands slipped under Sofia's shirt. "Very, very sexy."

## Thursday, July 17th

Sara's lips kissed slowly the fog away, that seemed to be around Sofia's head. She could hear distant voices, couldn't figure out what they were saying, it sounded like they were singing a song, she had never heard before. It was all kind of blurry, she couldn't really see where she was, but she felt her wife's lips and knew, wherever she was, it was the right place because they were here together.

"Wake up, Honey. Ignoring the alarm doesn't make your work go away. It only makes you hurry and gives you less time for your breakfast."

Sofia grumbled something. Wake up? She was asleep? It was a dream? Or something between a dream and reality?

"Come on, Sleepy Beauty, you have to leave the bed."

"Fog. Voices."

"The fog is the sleep in your eyes and the voices are the radio. It's after five, we can't stay in bed forever."

"Why?"

"Because you have to catch some bad guys and I have to entertain kids."

"When can we stay in bed a whole day?"

"Never, we have a little daughter and you're having two more babies in your belly."

"I'm fat."

"No, you're pregnant."

"Which is the same."

"Come on, you need to get out of bed."

"No."

"Okay, then you have to stay here, won't get any more kisses. Bye."

"No, stay with me."

"Sorry, I have to work. See you later. The later depends on you. It's either breakfast or tonight. No kisses for twelve hours."

"You're so heartless." Sofia sighed, rubbed her eyes. The fog disappeared. And so did her wife. So did she want to stay in bed, get in trouble because she would be late for work or follow her wife, leave the lovely bed and be on time at work, get some more kisses and say good morning to her daughter. And her son, if he was awake.

"I hate when you leave me alone in bed." The blonde stepped into the shower and took Sara's hand to keep her balance. It

wasn't easy to keep her balance on one foot without crutches in the shower.

"Well, I gave you two choices, my dear."

"I took the right one." Sofia kissed her lover. Even when she had almost two more hours before she had to go to work, it was worth getting up early. Every kiss Sara gave her was worth more than a minute in bed.

"Good morning part one of team Pregnant, how are you?" Sofia greeted JJ when she came into the office.

"I'm fine, had a wonderful evening thanks to you and your friends. How are you?"

"I'm good, had a little fight with myself if I want to get up or stay in bed."

"The responsible part of you told you to get up."

"No, my wife left the bed and I felt lonely."

"Now you know how I felt the whole night."

"Horrible. Is there no way your husband can come with you? And your son?"

"No, it's work. Sara and Susan doesn't come with you."

"She could, she used to be a CSI."

"True."

"The rest of our team is out, checking on people, who own a car, that fits our description or have their license plate stolen. Reid is reading through internet research Garcia found on other cases all around the world."

"How many has there be?"

"A couple of hundreds. Interestingly most babies disappeared in rich countries. Over ninety percent were Caucasian. There were only two percent of Asian babies, four percent of Hispanic heritage and five percent African."

"You said most of them disappeared from rich countries, I suppose they were taken not from the African continent."

"No, we have three children taken from South Africa, one from Egypt and two dozen from various African countries. All families were from the upper class. Same for Europe, Asia and America."

"Did he also find something out about the buyer? Did some of the children have ever been found? Brought back to their families?"

"Not that we know of it. Like we have no evidence of anybody of them ever get caught."



"I bet if they are caught, they don't say a word. It has to be a huge group, you talk, you die."

"Like the mob."

"A mob handling babies instead of drugs, booze or weapons. More money, less danger. With the right passport nobody will stop you at a border. Nobody expects a child to be abducted when it comes to an airport with a family."

"No and when the baby wasn't born, there is no information about it." JJ sighed. "Hotchner wants us all to meet at twelve, see how far we are."

"Not close enough to catch somebody, otherwise they had told us. Or is the FBI holding back information?" Sofia cocked her head. Sometimes her old aversion against the FBI did show up.

"Would you be surprised?"

"To be honest: no. My experience is not the best when it comes to the FBI."

"What is wrong with team Pregnant? I thought we are doing good."

"I'm not talking about us, in fact, it was my idea to get you and your team here. I'm talking from other experiences I had, back in Vegas, when the FBI overtook and left us in the dark."

"I can promise you, it's not like that today. You know as much as I know. I have no intentions to lie to you or hold information back. The more we cooperate and talk to each other, the better are our chances to catch these men and get the babies back to their parents. That's what's important to me and what's important to my team."

"I'm sorry."

"No need to apologize, you were honest and I appreciate honesty. Now, why don't we go back to our work?"

"Sounds good to me."

"There are a lot of more parents gathering around the forest while their children are on an excursion with us since the baby kidnapper are back in town." Shane said to Sara while they watched the area around the visitor center. "Did they ever take a child older than two weeks?"

"No. It scares them anyway."

"It scares you too, doesn't it?"

"Yes. The idea of somebody taking Susan away is always there. I know she doesn't fit the profile of these men and women, but she's a toddler, when somebody orders a toddler,

they won't hesitate to take one. And we do live in an area, people consider as one of the better areas of Los Angeles."

"The hippest area it is."

"Yes, whatever that means. I don't care if somebody thinks Silver Lake is hip, it's nice there. I like the water, the hills, the mountains in the background, the view of the Hollywood Sign and Griffith Park. And the dog park."

"It stinks there."

"It smells like dogs."

"Which is the same. You take them with you to Lake Tahoe?"

"Of course."

"Lou Lee lets dogs into his villa?"

"Yes."

"Why don't you take me with you there?"

"Because I like my dogs more."

"Ouch. You'll live one week in luxury. Why can't I walk into a bar and meet a famous star?"

"You're not a sexy blonde."

"Sofia said no to a movie star because of you. How did that make you feel?"

"I want my wife to say no to everybody, who asks her out, no matter if a movie star or a panhandler. There is no difference for me."

"How comes you sound like you don't like your generous host? And if you don't, why do you go to his place?"

"It makes my wife happy."

"Does it make you happy?"

"When Sofia is happy, I'm happy too. Plus it will make my son very happy and my best friends too. How could I not be happy?"

"A villa on a lake, a spa, sauna. I hate you for having such a great place to go while I go to Vegas."

"With your girlfriend."

"Yes. She wants to see a different show every night."

"Thunder from Down Under is a nice show."

"Is it weather or sex?"

"Sex."

"For her or for me?"

"I think both of you can enjoy the hottest guys of Australia. stripping. Covered in oil, wearing only strings. You can see a lot."

"That is so disgusting. I don't want to watch half naked men."

"Your girlfriend does."

"She can go there, I go to the table dancing naked women."

"And that's not disgusting?"

"No, that's sexy. You should agree."

"Just because I'm married to a woman, it doesn't mean I don't appreciate looking at a sexy man. Or two. Or a dozen. In fact, the next time Sofia and I are in Las Vegas, we should watch the show. We'll both enjoy it."

"You're strange lesbians."

"We appreciate beautiful people and don't judge them by their sex. It's not like we never had sex with a man. A real gourmet knows to savor various tastes."

"Which would mean, you taste them and then you cheat on your wife. Unless you have an open relationship, which you guys don't have."

"You can savor with your eyes and eat at home."

"Seeing naked men makes you want to jump Sofia?"

"I don't need to see anything to want Sofia."

"One day I get a camera in your bedroom and watch the hottest porn ever."

"Then we find the camera, tell the captain and nobody will ever find a single piece of you." Sara grinned.

"Why do you have to get your mother-in-law into this?"

"Because she scares you."

"I don't think there is anybody with a clear mind, who isn't scared of her or of what she could do to you."

"It's why she's this good." Sara smiled. Marie was exactly the mother-in-law she always wanted to have. Well, or the best she could have asked for since the older woman decided, Sara was the best thing ever happened to her daughter. The first meeting was everything but nice for the brunette.

"Curtis."

"Captain Curtis? It's Sam Sidle. I know I was not supposed to get in contact anymore, but I think this is an important information."

"Is it?" Marie's voice was skeptical and not very friendly. "And how did you get my cell phone number?"

"I do have some contacts too. It doesn't matter, I don't call to harass anybody. It's about Sara's mother."

"Sara doesn't want any contact with her anymore and I think I made myself clear the last time, that her wish is to be respected, Mister Sidle."

"I know but I think Sara should know this and I'll stick to the facts to steal as less time of you as possible. Our mother died last night. She committed suicide. At least that's what they told me. I intent to investigate her death because I don't believe she killed herself."

"Are there any signs of murder?"

"She didn't feel good the last months, actually it got worse every month, that was why I tried to get in contact with Sara in December. The nurse said Laura kept some of her pills and then took them all at once. If that's the truth, they failed to do their job, it's their responsibility to make sure, Laura takes her medication. I ordered an examination of her body and the funeral will be next Thursday. I'm not sure if Sara wants to be there, if so, she can contact me for further information."

"I'm sorry for your loss, Mister Sidle."

"Thanks." He paused for a second. "Do you think Sara wants to come to San Francisco?"

"It's her decision. I'll let her know."

"I'd like to talk to her."

"That's up to Sara."

"Our mother died."

"Which is sad, but I know the whole story and when Sara doesn't want to talk to you or does not want to go to the funeral you have to accept it. Am I clear?"

"Don't you think at one point you should leave the past in the past?"

"It's not important what I think, it's important what Sara thinks. When she wants to talk to you, I've got your number, she can contact you. Otherwise you have to accept the fact, for Sara her only family is here in Los Angeles."

"Our mother was sick, she didn't know what she was doing."

"Yes, she was, but despite her disorder, there were some decisions she could have made different. Some of her actions and feelings were limited due to the disorder, not all and these things. The things your mother willingly ignored, are what hurt Sara most. I'm sure she has a good insight of the disorder."

"So you're saying I'm supposed to organize the funeral like Sara doesn't exist? Doesn't come along?"

"Yes. Continue with what you want to do and when Sara wants to be there, you'll see her at the funeral. If she wants to talk to you, she'll call."

"How will you tell her? Just down to the facts?"

"Let me worry about it."

"Okay. I think I go back to what I have to do."

"You do that and I go to what I have to do. Don't forget our agreement, Mister Sidle. Nothing has changed there." Marie ended the call.

"Sara's mother died?" Marc asked his wife. He heard most of the conversation.

"Yes. Apparently she overdosed, Mister Sidle ordered an autopsyn to find out, what really happened and whose fault it was. He wants Sara to come to San Francisco, join the funeral."

"Do you think she will go there?"

"I'm not sure. Death can change a lot of things."

"It does." He took her hand. "What will we do now?" We, not you. She took the call, she did the talking with Sam, but with the information he left them, they were together, not Marie alone.

"Tell her, but I'm not sure how."

"Why not give this to somebody, who knows what to do in these situations? Your job was the interrogation, finding out the truth and make people talk. In this case your skills are not needed."

"Do you want to tell her? Using your teacher and nurse skills?"

"I can do it but I think, the best person to do this is Jules. Not Sofia because she's too much involved, Jules knows what to do and say. She knows Sara and as much as Sara loves our daughter, in my opinion her former therapist is the best choice."

"You might be right." Marie sighed. "I guess I'm going to call Jules and ask her, if she can do this talk. While we take the kids. On our day off."

"Be honest, you miss having kids around you already. The silence drives you crazy. As does sitting in the garden with a book." Marc smiled. He didn't need to be a therapist to see, his wife was not happy with her day off. She had put the book aside a couple of times, walked through the house like she was searching for something or somebody. The chance to have three children around made smile and happy.

"Maybe. A little bit." Yes, she was so used to have Susan around her, that when her granddaughter wasn't around, she wondered, what sensible things to do with her spare time. What did other women do when they were retired? It was impossible to look after your house the whole - and it wasn't much of fun neither.

"There was another baby taken. From Silver Lake." Don's voice made Sofia's stomach turn. "Four roads away from our place. Nick Rider."

"Seriously?" She knew the parents. Talked to Rosalie Rider when she met her at the reservoir, talked about babies. Sofia saw Nick, only a few days ago.

"Yes."

"I'm on my way."

"Are you sure..."

"Don, I know them, I want to be there. Don't try to stop me."

"I won't. See you on scene."

"Yes." She ended the call. "They took another baby." She got up, picked up her kit and went to the door.

"Wait, I'm coming with you." JJ followed her. "You know the victims?"

"Yes. And the baby was abducted only a few blocks away from the place I live. They just got into my personal space again."

"Shit."

"Yes. Ouch." She held her belly. "Not now, my dears, we have to go there and help find Nick."

"Are you okay?"

"The twins get active again. I tell you, my parents will have a lot of to run when they're as active outside my belly as they're inside."

"Are you sure you want to go?"

"Absolutely."

When they were in the car Sofia's cell phone rang. "I put you on speaker, Honey."

"Is it true? A baby was taken from Silver Lake? I got the AMBER alert."

"Unfortunately yes. It's Nick Ryder."

"Oh my god."

"We're on our way to them."

"Keep me posted, will you?"

"Of course. How is it going in the forest?"

"A lot of concerned parents and children, who enjoy their time here less with every AMBER alert they get."

"They're safer in the forest than in their own house."

"Did you call Lea already?"

"No, I'm sure she and Susan are fine."

"I hope so, I call them to let her know what happened and have an extra eye on Susan."

"Okay."

"You take care of yourself and our babies?"

"Oh course. Team Pregnant is together."

"Hi Sara." JJ called.

"Hey JJ, please make sure Sofia takes her breaks. I don't want to see her in hospital again."

"Don't worry, I make sure she will look after herself. Together with me."

"Thanks. I talk to you later. Get these bastards and bring Nick back home."

"We will. Love you."

"Love you too. Bye."

The house, the baby was taken from, was on the same side of the reservoir as Sofia's was. She parked the car, looked at the houses, she knew from countless walks and took a deep breath. Time to investigate close to home. Again.

American history was not exactly what excited Lea. Not the civil wars, not the presidents and not how and why the people came here. She knew it was a big thing for most Americans, a lot of things they were proud of, but she wondered why she should be proud of something, she had nothing to do with. It wasn't her history, her history didn't start 1492, it started almost seventeen years ago. Maybe she should ask Marc to explain all these things to her, he was a history nerd and made Steve's marks much better. And he knew how to explain boring stuff in a way it became interesting.

When the doorbell rang she checked on Susan, who lay curled up on a blanket. "Scooby, look after Susan." Sara called her only half an hour ago, told her about the abducted baby not too far away. It was not very likely the same people would appear here, but it was better to have the dogs looking after the girl when she was gone for a moment. She jogged to the front door and opened it. "What are you do here? Again?"

"I heard you and Susan in the garden and thought maybe you want some company your own age."

"Thanks, but no thanks. I've got a history book to keep me company."

"Seriously? You prefer a history book over me?"

"Yes." At the moment she preferred everything over Lauren. It was safer to stick with a book.

"I don't believe that."

"Nobody asked what you believe."

"Stop being such a bitch." Lauren pushed Lea out of her way and went inside. "Don't you have to look after Susan? Where is she?"

"In the garden. Get out of the house!"

"Okay." Without paying any more attention to Lea the older girl went straight through the house into the garden.

"Hey!"

"You told me to leave the house."

"Not this way, out on the street."

"Shut up or do you want to wake her?"

"I told you to leave."

"And I didn't care. Want to call the cops? What's your problem anyway? You acted weird last night."

"Just leave me alone."

"Or what?"

"Or else."

"Or else what?"

"You're such a pain in the a...rm."

"Cry me a river."

"Do you leave voluntarily or do I have to kick you out?"

"You? Kicking me out? Funny." Lauren grabbed Lea's shirt, pulled her toward her and kissed her. A second later she found herself on the ground, after a hard and angry slap in the face.

"What the fuck?" She rubbed her hand over her nose and found blood. "Did you break my nose?"

"No, unfortunately not. But maybe the next time you try to do something another person doesn't want, you remember what can happen. Now get out of my eyes."

"I can't believe you really slapped me."

"I'm going to do it again if you don't leave."

"No, you won't." Lauren folded her arms and stayed on the ground. "And I'm not leaving. Unless you carry me out of the house. And the garden."



Lea rolled her eyes and dropped next to Susan, who was still asleep. Tired she caressed the back of the little girl. "Somehow American history doesn't sound that bad anymore. At least the book I could just put away."

"What is your problem with me?"

"How about we start with the fact you kiss me although I don't want it."

"I couldn't help myself, you are cute when you get angry. Or nervous. Or happy. Actually you're always cute."

"Do you kiss everybody, you think is cute?"

"Of course, I'm bad to the bone."

"You don't look like George Thorogood."

"Wow, you know him?"

"I like old music, rock music. And I don't believe you. If you want to lie or give me crap, I take Susan with me inside and lock the door."

"Why do you threaten me all the time?"

"Because when I ask you to do something, you don't care."

"I also don't care when you threaten me."

"Which doesn't make you very likeable."

"What would make you like me?"

"How about you leave me alone? Stay out of my life."

"No, I don't think so. And I doubt you want that." Lauren cocked her head. "You kissed me back the last time."

"I was caught by surprise."

"You were caught by surprise the first time, not the second."

"It doesn't matter."

"It matters to me. You are not taken, are you?"

"Why does that matter? When I tell you I don't like you."

"You complain about me lying to you while you lie to me. So Lea, where is your problem? Is it because I'm a girl?"

"I don't want to talk with you about my person life, it's not your business." Lea got up, picked Susan up and went with her inside. She didn't want to talk to Lauren, she wanted to be alone, look after Susan, read a book, even the history book if she had too, but not talk.

"Lea."

"What my darling?" She kissed Susan's cheek. "I bring you to bed."

"Arm."

"No, I can't carry you around the whole time, you are too heavy."

"Arm."

"Okay, we sit on the couch and you can sleep in my arms." At least until she was asleep and Lea could bring her into bed.

Exhausted from carrying the little girl up into the third level Lea sat on the couch, closed her eyes and took a deep breath. Susan was already almost asleep and held on to Lea's hand and shirt. So much for bringing her to bed.

"I'm not running away, you don't have to hold on to me."

"She wants to be with you, maybe she had a nightmare and you're her guardian angel." Lauren leant on the doorframe.

"I thought you went home."

"No."

"Why?"

"We haven't spoken yet."

"I said I don't want to talk to you."

"Why?"

"Because it's not your business."

"Lea, I can see you liked the kisses. Why do you fight against it?"

"I don't."

"It's nothing bad or wrong."

"Yeah, that's why you got in trouble at your old place. Because everybody is fine about it."

"Is that what it's all about? Because of what happened back there?"

"No."

"But?"

"But you're out of the closet and I'm not and I don't plan to do that any time soon. So while your parents are fine with you being a lesbian, mine wouldn't be, which means, I don't want them to know until I've moved out and earn my own money. No kisses, no holding hands, no Christmas time together for quite a while. I can live with that, it's what I've chosen, but I won't ask it from anybody else. So I'm going to stay single, live in peace with my parents and wait what college brings."

"Steve knows about it."

"He does, so do his parents and three of our friends. I don't need nor want the world to know."

"So basically you want to stay alone for the next few years until you can support yourself and then you tell your parents, who you really are?"

"I don't define myself over my sexuality. It's nothing I chose and I prefer to define myself over the things I can choose."

"All right, fair enough. But it doesn't change that you're living in a lie."

"I never told my parents I'm interested in boys. They assumed - like everybody - for a while Steve and I are a couple, I always said it's not true. Since they know Steve is with Jenny, they know it's true and haven't ask any questions. I live in a world, I chose to live in. It doesn't mean it's the right thing to do for everybody, my truth doesn't have to be yours, but it's what I want."

"Okay."

"So I'd appreciate when you leave me alone and don't try to mess with me and my life."

"I have no intentions of messing with you or your life, Lea. I meant what I said, I like you. I'm aware we know each other for three days, but...besides the fact I think you're totally cute, I like you. I think you're funny and smart, kind hearted, a very good friend and a pretty good PS 4 player. And your right fist is pretty strong."

Lea had to laugh even when she didn't want to. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to hurt you. Does it still hurt? It's not bleeding anymore."

"I'm positive I'll survive, don't worry. I dared you, so I got what I deserved. I promise I won't kiss you anymore; unless you want me to."

"That sounds good."

"Do I have a chance you might want to kiss me one day?"

"Lauren...gosh." Lea sighed and closed her eyes. "I talked about this last night with Steve. Told him, you are exactly my type but...I meant what I said. I don't want to be out and I don't want you to hide. You wanted to be out, which is great, I envy you, but...I don't want it for myself. Any time soon."

"Well, we don't have to rush anything and...just to let you know: when I was a kid, I loved playing hide and seek. I could hide from my parents for hours - especially when they wanted me to clean my room." Lauren grinned. "Just keep that in mind, okay?"

"Okay."

"Otherwise, it's all up to you."

"Thanks."

"No, I have to thank you for telling me what's going on. Thanks for your trust. I promise, I won't disappoint you."

"Good."

"How about some juice? Are you thirsty? You can't get up with your little baby sister holding on to you."

"Yes, some juice would be nice. And Susan can sleep for another half an hour, then it's time for her to wake up and play. Otherwise she won't be tired tonight." And Lea was sure Sara and Sofia would be tired tonight. An active daughter, who didn't want to go to bed, was surely nothing they wanted.

Greg and Juana were working the scene while Sofia decided to talk to the parents. Together with agent Hotchner, who let her take the lead because she knew the parents.

"Rosalie, I know this is difficult for you."

"Sofia, they took my baby. They took Nick, he's only one week old. I want my baby back."

"And we do everything to get him back. You Greg, he's working hard to get Nick back."

"He was taken by the same guys, who killed the woman yesterday, right?"

"It's possible. Where was Nick when he was taken?"

"In the garden. It's what I told the police already."

"I know, we have to get through it again. Sometimes you remember things the second time you talk about, you have forgotten before. Nick wasn't alone in the garden?"

"No, I mean yes, only for a short moment. I took him out with me around eleven. I was working on some paper stuff, went inside the house to get a new coffee and when I came back, Nick was gone."

"How long were you gone?"

"Two minutes?"

"And Nick was where?"

"In his buggy. He was asleep, that's why I went into the house. I thought everything was fine."

"You don't have a fence around the building everybody can walk into the garden, right?"

"Yes. I should have never left him."

"What happened is not your fault."

"Sofia, I left my son alone. Outside in an unsecured garden. Although I heard about the other babies, watched the news. I'm a bad mother."

"I leave Susan all the time alone when she's in the garden."  
"Your garden has a fence and you have two dogs."  
"Rosalie, it's not your fault. These people, they don't abduct children randomly. They choose them, they follow the parents."  
"They watched us? Since when?"  
"We don't know, but we're sure, they watched all victims."  
"I didn't notice...oh my god, they spied on us! Do they have cameras installed?"  
"We never found one. Your kitchen doesn't face the garden, you had no chance seeing them. Did you see a car?"  
"No."  
"Anybody walking around your house?"  
"No, it's too warm to walk. You know our street, there are no trees, you would be right in the sunshine, from eleven to three, you don't want to do that."  
Mrs. Rider was right. "Did you see anything strange? Anything, that was different to other days?"  
"No. It was an ordinary day."  
"Who knew you had Nick here?"  
"My family and friends. The neighbors."  
"Who knew about the pregnancy?"  
"Everybody, who saw me. You can't really hide a pregnancy, can you?"  
"No. Was anybody interested in you, you don't know? Anybody asked you when you are due? In a way, other people didn't?"  
"People ask all the same questions. Or did they ask any strange questions?"  
"No. You don't have any surveillance here?"  
"We never thought we'd need it. Guess we were wrong. Like I thought we live in a safe neighborhood."  
A safe neighborhood. Sofia wasn't sure there was a safe neighborhood in this city. Or in any city. Bad people had the habit to get wherever they wanted to be. No matter how nice your house was, how high your fence or how good your alarm system was. Somebody was always better and smarter and the more you tried to hide, the more they wanted to know why.

After talking to Rosalie Rider Sofia left the building to talk to the neighbors. Instead of JJ agent Derek Morgan joined her. A few years ago she'd have used the time with the agent for more

than a business related conversation. With his chocolate brown skin, well trained muscles and brown eyes he was more than a feast for the eyes. Very sexy. She could have fallen for a man like him if she wasn't happily married. But it was allowed to watch, wasn't it?

"Where do you want to start, CSI Curtis?"

"Please, call me Sofia."

"Okay with me when you call me Derek?"

"I will. I know this area a little bit and Rosalie gave me the names of her neighbors, who are likely at home. Most of them are at work, Mister Teaspoon on the other hand, is retired and lives across the street. He owns a little Terrier, so I know him a little bit through our dogs. I'd like to start with him."

"What kind of dog do you have?"

"I've two mixed breeds, very hungry, very protective. Something I'm very thankful for now. As long as they're around my daughter nobody can get close to her. Nobody outside the family and our closest friends."

"This case must make you think about her all the time."

"It does. And it makes me call my parents all the time to make sure my daughter is fine."

"I'm sure your parents look after her."

"They do...today the best friend of my son looks after her. I'm sure she doesn't take her eyes off Susan."

"You called her?"

"Of course." They stepped up to the stairs to the front door. Agent Morgan rang the bell. A minute later an elderly man opened the door.

"Mister Teaspoon, I'm agent Morgan with the FBI, I'd like to ask you a few questions."

"I haven't seen anything." The man said and closed the door.

"Nice." Derek Morgan raised his eyebrows. "People here are very friendly. And helpful."

"Shall I try it?"

"Be my guest."

Sofia rang the doorbell. A few seconds later the same man opened the door. When he saw Sofia his annoyed face changed into a friendly one. "Sofia, how are you? Are you okay? Do you have any problems with the babies? Do you want me to call an ambulance?" So many friendly offers before she could say a word. So much for unfriendly and not helpful.

"Hey Mister Teaspoon how are you? How is Bobby?"

"Happy and tired, this isn't the best weather for him. Nor me."  
"Same here. The twins hate the weather and show it whenever they have a chance."  
"I bet. But you're okay?"  
"Yes. Unfortunately your neighbors, the Riders, aren't. Their son was abducted this morning."  
"Really? Oh my god, that's horrible."  
"You don't happen to see something? Little Nick was in the garden, somebody took him out of his buggy around eleven forty. You don't happen to see somebody going into the garden?"  
"Are you talking about this guy dressed in black?"  
"Man dressed in black?"  
"Yes. I assumed it was the UPS man, they wear black, don't they?"  
"The Riders never mentioned a parcel deliver. Can you describe the man better? He wore black? Was it a UPS uniform?"  
"It was...black shorts, a black shirt saying UPS and black shoes. Now that I think about it, he did carry a black sports bag. Usually UPS guys don't wear sports bags, do they?"  
"No, they don't. Can give me more on him? How tall? Skin color?"  
"Around six feet, I'd guess. White, wore a black cap and shades. He looked a lot like the man, who brought me a parcel last week. I had no idea, who ordered it, it surely wasn't me, but the food inside was delicious."  
"You received a parcel, you never ordered?"  
"Yes. Figured, it was a mistake, somebody used the wrong address. But the food was good and like the delivery man said, it was all fresh, I shouldn't wait too long to have it. Oh and I won a trip to Vegas."  
"You won a trip to Vegas?" Sofia had no idea how this fit into the story, but so far Mister Teaspoon hadn't stroke her as a man, who got confused easily or mixed things up.  
"Yes, I was supposed to leave this morning, but I didn't want to send Bobby to a shelter and my sister is on vacation herself, she can't look after him. Your dog is more important than a trip to Vegas, right?"  
"Absolutely." Sofia doubted the winning was a coincidence. Like she doubt the winning was real. "It was the same guy?"  
"Yes."

"Did he have an accent?"

"Yeah, was a Yankee. Wondered what he was doing here? Don't they have parcels to deliver in New York?"

"I'm sure they have plenty. Did the man come in a UPS van?"

"No, that was another strange thing. He stepped out of a black Sedan. Was the passenger."

"You didn't happen to get the license plate?"

"No, I'm sorry, my eyes are good but not that good. But I have something better." He pulled a smart phone out of his pocket.

"My nephew gave it to me, dared me to learn how to use it until we see each other again. I took the challenge and try to learn as much as possible about this little thing. Not quite sure why everybody has one and walks around with it all the time. Are people nowadays this important that you have to reach them all the time?"

"Did you take a photo of the man?"

"No, taking photos is for beginners, I took a video of the man. Not sure why, probably because I was sitting behind my window and waited for anything that moves and I can film so my nephew sees I'm old but not stupid. So when this car stopped, I filmed it until it was gone. Not an exciting video, but I thought, until I get something better, I have something. Planned to delete it this afternoon when I'm at the dog park. Bobby looks better than the car."

"I'm sure he does. Would you mind sending the video to my cell phone?"

"Uhm...I'm afraid you have to show me how that works. Oh, what a great idea, then I can send a video to my nephew, he'll be surprised." He gave the cell phone to Sofia.

"Of course. You get into the menu first. Wait, it's best when you do it yourself." She gave him the cell phone back and told him how to find the video and then send it to her. A few seconds later her cell phone rang. "There were go, the video arrived. You sent it." She smiled, let her fingers flew over the cell phone and sent the video to Don, Greg, Juana and JJ. "Agent Morgan, can I have your cell phone number? I'd like to send you the video too."

"Sure."

"Back in the days the man asked the woman about her number and not the other way around."

"Nowadays the women can do that and as you know, I'm married so I want his number for work purpose only." Which



was kind of a shame. Why didn't agent Morgan show up a few years earlier? Like when she was still in Las Vegas?

"How is your wife?"

"Good. Thanks."

"I go and talk to my colleague." Derek said.

"Wait, I join you. See you later. Mister Teaspoon, when you see this man again, can you let me know?"

"Of course. Do you think he abducted the little baby?"

"He went into the garden, had a sports bag, that was big enough for a baby and to be honest, to me everything looks like he is the kidnapper."

"Oh my god and I filmed it."

"Looks like. You might be the best and most valuable witness we have so far. If the FBI can work with the video, they might be able to arrest the people and bring the babies back to their parents."

"Their? Isn't it your job?"

"We cooperate and agent Morgan is in a much better physical condition than I am."

"The best physical condition doesn't help if you don't have enough up here." Mister Teaspoon ticked with his index finger at his head. "When he rang the bell, I closed the door after one sentence. You rang and you got answers."

"We know each other."

"Yes, I know I can trust you. This guy, he doesn't look trustworthy. More like one of these Venice Beach muscles men."

"Some of them look very good."

"What does your wife say about this?"

"Eat at home or your body will disappear."

"I like Sara, she's straight to the point."

"She's the best thing ever happened to me. Mister Teaspoon, was there another car? A car, that wasn't here before? Or showed up a couple of times the last weeks? We assume they spied on the Riders. Like when they came here to give you the parcel. Or the trip you won. I think they faked it so you were away. All other neighbors work during the day."

"You think they wanted me out of the way?"

"They're very careful, yes I think they wanted you away. That they didn't check if you were really gone was their mistake. And our luck."

"You know what car they're driving."

"The license plate will be stolen, but we can trace the car via street traffic cameras and it's the third time they used a black Sedan."

"I hope you will catch them."

"Me too." She held her belly.

"Are you okay?"

"The twins kick again, guess they want me to take a break."

"Do you want to sit down?"

"No, thanks. I think I tell the guys I take a baby break of half an hour and drive home, see how Susan is. It's a two minutes drive."

"She'll be happy to see her mother."

"Not as happy as her mother will be to see her. Thanks for your help, Mister Teaspoon. You have my work number, call me if you see the man again."

"I will. Good luck with the hunt and with the babies. Don't work too much."

"Thanks. Bye." Carefully Sofia walked down the stairs. Time for her to take a little break and then see, what the FBI could do with the video. Hopefully they could close the case soon.

After a little time with her daughter Sofia went back to the crime scene.

"You look much better." JJ said when she saw Sofia. "The break was good."

"It was. Time with my daughter always makes me feel better."

"You deserved it, the video was a big help. Garcia is tracking the car down, the license plate is stolen. They won't take it off the car until they're where they're hiding."

"How far did she follow them?"

"Over the hills, through Universal City and she lost them on Cahuenga Boulevard. Between Universal Studios Boulevard and Fredonia Drive. A little bit over a mile we have to cover and we do know, they continued north or west. We're getting close."

"Residential area, expensive, a lot of houses standing alone, perfect to hide babies. Can your computer tech check if there were any houses rent recently? Like within the last month?"

"She's already on it, double checks, if there's a name, that pops up as a renter around the time, when the first babies were kidnapped."

"We should get there, ask people for the car. For new arrivals."

"Morgan, Hotchner, Reid and Blake are already there, together with a dozen von LAPD officers. With photos of the car and the man."

"Wow, The FBI brings us up to speed."

"We all want to end the kidnapping soon. They hit less than three hours ago, they might feel safe and we don't know how long they'll stay in the city. Five babies disappeared this week, they might have enough. I doubt they'll stay here for much longer when they have what they want."

"They need a passports for the babies otherwise they can't leave the country."

"You don't happen to know a few names of people, they could contact?"

"As a CSI?"

"As a former cop."

"I might not been up to date...let me call somebody, who might know more." Sofia dialed the number of captain Rock.

"CSI Curtis, how are you?"

"I'm good, what about you?"

"Busy. Like you are. I assume you didn't call to say hello."

"No, I wonder if you have a few names of people, somebody wants to contact in case they need a passport. Or five."

"I do have a few names, I assume you don't ask for names of people, who can get your son a fake ID to get into a club. You want stuff, that gets you through every boarder control. You want them fast and the person, who does them, forgets you were ever there."

"Exactly."

"Have been in the business for a while, so you know you can trust him and his work is really good."

"Yes."

"Mule."

"Mule? How can I reach him."

"You can't, you're a CSI. She doesn't know you and she won't talk to you. Give me some time and I see what I can find out for you."

"Thanks captain."

"Save your words, you know how to thank me. Call you later, Sofia."

With a smile Sofia took her cell phone away.

"A secret devotee?"

"A police captain, who wants me back with LAPD. I'm not a desk person and it's the only thing she can offer me. So all she gets is a spoken thank you."

"And we get an answer?"

"ASAP."

"Good. Your colleagues finished their work here, I waited for you so you can take me back to the lab. There's some work waiting for us."

"I stop at four, got a doctor appointment at five."

"Two more hours to close the case and go home with good news."

"Would be nice."

At five right on the spot Sara and Sofia sat in the office of doctor Blumfield. Both arrived in their own cars and met in the building.

"How far are you?"

"Circling, getting closer and hopefully catching them soon."

"Is our vacation at risk?"

"No." The blonde smiled and took the hand of her wife.

"Ladies, how are you?" Doctor Blumfield and her usual cheerful mood came into the room. "I see the babies are growing."

"Yes they are, they make me look like a whale."

"They make you look like a happy pregnant woman. How are they doing? Did you count them kicking?"

"Yes, twenty times in twenty minutes. They'll be break dancer one day."

"Let's see how they're doing. Have a seat, Sofia."

"My least favorite chair."

"To get photos of your most favorite twins, see how they're doing."

"Why don't you have this lotion in warm?"

"With the weather outside you should be glad to have something cold."

"My happiness is...limited."

"Has it something with your work to do?"

"Yes. A lot of stress."

"Don't forget to mention you lost consciousness and ended up in hospital." Sara added.

"I beg your pardon?"

"Yes, I had some minor complications, according to the doctor the twins and I are fine. No need to worry. I learnt and have more breaks. And I decided by the end of the month or early August I stop working until the twin are six weeks old."

"I really thought you are more sensible, Sofia."

"This case...is not an excuse."

"No, it's not. Here we go, your babies are giving you the best smile."

"Oh, one of them sucks on his thumb." Sara squeaked.

"Isn't that an international sign for: I want more chocolate?"

"No, it's not."

"Doc?"

"Babies prefer healthy food, it's good for them. Or fruits. The mother can have some chocolate sauce on her fruits, that's fine too."

"Hah, I like this one."

"Of course you do. Doc, we'd like to know the gender of the babies. I know we said we want to be surprised, we changed our mind. Chose already names, now you have to tell us which ones will be the correct ones."

"Which names did you choose?"

"We have Sandy, which works for a boy and a girl and Solora for a girl or Saloso for a boy."

"You go experimental this time?"

"A little bit. So which one can we take?"

"Sandy."

"Funny. And?"

"What would you like to have? Two girls? Two boys or one each?"

"One each."

"This wish won't come true."

"All right, so what is the name of Sandy's sibling?"

"Saloso."

"Two boys? Steve will like that, he won't be the only man in the family anymore. Sandy Marc and Saloso Donald." Sara kissed Sofia. "I like that."

"September twenty-seven, right?"

"Don't expect them to be on time."

"I don't mind if they come early. A week or two."

"Well, until they're born I want to see you every week."

"Can we skip next week? We'll be in Tahoe from Saturday to Saturday."

"Then I want to see you first thing on Monday morning. Please, step a few steps back and get the twins and yourself a break."

"Yes ma'am."

"Good. We'll make a few more tests before you can go home and tell your son and daughter about their brothers."

Yes, the twin brothers of Susan and Steve. She wondered what her children will say about the news. Two little brothers. And what would Don say? Not one son but two. He'd be very proud.

Jules's thought had circled around what to say to Sara since she had talked to Marie. The older woman had asked her for a favor, that was big and difficult. One, Jules could have denied, the easiest way for her, but she knew, it was the best for Sara to hear the news from her. She had no idea why, it was only a feeling she had and she had to go with this feeling.

When her last patient was gone, she picked up her children from daycare, brought them to Marie and Marc and went to Sara's place. She let herself in with her key. Scooby and Rantanplan greeted her and took her into the garden, where Susan and Lea were.

"Hi, how are you?"

"Well, we decided we rather play than learn."

"Ju."

"Hi Susan, did you have a lot of fun with Lea?"

"Ya."

"Very nice. Oh, there are your mommies coming." Jules heard two cars stop in front of the house.

"Where are your children?"

"With Marc and Marie."

"Why? I thought they have a child free day."

"There was a little change in plans."

"Doesn't sound good."

"No."

"Hello ladies." Sara looked surprised at Jules. "What brought you here and where is my baby boy?"

"I need to talk to you."

"Okay." Sara looked at Lea.

"Don't look at me, I have no idea what's going on."

"What is going on? Hi Jules." Sofia came outside, surrounded by her dogs.

"Sara?"

"Okay. Talk."

"No, I want to talk to you alone."  
"What for? I'll tell it Sofia anyway and Lea is family."  
"Okay." Jules took Sara's hand and pulled her to the bench.  
"What is it? Why are making such a fuss?" Slowly she felt how anxiety and fear crept up on her. Whatever Jules had to tell her, it was nothing good. Otherwise she would not make such a fuss about it. Was somebody hurt? Did somebody die?  
"Because I thought the whole day about how to tell you this, which is the best way, the smoothest one, then I came to the conclusion straight to the point works best with you."  
"It does. So?"  
"Your brother called this morning. Not me, he called Marie."  
"Why?"  
"He has some information you want to hear."  
"Do I? Hard to believe."  
"I think he's right this time."  
"Is he? So, what is it? What am I dying to hear?"  
Jules sighed by Sara's choice of words. "He called because your mother died last night."  
"What?"  
"Apparently she overdosed."  
"Okay."  
"Okay? Sara, your mother died."  
"A woman, I didn't want any contact with anymore."  
"Nevertheless she was your mother."  
"She was the woman, who gave birth to me, not a mother. I didn't want her dead, all I wanted was her out of my life."  
"Sara..."  
"No Jules, it's okay."  
Jules looked at Sofia.  
"I think Lea and I take Susan inside and prepare some dinner."  
"Honey..."  
"No, Jules and you, you should talk and we take care of the rest."  
"I am fine."  
"And I'm serious about it. Lea?"  
"Yes." The teenager picked up the toddler and followed Sofia into the house. Sara wanted to get up, but Jules held her back.  
"Please."  
"I'm fine."  
"Okay, when you're fine let's talk about Laura. Do you think she really overdosed? Because Sam doesn't. And if she did, he

thinks it's the fault of the nurses. They're supposed to look after the patients, make sure, they take their medication the right way."

"He's right about that."

"Are you glad she's dead?"

"No."

"What do you feel?"

"Are you going shrinky on me?"

"No. If I go shrinky on you, you wouldn't realize it. I'm doing the straight game. How do you feel about her death? Honest."

"Honestly? I don't know. I don't feel like crying, I don't feel sorry, I feel...nothing. Detached."

"Would you like to go to her funeral?"

"No."

"Why is that?"

"Because you go to a funeral when somebody died you loved. I didn't love her. You go to a funeral when somebody died, who was important to you. She wasn't. To show up at her funeral would be a huge lie."

"Do you feel like saying goodbye?"

"No. Again, I didn't want to talk to her when she was alive, why would I talk to her dead body? If I have the urge to say goodbye to her, I can talk to a tree, it has the same effect."

"Do you want to talk to your brother?"

"I'm sure he wants to talk to me."

"He won't call you, Marie made it clear, he has to wait for you. So you can decide if you want the contact or not."

"I don't. Did that come out too fast?" Sara smiled thinly.

"If you asked a question and the suspect answered this fast, what did you think?"

"A big fat lie. Do you think I should talk to him? Go to her funeral?"

"I think funerals are a nice way to say goodbye. So is a visit at the grave. I think, you should say goodbye, one way or another. It doesn't have to be the funeral or her grave."

Sara closed her eyes and thought about what her friend said. "I think I'd like to close the whole story by going back to the B&B my parents owned."

"That's a nice idea."

"It is."

"We can go there on our way to or back from Tahoe. Or do you want to go there alone?"



"With you guys. That place is my past, you're my present and future."

"Then we'll be there with you." Jules kissed Sara's cheek. "I'm sorry Sara."

"What for? Don't say for my loss."

"For you not having the chance to come clean with your mother. I wished, she'd have realized what she did to you when she told you to let go of what Trevor did. I hoped at one point, the two of you could have a better relationship. I hate seeing you without a mother, even when Laura was not a mother of the year type. There was always the chance she changes and... well, it's unlikely she could be to you what Marie is to Sofia or you, but I wished she could have been a mother, you don't hate."

"I always wanted a mother like Marie, my mother wasn't like her. Not even close. I'm grateful to have Marie, who always treats me like her daughter. The famous problems you have your mother-in-law never applied for me. Well, not after the first meeting."

"You're lucky to have her and Marc, they worry a lot about you."

"Why did she not tell me about my mother's death? You said Sam called her."

"She thought I'm better in telling you because I'm a therapist. I believe she would have been as good as I am because she loves you."

"You're the one, who makes her money with talking. And you did very good. Thanks Jules." Sara hugged her friend and stayed in her arms. "I think Marie knows, if I have to cry, it's easier in your arms."

"You didn't cry but if you feel like it and need some arms, mine are open all the time."

"Thanks. I think I'll try the arms of my wife first."

"A good idea. Would you like to go inside and see her?"

"Yes." Sara got out of Jules's arms only to pull her in again.

"We'll have two boys, by the way. The doc told us. Sandy Marc and Saloso Donald. Shall we add a Greg to their names?"

"No, they're fine with two names. Saloso? Didn't you say you don't want a strange name for your baby?"

"It's Native America, means Wild Goose Cry. Or short for Sara loves Sofia."

"A wonderful meaning."

"Can you keep an eye on Sofia when we're in Tahoe? Her doctors are far away then."

"She should take all information with her, so in case of an emergency, the doctor knows what's going on. Otherwise, you know, I'm not a physician."

"Your mother is the best surgeon in town, you learnt from her. And we both trust you."

"I always have an eye on all of you, you know that. And you, my darling, get an extra eye."

"The kids should get the extra eye. Where are they?"

"With Marie and Marc. I get them now. You tell Sofia about your mother, talk with her and when you need me, you call me, okay?"

"Okay. Love you, Jules."

"Love you too. Don't try to be too strong, even Laura deserves a tear or two. Even if it's only to make you feel better." Jules kissed Sara's cheek and got up. Time to go back to her children and take them home.

"Are you sure you wanted to send the text to me?" Lauren asked when Lea showed up with Susan in the buggy and Rantanplan and Scooby on leashes.

"Yes."

"Wow, I feel honored."

"You start annoying me, I walk around the reservoir without you."

"Aren't you just lovely?"

"I mean it."

"Okay. Where is Steve? How comes he doesn't look after his sister? You said, he only worked in the morning."

"He had to stay longer and then...something happened...with Sara's family and he's with his mothers."

"Is Sara okay? And Sofia?" Lauren stopped and looked shocked at Lea.

"Yes, they're fine."

"Thank god."

"It's Sara's mother. She died."

"Oh shit. You knew her?"

"No, I don't. She's not from L.A. and...probably I shouldn't tell you these things, they're not your nor my business..."

"Lea, they do something with you, something bad. Whatever you tell me, I won't tell anybody else. And I can see, whatever

it is, it's eating you. Come on, we walk and if you feel like talking, you talk. Otherwise we walk around the reservoir, stay quiet and...I don't know. Do whatever feels best."

"Thanks." So much for she didn't want to be around Lauren, didn't want to talk to her. How much could change within a few hours. After one conversation and establishing points. Since she had talked to Lauren this noon, since the other girl promised to accept her rules and lines, she felt better with her around.

"Sara doesn't talk about her mother, I don't remember her being in Los Angeles at any time, not even for the wedding, like I can't recall a day, she went to see her mother. She never told me why, I never asked, it's not my business. I'm sure Steve knows, but he never told me."

"I thought you talk about everything, don't have secrets." Laura said carefully.

"We talk about us, not about our families. Whatever happened between Sara and her mother, it must have been bad and when she doesn't want anybody to know, or only her wife and children, it's absolutely okay. I don't have to know."

"Will she go and see her mom?"

"Steve says no, but...I mean...can you imagine not to go to your mother's funeral?"

"If she really pissed me off and we didn't talk for years. I think it's more honest to stay away then than going to the funeral and pretend you cared."

"Mhm, you are right." Lea stopped at a drink fountain to get some water. "I'm not saying my parents are perfect, they are not even close to it, but...no matter how horrible they can be, I don't think I could cut them out of my life."

"How if they don't agree with your girlfriend? I mean later, when you have your own place. Maybe Sara's mother didn't want her to be with Sofia."

"Can a fight about your relationship get this bad?"

"Well, my mother doesn't talk to her parents anymore because they're not very happy about my dad. Not my biological dad and the real dad. So we don't write them Christmas cards nor call them on their birthdays but when something happens to them ...I'm not sure mom would stay here."

"Would you want to go to your grandparents funeral?"

"No. They made it obvious they don't want any contact with me anymore after the police thing."

"Was it that big?"

"Yes. The town we lived in is very small and that was... something everybody knew about. I tell you, countryside people can be a little bit different from city people. They care about all of your business, no matter if you want them to or not. Which is in cases like my dad or me bad. In other cases it's great, they care for each other, you can't just rob somebody on the streets, the town would chase you, while nobody cares here."

"Everything has its up- and downsides."

"Yes." They walked around the meadow area at the reservoir because the dogs weren't allowed in there.

"Do you want me to come with you when you go back? Or will you go home? I'd feel awkward there."

"I don't feel awkward, I know I'm not a part of the family ...although they treat me like their daughter...do you know everything about your parents?"

"No, not at all. I think there are some things you don't share with your children. Because it's too personal or to protect them. For example, if I had a child, I wouldn't tell it about bad things that happened to me. I'd try to keep the family a happy place, the rest of the world is bad enough already."

"Yeah, you're right."

"So you want company or not?"

"I think I can manage it on my own, thanks."

"Will they cancel their vacation? You want to go to Lake Tahoe on Saturday, right?"

"Yes, we do. As far as I know it's not cancelled."

"Good for all of you, bad for me. I'll miss you."

"I'll be gone for a week, you don't even know me for a week." Lea laughed.

"And yet it feels like you're best thing about Los Angeles. Better than the Hollywood Sign, better than the Walk of Fame and better than the beaches."

"Don't try to charm me, that doesn't work. You'll be fine without me."

"No, but I'll survive."

"You go out, will meet a lot of other people. Probably girls, who are easier to handle than I am."

"I like challenges as long as they're worth fighting for. Won't you miss me at all?" Lauren stopped and gave Lea her best sad puppy eyes look.

"If I miss you, I'm going to call you. Most likely I'll be too busy with all the sexy lifeguards around. You can go to the beaches here, watch them there."

"Not interested."

"Not sure if I believe you - no, I don't." Lea laughed. "Come on, you can help me with the buggy up the hill."

"Susan is a lucky girl. She spends her days with you, doesn't have to walk up hills, gets her food prepared and drinks served, can sleep in your arms."

"Only when she's a good girl and does what I tell her to do. Means, you have no chances because you proofed a couple of times, you like to do exactly the opposite of what I ask you to do."

"That must have been in the past. A long, long time ago." Lauren grinned and got one side of the buggy.

"How do you feel?" Sofia pulled Sara in her arms and kissed her softly.

"I'm all right."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

"Your mother died."

"Yes and I feel kind of sad. Not sad like you should when your mother dies but...I didn't want her dead."

"She was your mother."

"Never was one."

"But she was your mother. No matter how she acted."

"Yes. Honey, I'd like to go to the B&B they owned when we come back from Tahoe."

"Of course."

"Thanks."

"Susan is asleep." Steve came into the living room. "Is it okay when I'm here? Or do you want to be alone?"

"You're our son, we don't send you away. Come here." Sara petted on the spot between her and Sofia. Steve sat between his mothers, who got him into their arms. "Thanks."

"Mom, are you all right?"

"Yes, I'm okay."

"Grandma...are we going to her funeral?"

"Do you want to go there?"

"I never met her...isn't it what you're supposed to do? She was your mother."

"She was the woman, who gave birth to me. Not a mother. I don't want to go to the funeral, I want to go to the place my parents own when I was a child."

"Okay."

"Is it okay for you?"

"Of course."

"Good. It's your vacation too."

"Mom, she was your mom."

"Then we'll go there. Did Sofia tell you about the twins?"

"No. What is with them? Any problems?"

"No, they're fine, very active. The doctor told us their gender today."

"And?"

"What do you want?"

"I have a baby sister so I'd like to have a baby brother too. But most important is, they're healthy."

"You'll have two healthy baby brothers."

"Seriously?"

"Yes. We'll be even. Three females, three males. You can be the hero for your baby brothers. For Sandy Marc and Saloso Donald."

"The names suck."

"Why?"

"Sandy? For a boy? What do you want him to be? A transvestite or a surfer?"

"I love you, you're such a nice boy." Sara kissed her son.

"And Saloso? Did you get drunk when you chose that one?"

"No, we played with our names. Sara loves Sofia."

"Poor guy."

"You're so not romantic. He has the names of his mothers and his father."

"He'll be bullied in school."

"He has a big brother, who can take care of him. And the captain is his grandmother. You think somebody wants to mess up with her?"

"No. Still, strange names."

"All the good ones with 'S' are taken."

"Scott, Stan, Simon. There are so many normal names."

"This isn't a normal family."

"No, we're not."

"See. Everything fits perfectly. Why weren't you home this afternoon? You were scheduled to work only half a day."

"I know, but Mel had a lot of work for me and she gave me another contract you need. Or Don needs to sign so the babies are all yours. It's on the kitchen table. Wave his parental rights. I'm not sure I could do that."

"He knew it was the condition. And it's not like he has to stay out of their lives." Sofia said.

"No, but he's the daddy. And he acts like it."

"In case anything happens to Sara and me, he'll be the one, who takes care of the twins and Susan. Your grandmother will take care of you, apparently she's the only one, who can handle you."

"Yeah, I'm a bad ass guy, who needs a firm hand. It's what they said in the children's home."

"We know they were a bunch of assholes."

"I love you mom, you're so...straight to the point. Like the captain."

"It runs in the family. So, are you happy about your baby brothers?"

"When they're old enough that they don't cry all the time, use the toilette and I can play ball with them, I'll be happy about them. Until then we leave them most of the time with our grandparents and our place will be quiet. You know, I need silence when I have to study."

"Don't worry, we'll find a way to give you all the time to study. And the silence. I'm sure Lea's parents offer you a place to learn."

"Yes. Poor Lea, she really learnt today. When Susan wasn't awake."

"And she had a visitor over."

"Really?"

"Yes. Lauren was here."

"Oh."

"What's going between them?"

"Why do you think there's something going on between them? Why can't Lauren not just visit Lea? After all, we played last night together video games."

"There's something going on between them, I can feel it. Not sure what it is, but something is there. Is she the new Zoe?"

"No, nobody wants a new Zoe and I won't tell you anything else, you have to ask Lea what is going on. If she wants us to know, she'll tell us."

"Fair enough. I like Lauren."

"Me too."

"Which is important is, does Lea like her? And does she like Lea? Because I don't want her heart broken anymore."

"It will happen, to both of you. You're both so young, your hearts will be broken a few more times. Unfortunately it's a part of our lives." Sofia put her head on Steve's shoulder. She wished she could do something so her son and Jenny would live happy ever after but she was realistic and knew, it was not very likely.

"Okay, let's talk case." Sara pulled Sofia in her arms, made sure her wife was tucked in and warm, although it was hot enough to sleep without a blanket.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. You made some progress today."

"We did. The area, where we suppose their house is, gets smaller and smaller. The FBI works through the night, if everything works the way it should, we wake up tomorrow morning and the case is closed. All babies are back with their parents, we have the paperwork of the other kidnapped babies and soon everybody is where he or she belongs. Does that sound like a modern day fairytale?"

"Yes."

"What a pity. Nevertheless we are closer to get them than we ever were. Thanks to Mister Teaspoon."

"Who talked only to you and not the agent."

"Agent Sexy...I mean, agent Morgan."

"Agent Sexy? Interesting. Do I have to worry?"

"No, he would have been very interesting if I had met him in Vegas. A nice body."

"Maybe I have to come with you tomorrow, I'm not sure if I can go to work when I know, you are close to Agent Sexy. And here I am, thought I have to worry about JJ, while you go after the male agent."

"I don't go after any agent, my wife is the only one I want. The mother of Sandy and Saloso."

"You're their biological mother."

"You're their mother too. We have it written down now. Thanks to Mel."

"Yes, the boys are all ours. I do feel a little bit guilty again because we used Don as the father and he doesn't have any rights. I wish there were a possibility we all could be



responsible for the children. Then again, we told him, he won't have any responsibilities. No money to pay, nothing."

"Which doesn't matter because he's their father and acts like it. Susan calls him dad."

"And it feels right, doesn't it?"

"Absolutely. It's very cute too."

"How do you feel about your mother's death? You had a few hours to think about it."

"Still the same. I try to feel sad, try to cry, but I can't. I think I'd have felt more sorry about her death a few years ago, but after the trial against Trevor and her denying everything, I can't see her as my mother anymore. As cold as it might sound. And I haven't changed my mind about going to her funeral."

"What about calling your brother?"

"No."

"Okay."

"We do the trip to their B&B, that's enough."

"Okay."

"I might dream about my past tonight. Can you wake me up when you hear I've got a nightmare?"

"Of course." Sofia kissed her lover. "Whatever I can do to make you feel better."

"Hold me, be here. Don't leave me for Agent Sexy."

"I don't leave you for anybody." The blonde pulled the brunette closer. "I love you, why would I want to be with anybody else?"

"Because he's sexy?"

"Not as sexy as you are. Your brown eyes are nicer, your ass is sexier and your personality is the best."

"Is it?"

"Absolutely. Plus, you gave me a wonderful daughter, who looks like you. With every day I spend with Susan, I see you growing up and fall more and more in love with you. And Susan. In fifteen years, when she dates, I might be worse than Don when boys come to our place. Protect her from them. Or girls. You never know."

"You and Don go crazy and chase away admirer and devotees, I talk to her, see what she thinks about them. Show her, school is more important than dating."

"You don't make a nerd out of her."

"She has me DNA, she'll be a nerd."

"Half of her is Don's DNA and he knew how to party."

"We'll see. Time to go to sleep, we've a lot of things to do tomorrow. At work and at home. The last day to pack our stuff, prepare the cars so we can leave early."

"One more day and we have a week off. A whole week with you, Greg, Jules and the kids. The perfect vacation in a villa. Something I always dreamed of." Sofia snuggled deeper into Sara's arms. One more day at work and she could forget about all the bad things, that happened every day because she'd be far away from all of it.

## Friday, July 18th

"What time do you finish today?" Sofia kissed Sara and dropped two slices of toast on her lover's plate.

"Three. I hope. What about you?" The brunette washed two apples and placed them in a lunch box next to a salad and cheese sandwich. So many vitamins, she had to wash her mouth with chocolate later.

"Fourish. Depends on the case. Eggs?"

"No, thanks. I saved you a steak, do you want it in a sandwich or plain?"

"Sandwich please. There's some salad left in the fridge, do you want it for lunch?"

"No, you can take it, I'll be out with Shane the whole day, it's too hot to keep it out of the fridge that long."

"All right, then I get you some biscuits and bananas. You need something to eat. We have berries."

"Keep some for Susan."

"I'm sure my parents have plenty of berries for her. Do we have to wake up Steve?"

"No, he has the day off. Remember, he worked longer yesterday."

"Right. We leave him a list with things, he can do."

"Make ourselves very popular?"

"Kind of." The blonde added some berries to the fruits for her wife. Preparing each others lunch was a fun thing to do, something that made her feel closer to her.

"Mom comes and picks Susan up, right?"

"No, your dad. Your mother has yoga. He told her to go there twice a week, make her feel more relaxed."

"He tries to handle her via yoga? Interesting theory. Not sure it will work."

"He goes too, doesn't he?"

"Yes, Runyon Canyon. First yoga than a walk."

"I love Runyon Canyon, we should go there too. Take the dogs with us, climb up the hills. Do some serious cardio workout."

"Maybe in a few months, after the twins are born, I don't weigh a ton anymore and have my energy back."

"Or I walk with some chocolate in front of you."

"That will do too." Sofia pulled Sara in her arms and kissed her. "I love you."

"Love you too. And I have to leave to be in the forest on time. Say hello to your dad, they come over tonight to say goodbye?"

"Yes. Take care of my ranger."

"Take care of my CSI and our baby boys."

"Always."

"Oh, and stay away from Agent Sexy, you're all mine."

"Only yours." Sofia smiled. "Honey?"

"Yes?"

"You call me when you need to talk? About your mother." Sara didn't sleep too good the last night, tossed and turned a lot. Sofia didn't wake her up, only listened to her wife, made sure it wasn't too bad. Nevertheless she wasn't sure if her lover was okay.

"I will. Promise."

"Good. Go and make children happy with stories about Yogi and all the other interesting residents of Angeles National Forest."

"Good morning." Sofia smiled at JJ when she came into the conference room. "Any news from my untiring working FBI agents?"

"We're getting closer and closer. Our team was out until ten last night, are back since seven this morning and we're down to two roads."

"Good news. Anybody looks very suspicious?"

"A dozen houses, that stand offside, two of them were rent out recently. We have somebody out to watch them."

"Can you see what kind of car they drive?"

"No, there are fences, hedges and walls, no sight of a car."

"Did captain Rock call with news?"

"No."

"Bugger." Captain Rock had told them last afternoon she'd go and talk to the people, she believed could be a help, as they were unlikely to talk to the FBI. And if a federal agent appeared there and told them Rock sent him, they'd never talk to her again.

"How was the doctor appointment?"

"Good. She told us the gender."

"And? What are you having?"

"Two boys. Sandy Marc and Saloso Donald."

"Interesting names. Saloso. I never heard that one before."

"Native American."

"Or short for Sara loves Sofia."  
"Yes." Sofia smiled. "How do you know?"  
"Some FBI agents are not that stupid."  
"I know one."  
"Really? Wow, must be somebody special."  
"Yes, the second half of Team Pregnant." Sofia's cell phone rang. "Hello captain, we just talked about you."  
"Anxious to hear any news? I talked to my informant and she gave me a description of somebody, who sounds like the guy, you have on camera. Of course, the description of the man is not very good, but here comes the interesting stuff: she told me, he'll be back this noon and needs six passports."  
"Six?"  
"Yes. He wants them ASAP."  
"Did he say for whom he needs them?"  
"No. Only said six passports, American passports, and how long it would take her. He brings the photos."  
"Who put you on watch?"  
"Your two buddies."  
"Good."  
"Let me know when there's anything new, agent Hotchner is informed."  
"Okay. Thanks." She put her cell phone away. "Captain Rock found the one, who is responsible for the passports. Two officers are at the place, wait for the man to show up."  
"So when we don't find them until then, they follow him and he leads us to the house."  
"Yes. That's the bright side, the downside is, when they want six passports, they'll kidnap another baby. Worst case scenario, they kill another pregnant woman."  
"I'll have both eyes on you and your twin boys. As long as we're here, all three of you are safe."  
"We won't stay here when the action is somewhere else. We can't go to the passport lady, we could have a look at these two houses, that were rent out recently."  
"We?"  
"Yes, I mean, who sends two pregnant women away?"  
"Why would two pregnant women walk around? Get lost?"  
"We took a walk, ran out of water because it's hotter than we expected."  
"They see two pregnant women, one, who looks like she's about to give birth any minute when you don't know she's

pregnant with twins. If they are the guys we're looking for, you find yourself too close to comfort with a scalpel. No, we stay behind the rest."

"Can we go there? Wait for them to finish their search and then decide what to do?"

"You just can't stay way from the action, can you?"

"Barely." One of the reasons why she changed back from CSI to cop. She needed action, she wanted to be in the center of the hurricane, not watch what it did when it was long gone.

"The pregnancy doesn't stop you, what about your leg? It must be more difficult to walk with the extra weight. Aren't you glad when you can sit down?"

"My leg is, the rest of my body isn't. JJ, I hate sitting here and do nothing, it's why I stopped being a cop. A desk is not the perfect place for me to be, I belong outside, where I can do something. Active. And not sit and wait until somebody brings me something to work with. I want to earn it myself."

"Four more months and you're back at the job."

"By then I've got three little children at home and don't want to be back. At least not the first weeks. I'll miss them."

"Or you're glad to be back and have some quiet time. I remember when Henry was small, there were some days when I was glad to be away and don't hear him crying for a few hours."

"The first cries are the best, when they cry they're all right, right?"

"I think so."

"Ouch." Sofia held her belly and started counting. Let's see how many times she got kicked this time.

"Holiday woman, how are you?"

"Still working."

"Right. Any news from home?"

Sara thought about her last night. There were a lot of news, some she liked, some she didn't and some...she still had no idea what to do with. Shane was her friend, she liked him a lot, but she didn't want to talk to him about her mother's death.

"We'll have twin boys."

"Really? Cool. What are their names?"

"Sandy and Saloso."

"You can do better."

"Not the right words to say, Shane."

"What? Am I supposed to lie? To me, Sandy is a sexy blonde girl and the other thing...I have no idea why you chose that."

"It's Native American."

"Are you doing a political statement with the name of your son?"

"No, we're not. We just like the name."

"Where did you find it? Did you look into books with names?"

"The internet. We searched for names, that start with an 'S', wrote our favorites down and then told the other, which ones we like."

"And you both chose Saloso?"

"Sofia did and I liked it."

"You liked it or you wanted her happy and told her you like it?"

"Both. I'm very sure she let me pick Susan's name and I wanted her to pick the name for the boys. Or twins, we had no idea if they're boys or girls."

"Well, nowadays people call their babies after towns, fruits and whatever comes to their mind. At least you can say, the name of your baby has a historical background. Wild Goose Cry."

Surprised Sara looked up. She didn't expect Shane to know this.

"What? Am I not allowed to know that?"

"You're the first, who knows it."

"Oh well, I may have an Irish name, that doesn't mean I'm Irish. Did you know that my ancestors are Native American?"

"Seriously?"

"Yes. The name you picked, it's from the Ga'igwu tribe. They still have their own language."

"You impress me."

"Finally."

"Which tribe are your ancestors from?"

"Navajo. There are some relatives, very far related relatives, in Monument Valley living. We don't have any contact with them, never visit them, but I know they're there. From my dad's side. He made me learn a lot about the different tribes and also learn the language. Or some words of it."

"Is that why you work in a forest? Your natural roots?"

"Maybe." He laughed. "Native American from my father's side, Irish from my mother's side. I had no other choice than love nature and green."

"Apparently. In this case Saloso can't be such a bad choice."

"Wrong tribe."

"What would be a typical Navaro name with 'S'?"

"I have no idea. What is wrong with Shane?"

"Sometimes I feel everything is wrong with the Shane I know, sometimes he is a nice guy. It's a roller coaster ride with this guy."

"You like him."

"Most times."

"You want to hug him."

"No."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

"Too bad."

"Maybe this afternoon, before I go home. We'll see."

"We have to celebrate the names of your sons."

"We do that later. Today I've got other things to do. Pack, prepare for tomorrow."

"Your last chance to invite me to join you."

"I pass on that."

"Bugger."

"You'll survive. Our kids for the day arrived, come on, my personal American Indian, be a good guy and give them a good time."

"The Native Americans were the good guys, the other ones were the bad ones. Even when they tell you different in the movies. It was not the land of the English or Spanish, it was the land of the Navaro or Ga'igwu. They were the intruder and killed the owner."

"I know. A lot of things went wrong back then, probably almost everything and people ignore that. It has always been the privilege of the white man to go somewhere new and take whatever he liked and not being the bad one. No matter if here, in Australia or Asia. They came, took the land, killed the people and announced themselves to be heroes."

"Amen."

"Yes, they also liked to force their religion on other people."

"I think the people of my tribe would like you a lot." Shane smiled. "Come on, time to work. The sooner we start, the sooner you can go home and prepare for your trip."

"Are you done with packing?" Steve hugged Lea when she came into his room.



"Yes, ready to leave."  
"You stay here tonight?"  
"Yes, your grandparents and I are going to a concert. Why aren't you coming?"  
"I have to say goodbye to my girlfriend. One week without her, a long time."  
"It's a shame she can't come with us. Even when it would mean, you had no time for me." Lea dropped on Steve's bed.  
"We'd get you somebody to play too. Like Lauren."  
"Why her?"  
"Because she's cute, she kissed you. Again yesterday. Before you punched the crap out of her."  
"I made a point she understood."  
"You like her."  
"I don't like her being this...cocky."  
"She likes you and shows it. At least you know what's going on with her, not like with Zoe. Lauren is straight forward and doesn't play with you, I like that a lot."  
"Yes...that's good...but still too much for now. I need some time."  
"She gives you that time?"  
"She said so."  
"Good. If not, she'll get in trouble with me." He showed her two shirts. "Which one?"  
"The left one, suits better to your eyes."  
"Oh, you can be so sweet. Shall I pack the Playstation?"  
"I think we can do other things."  
"Like what?" he cocked his head.  
"I'm not Jenny, so get these nasty thoughts out of your head, little dirtbag. We can play a board game, like people back in the days did. Watch a movie with the others. You know, be social. You always tell me to be more social, open up more. With a Playstation you keep the others out."  
"Wow, since when do you listen to what I say?"  
"I always listen, I just don't follow every word you say. Only the ones, that make sense. Leave the Playstation here, I saw in the living room board games, let's get two or three of them. And we have to pack toys for Susan. Are her clothes packed?"  
"No, we have to do it too. And don't forget the dogs."  
"Okay. Anything else?"  
"Prepare dinner, maybe even the breakfast for tomorrow and take the dogs out for a walk. Not sure when my moms show up,

we can't prepare the cars before they're back. Oh, mom got a emergency list from her doc yesterday, we should copy it and take two copies with us, in case she loses the original."

"For her, Sandy and Saloso. Two little brothers. You'll be more famous than Superman."

"I am Superman."

"Sure." Lea laughed. "I get us some DVDs. For us and for the kiddies." Sara and Sofia bought a lot of DVDs with old cartoons. In their eyes, the old cartoons were drawn with love, showed a nice world and were more suitable for children than the things, you could see nowadays on TV.

"We have the possible houses narrowed down to four." JJ said after she finished a phone call.

"Okay. Now what?"

"Your colleagues haven't called, means nobody asked for the passports yet and we haven't another missing child."

"Which can be good or bad. Good when they don't plan to get another baby, bad when they plan to kill a pregnant woman to get the baby. Nobody calls us until her body is found."

"We have an alert on missing people. If anybody reports a pregnant woman missing, we know about it ASAP."

"Good. These four houses, how far are they apart?"

"Two are on the same street, all in an radius within half a mile. That's the problem, we can't just walk into them, we start with the wrong one and the kidnapper might get tipped off."

"All four together?"

"We can't go in rogue, it's too dangerous. Imagine how many people you need to secure the scene and ensure civilians are not at risk."

"LAPD does it when the bust drug dealer."

"Then it's planned a few weeks, they have a few dozen people ready, who all know, what the other one does. When we call all available units in, we can't brief them in a short time. It's too dangerous. For the babies."

"Yes, you can make them disappear within minutes. I'm sure they'd rather lose the babies than being caught." Make disappear meant kill them. "I'm not sure if the babies are better off dead or alive. Does that sound weird?"

"To me it makes perfect sense." JJ sat down, poured some tea.

"If they go to loving parents, who chose the wrong way to get a

child, they're better off alive. When they get sold to a porn  
pervert they're better off dead. In my opinion."

"Do you think they'll call us before the action starts?"

"No."

"Me neither." The blonde tapped her fingers on the table. "Let's  
go there. When something happens, we're there, we see what's  
going on. We're pregnant, not on sick leave."

"Sofia..."

"No JJ, you either come or I go alone. I'm not waiting here  
until everything is over when I can be where the action is. They  
might need us."

"You don't make us very popular." JJ sighed and got up.

"You don't have to."

"Honey, we're one team, Team Pregnant. We go there together  
or stay here."

"Thanks. I drive."

"You know the way."

"What are you doing here?" Agent Morgan greeted the two  
women, when he saw them walk down the street toward his  
car.

"Waiting for the action." Sofia sent him her most wonderful  
smile.

"You should be in the department."

"Why?"

"You're not in a physical condition to be here."

"My physical condition and I feel very good here. We're  
pregnant, not sick. You either get us up to date or we have to  
figure it out all by ourselves. We're colleagues, it's our right to  
know what's going on and participate."

Morgan looked at JJ. "Do you have a gun license for her?"

"No, she's too dangerous for that. Any news? Do we have  
another missing baby?"

"Not that we're aware of that. We excluded one more house,  
three are left."

"Which one?" Sofia asked.

"Have a look." He got his tabled out. "This one here we  
excluded, it's empty. We used cameras, heat detectors."

"Did you do the same with the other three?"

"We tried, the buildings are too far away and it's too warm to  
do it now."

"Could you see anybody?"

"These three houses are quiet, we saw some movements behind curtains, so we know people are at home."

"Bring a delivery man into the scene."

"Do you believe they let somebody in? When they haven't ordered anything." They're not stupid."

"Who would you let in when he rings your doorbell?"

"With five kidnapped children I'd not open the door to anybody."

"What would you do when the police came to your door?"

"No warrant, no right to enter."

"Exigent Circumstances. A serial killer escaped from custody, is on the run. LAPD wants to make sure he's not on the property."

Morgan thought about her suggestion. "We have to run this with Hotchner."

"Prepare a TV alert, makes the story more realistic. I can call Penelope, she can prepare something fast."

"Do that."

"I call captain Rock, you need LAPD on this."

"I'd rather have our men going in."

"Of course you do, she has to know nevertheless. She's the leading captain."

"Okay, let her know. We meet in thirty minutes in the van."

"Looks like you get your action." JJ said.

"Which means, we could have the babies with us within the next hours." Or risk their lives for nothing. As much as Sofia wanted to do something, she also feared what could happen in case they made a mistake.

"Don't you just look like the sexiest cop Los Angeles has ever seen?" Sofia commented when she saw agent Morgan in a LAPD uniform.

"I don't have to look sexy, I have to make them believe I'm a LAPD cop."

"Why wouldn't you? Are you overqualified?"

"No. Are you ready?" He looked captain Rock, who had insisted to join the FBI.

"Yes, let's pull it off."

"Good luck." Sofia put on her headphone and watched the screens. She knew there were four police cars on the back of the property, while five minutes ago Hotchner and Blake rang the doorbell of the house to the left while Rossi and Reid were

in the house on the right. Another four black and whites were waiting close by, they had enough backup to take down a little army. The problem was, they weren't taking down an army, they were rescuing babies. Which meant, there were innocent lives on the line.

"Can you hear me?" Morgan's voice came out of the headset.

"Loud and clear."

"We're getting in."

Sofia looked at the TV screen again. The L.A. News were on, bringing their faked case about a dangerous serial rapist on the loose in the Hollywood Hills area. LAPD was out, searching the area and in order to find this perpetrator fast and bring security back to all citizen, they were also asking to get into buildings close to the escaped area. It was for all their safety.

"Would you let LAPD in after you saw this?" JJ asked.

"I live with a LAPD detective."

"Okay."

"Nevertheless, if I had something to hide, like five babies, I'd not let them in. They'd see them and how could I explain five babies in my house?"

"Babysitter?"

"One possibility." Sofia looked at the screen. Morgan wore a little camera in his button, she could see the front door of the house, they suspected the baby kidnapper inside. Quality wooden door, with carved in decoration.

The door was opened by a tall Caucasian man appeared.

"Yes?"

"LAPD." Rock held up her badge, Morgan did the same with his faked ID. Another little wonder made by the cooperation of LAPD and the FBI. "We're sorry to disturb you, Sir. Maybe you have watched the news lately, we're looking for a serial rapist, who escaped in this area."

"I haven't seen anybody."

"I noticed you have your property secured."

"Yes."

"This man is known for interfering with security systems. We'd like to have a look around, make sure he's not here."

"I don't think that's necessary."

Sofia tried to recognize any signs of the man feeling nervous or acted weird. So far she didn't pick up anything.

"I can understand you feel safe, as I said, he knows a lot about security systems. Do you have family?"

"No."

A baby started crying somewhere. The first time Sofia saw nervousness in the man's face. He didn't have a family and yet there was a baby crying. Would he go for the TV excuse?

"I'm sorry, I have to get back inside, my nephew needs me."

"Sir, we really would like to check out your property."

"Listen, I don't think somebody has been around and..."

"Just check out the property, in fact, we don't need a warrant."

"Then why did you bother to ask?"

"We'd like you to know what's going, what we're doing here."

Rock paused. "Why don't you go to your niece and we check the property."

"Okay."

"Niece? He said, he has a nephew." Sofia mumbled. "He's so lying."

"Yes." JJ agreed.

"Entering the garden, keep an eye on the house." Morgan said quietly.

"They could enter the house, not only the garden." Sofia said.

"Yes, but then they risk the safety of the babies. There are more people, he isn't alone, there has to be a doctor or a nurse, taking care of the babies. And I bet they're all armed."

"Very likely."

"We've got some movement behind a window, second level, third window from the left. Male. Doesn't look too friendly." Rossi's voice came out of the speaker.

"Got another one, female, ground floor, backside of the house."

"I can hear more babies crying." Reid had an ultra sensitive microphone pointed towards the house.

"It's them."

"Guys, we've got a car rolling up the gate." Don's voice appeared.

Sofia looked at the screen, that showed the gate. A black Sedan stopped in front of the gate.

"Wait a minute. This is the car of the other videos."

"Why is the gate still unlocked? They should have their own key." The car started moving backwards. "They're trying to get away, stop them as soon as they're away from the property." Sofia said. "They turn west."

"I can see them, we get them." Lynn answered.

"You better get ready to enter, when they get stopped, they'll call their friends."

"We're ready."

"It's getting serious." She watched how Lynn and a colleague stopped the car, moved to the door, opened it and took something away from the driver. A cell phone? While her colleague took care of the driver another officer, who stopped his black and white behind the black Sedan, chased the man, who took off from the passenger's seat.

"He's getting away, hurry." JJ's eyes were glued on the screen. From the traffic camera she could see the chase.

"Lynn's got a baby." Sofia said. She saw her friend rocking a little bundle, that had to be a baby. Number six. "I'm glad she's here and not waiting for the men to show up for the faked passports."

"Moving in!" Morgan's voice got their attention back to the house. They kicked in the front door.

"Suspect on the move east of the building. He tries to get away."

"Suspect detained."

"I've got a suspect and five babies."

"How are they? Come Blake, tell us how the babies are." Sofia skidded on her chair. She wanted to know about the babies, the men were only her second highest priority.

"House is secured, two suspects detained. JJ, give me the heads up." Morgan said.

"The two guys from the Sedan are secured. The garden guy is still running. How are the babies? Can we send in the EMT?"

"Yes, but the babies look fine to me."

"Are they all there? All of our five babies?"

"Yes, all here. And they're fine from what I can tell."

"Good. We're coming in." Sofia ended the call and looked at JJ.

"Are you coming?"

"No, you go, I call the parents. They should know first their babies are fine."

"Good idea. I see that they can have them in their arms soon. Can you do me a favor?"

"Sure."

"Can you call the father of Conrad Javier first?"

"Of course."

"Thanks. See you later." Sofia got out of the van. It was important to her to have the man, who lost his wife during child birth, know first his baby was fine and he could have him back soon.

She guessed it would take her a few minutes to walk up to the house - mostly because she felt like a whale stranded in hell with the noon sun boiling her with every step she took - she decided to call her wife.

"Hey, are you okay?" Sara greeted her lover.

"Yes. We arrested the kidnapper and have the babies. They're all fine and here."

"Really? That's great."

"Yes. They have a another baby, it just arrived in the black limousine. Or shall I say, two kidnapper arrived with it in the limousine? Anyway, it's fine too. We haven't figured out where they got it from, which concerns me a little bit."

"Nobody called 911 to report a missing child? That's bad." Sara said. "You're likely looking for a body."

"Yes. The FBI is taking the two guys, who were in the car, downtown to find out, where they got the baby from."

"I hope the mother is alive."

"Me too. How are you doing?"

"I'm fine. In fact with your news, I feel like going on vacation right away. It means you come home on time, doesn't it?"

"Yes. I miss you."

"And I love you."

"Love you more."

"Go and bring back the babies to their parents. I'm proud of you."

"Thanks." Sofia smiled. Maybe this story got its happy end after all. It was one of the cases, that gotten into her a lot and she was very happy it was over now.

Sofia didn't leave the sides of the babies. She waited when the EMT checked on all babies, none of them was harmed, all of them were in good physical condition.

"You look like a happy mother between her babies." Captain Rock came into the room.

"I'm very happy to have them all back. Agent Jareau calls the parents. I want them to get their babies back ASAP."

"I ordered a small bus with child car seats, you can ride with them to the department and give the babies back. This is a crime scene, we'll spend a few more hours here."

"Where are the men?"

"On the way to the FBI headquarter. They'll take care of them."

"One is still missing?"



"I'm sure we'll catch him too."

"Hopefully." Sofia picked up a baby. "You'll see your daddy soon, Conrad. He'll be over the moon to have you back." The boy laughed at her. "You're a smart boy, you understand every word I say, don't you? Your daddy will be so proud of you." She cuddled him and held him in her arms. "I bet you missed him. Very soon you have him back, then you and him can start all over again. He needs you, you know your mommy died when you were born, but that doesn't mean you and your daddy have to stay alone forever. You have to find a new woman for him, a good one, who'll be a good mommy for you. The two of you deserve a very special woman in your life." She looked at the captain. "Don't you think the same, captain?"

"Yes, I do. And I found something else out."

"What's that?"

"To me you were always the perfect cop, I don't have to mention again that I want you back in my team, but to see you with this boy, see how you interact with him, how much love you show him although you see him for the first time today, shows me, you're not born to be a cop you're born to the a mother."

"Who says you can't be both?"

"I'm sure you could be both."

"One day. Ouch, did you feel that, Conrad? One of my boys said hello. How about we go get you and your five buddies ready for the trip to the police station? I hope this is the last time you all see the department from the inside - until you all come back as cadets."

"And get trained by one of the best captains LAPD ever had,."

"You'll train them? You heard that, guys? Captain Rock will be there to greet you."

"I thought more of you, Sofia."

"You won't let go of this, will you?"

"No. I'll get you back, Sofia. Believe me, I will."

"We'll see." Sofia put Conrad back into his bed. This was one of the best moments of her career. All babies well and on the way back to their parents.

"They caught the baby kidnapper and found all babies." Sara hugged Shane. "It's over."

"Really? That's great. Did Sofia call you?"

"Yes."

"When can the parents have their babies back?"

"Soon. The babies get checked and when the EMT guys say they're all fine, I'm sure nobody will keep the babies away from their parents."

"And nobody will keep your wife away from you. When they closed the case, she can come home on time."

"Yes. She might stay at the house a little bit, there'll be evidence, but she will be home on time. And so will Greg, who has some work left too."

"Wit his wife working."

"Jules stopped at noon, she has to pack for three children."

"A lot of work. Packing three suitcases for children, her own, her husband's and get the house ready because no woman likes to come back to a dirty house."

"She won't." Sara smiled. "Her wedding gift made sure of that."

"Her wedding gift? Did she get a vacuum cleaner?"

"No, a cleaner for a year. Sofia, Kyle, Lynn, Tony, Sally, Don, Tanya and I paid a cleaner for them, who will once a week come over for two hours and do the basics. She doesn't have to worry about sweeping, vacuuming or dusting anymore. Or can leave the laundry for the cleaner."

"A good gift, very handy."

"Not only handy, it gives her more time for herself and her family. When somebody takes care of your laundry, you can go and watch a movie. Or have a coffee with your spouse. You can give Sofia and me the same for our first anniversary."

"Sure, if I find a few more people, who join me and you can have a cleaner. Male or female? Dressed or undressed?"

"Male, undressed."

"Why do you want an undressed man?"

"Because I can have a naked woman whenever I want. Sofia and I will enjoy watching a naked man vacuuming our home."

"You're weird."

"We enjoy the beautiful things in life. Like with Thunder from Down Under."

"Do you have to clean the villa before you leave it?"

"No, we only have to take our belongings with us, take the trash out during the week, that's it. Lou has his cleaner, who looks after the house all the time. No matter if somebody stays in there or not."

"It must be great to have a lot of money."

"You can make some dreams come true, but it doesn't make you happy. You can't buy love or friendship. Nor happiness or health. Plus a lot of money means a lot of people, who are jealous and want your money, so you have to worry about that. Attention of strangers, no matter where you are, if you want to be recognized. I prefer my life, I have everything I need, a wonderful wife, children, great friends, a job I enjoy, we're all healthy or healthy enough to enjoy our lives, why should I ask for me? When you have everything, you forget to appreciate things, forget to be grateful for what you have."

"Amen."

"You'd prefer a Ferrari, don't you?"

"Could be a number faster and bigger, but yes, a Ferrari would be nice."

"Of course. Men and cars." Sara rolled her eyes. Where was the difference between a Ferrari and a Ford? With all the speed limits in the city and on the highways, what use did a fast car have?

"Back on time." Sofia pulled Sara in her arms and kissed her passionately. This was a good day, the baby kidnapper case was closed, she came home on time, her lover was there. What more could a woman ask for?

"Yes and you're back with a smile. I like it when my wife comes home with a smile on her face."

"I like it when I come home and you're here. Where are Steve and Susan?"

"Susan is with her grandparents, they insist on keeping her until after dinner, as they have to live without her for a whole week. We thought a week off will be nice for them, it looks more like we punished them. Steve and Susan prepared everything we asked them to do, now they're out, having a burger. Jules called, she has everything organized so far, she'll call later again."

"Okay, where does that leave us?"

"Packing the cars, getting the child car seats in so we only have to get ourselves into the cars tomorrow morning."

"And the food."

"Yes, and the food. Are the babies back with their parents?"

"Yes." The blonde sat down on the couch. "They're all back. I've never seen so many happy parents at one place. When they came to the house with the last baby, we didn't have a missing

child alert, feared they killed another woman, but the baby was a few days old, not a newborn. The mother called a little bit later, she had fallen asleep while they took her baby."

"Fallen asleep?" Sara had no idea how you could sleep so deep and long, that you don't realize your baby was gone.

"Yes. They were out in the garden, when she fell asleep. For two hours. Before she sat down to read her book she wasn't sleepy, it hit her out of the blue. I assume they put something in her iced tea. She left it outside when she went inside to get her baby."

"They really used all tricks."

"Yes. But in the end we were smarter and got all the babies back to their parents."

"Good. Which also means, you can close the case for yourself. It was on your mind all the time, it had gotten into you, you'll feel better now that they're caught."

"Yes. There are more men like them, it was only a small step, but it's better than nothing and we got six babies back to their parents."

"A happy end."

"When you ignore some fact. Like dead women, who were about to become mothers, babies abducted, children living far away from their originally home, with strangers, raised by strangers, or abused by perverts. All in all it's not a happy end story, only a story with an end. For a happy end there are too many other people, who abduct babies and children. I'm sure their group is bigger, that they will continue with this."

"Some stories don't have a happy end like in a fairytale."

"Like the one of you and mother."

"Yes." Sara sighed. "I thought about her and myself a few times today. And Sam."

"Do you want to talk to him?"

"No. I should, but...I can't. I don't want to be pulled into it. And I haven't changed my mind about the funeral. This chapter of the story of my life is closed and I don't plan to reopen it. Nor to continue it."

"Okay. So it's the stop at their old B&B."

"Yes. The past is important, it made you who you are, but you don't have to stay this person. We're all entitled to change and have a different future. My future is here, my future is you, our children. I don't want my past interfere with my future."

"But you do know that when you change your mind, we can always take the trip to San Francisco."

"I know."

"Good."

"Your new FBI friends, will they stay any longer?" Sara changed the topic.

"Hotchner, Rossi and Morgan stay until Sunday, the rest will fly home tonight."

"No more Team Pregnant."

"No. I'll miss working with JJ."

"And Agent Sexy."

"He looked very sexy as a LAPD officer. Filled out the uniform very nicely."

"Honey, these are details you don't tell your wife."

"Why not? I took a photo. Front and back." Sofia pulled her cell phone out of her pocket and showed Sara the photos of Morgan, she secretly took.

"Wow, he really fills out the uniform in a very nice way. From both sides." The brunette smirked. "You know, I told Shane today what he can give us for our anniversary: a naked cleaner. Agent Sexy could be the cleaner."

"Agent Morgan in his birthday suit on our anniversary? Is that a kind of menage a trois?"

"By then I'm not pregnant anymore, we can suggest it to him."

"You'd like that."

"Actually, I wouldn't. I don't want to share you, a menage a trois would mean, he touches you too. I'd kill him, very slowly when he has his hands on your naked body. Not to imagine when he has something else on you. In you."

"And now he's not Agent Sexy anymore, he's an enemy. A potential threat." Sofia laughed and kissed Sara. "You're so easy to play."

"I heard different."

"Maybe from suspects, they don't know you. I'm your wife, I know you, I know every inch of your body and of your personality. To me, you're an open book."

"You know how to make me forget all responsibilities with just saying a sentence."

"You mean, I know what to say and how to say it to make you horny? Yes, I do. And I admit, I use this knowledge sometimes."

"Like now?"

"Yes." Sofia pulled Sara in her arms. "Our kids are out, I'm sure we have like thirty minutes to spare for ourselves. Why don't we celebrate that our vacation have started now? In a very close and personal way?"

"Sexy close?"

"Sexy personal."

"Oh, I'd so like that. And I think, we might even have forty-five minutes."

"Let's not waste one second of them."

## Saturday, July 19th

It was the first time in a long, long time that Sara didn't complain when the alarm clock woke her up at five in the morning. Time to rise and shine, wake her wife, who snorted (!) next to her and their two, no three, children. She couldn't forget her adopted daughter.

"Rise and shine, Darling."

Sofia grumbled and turned away, not willing to listen to her wife. This wasn't scene like in a Hollywood romance, when spouses were happy about the voice of the other.

"Time to get up, Lake Tahoe is waiting for us. One week of vacation. Or do you want to stay home alone?"

"One more minute."

"All right, you stay in bed, I get ready and when you're not in the kitchen on time, we leave without you."

"Mean woman."

"Love you too." Sara kissed Sofia's hair and got up. The drive up to Lake Tahoe was seven and a half hours without any break, which meant, with breaks they'd be on the road for nine to ten hours. By seven Sara and Sofia were supposed to stop their car in front of Jules's and Greg's house, Steve and Lea behind them. Which meant, there were two hours for them to finish packing the car, get themselves dressed and ready, and do the same with Susan.

"Good morning, mom." Steve smiled widely when Sara came into the kitchen.

"Good morning, Sunshine, how are you?"

"Excited. The first time I can drive a car this far."

"You share the drive with Lea."

"Yes, I will. Doesn't matter. Your car is ready for the kids, mom's car is ready for the dogs. I gave them breakfast, as soon as we had breakfast, Lea and me will take them around the reservoir, twice, with us on bikes, they're tired when we start... where is mom?"

"In bed. I told her we leave without her when she's late."

"That's cruel."

"The rules are clear, one says, we have to meet Jules and Greg at seven. Where is Lea."

"In the bathroom, our bags are packed, we take them downstairs when we go out with the dogs."

"You're a wonderful son."

"I know." He grinned. "Look, Sleepy Beauty is awake. Morning mom."

"Morning." With her eyes half closed Sofia came on crutches into the kitchen area. "Wife, I need you to wash my back."

"Bossy." Steve chuckled.

"Yeah, I use cold water." Sara blinked at her son and turned.

"Okay, come on, shower time and then we have to get started."

"This is me getting started."

"Change into a higher gear." The brunette opened the door to the bathroom and vanished inside with her wife.

"Mom talks to mom the same way she talks to me when I try to be late for school. Interesting."

"What's interesting?" Lea came out of the second bathroom with a towel around her head.

"Your style. Indian?"

"Very funny. Are we on time?"

"Kind of. You get yourself ready within the next ten minutes and we are."

"All I need is to dry my hair."

"You do that, I get breakfast ready. Scrambled eggs?"

"Egg sunny side down, on toast with cheese and bacon. Don't forget mustard and tomato sauce. Two more toasts afterwards and cold chocolate milk."

"You are a demanding woman."

"Get used to it, this is how your life will look when you're married."

"Jeez, I might stay single, or at least not married, for the rest of my life." He laughed. So far Jenny hadn't been like this, maybe he was lucky or she'd change after their wedding. If I were to get married one day.

Not too far from Owens Lake they made their first break after three hours. The dogs used the time to run around, chase themselves and the treats Eric and Jorja threw for them.

"We're almost half way there." Sara stretched.

"It's not even eleven and it's hot like hell. I'm not sure it was a good decision to get this way up to Tahoe." Greg said.

"The traffic here is lower than on the highway. Especially with all the holiday traffic going on. And we haven't been on this side of the Yosemite and Sequoia."

"All you want is a long break at Mono Lake."



"Oh yes, it's a wonderful place. I always wanted to go there. Wahoo, Susan, where are you going?" She caught her daughter before she took off behind the dogs. "You can't run away, there might be snakes around."

"Doo!"

"Yes, Scooby comes back soon. Don't worry."

"Lou?"

"Yes, you can go over to Louise and play with her. Or with Eric and Jorja." The twins were playing with a ball, kicking it backwards and forward.

"Mom."

"You want to play with your mom? Okay, let's play tag. Try to catch your mom. And get Louise to help you. Hey Louise, come on, you and Susan have to catch me." Sara started to jog away from the two little girls, letting them get close and to tag her before she ran a little bit faster. Soon Jorja and Eric joined them and Sara had to concentrate and pay attention not to get caught.

"Aren't they cute?" Sofia asked.

"Yes, your wife is a wonderful mother." Greg agreed. "I love her, I love to watch her playing with the children. My Sara changed so much since she left Las Vegas."

"Your Sara? The last time I checked I married her and you never were together with her. She turned you down, like a dozen times. In one year."

"Shut up, my wife is here."

"She knows all these things, she knows more about Sara than you do. Maybe even more than I do. Which is nothing I like."

"Maybe you two school girls should play tag too." Jules suggested.

"No, I'm too pregnant."

"I'm too...lazy."

"Okay, in this case I play tag with Sara and the kids." Jules got up. "Hey kids, try to tag me." She joined Sara and ran with her together.

"Now we've our wives busy, you know what that means."

"Yes, they'll fall asleep and we have to do the drive alone."

"Hey, there's no chance for a cold dip in the lake!" Steve and Lea came back from Owens Lake.

"It's a dry lake, of course you can't swim in it." Sofia laughed.

"It's been dry for eighty years, besides of a little bit of water, you can't really call a lake."

"Why did we stop here?"

"Because the dogs can run."

"And because this way you learn something about geology."

Lea sat down on the ground. "The lake is currently a large salt flat whose surface is made of a mixture of clay, sand, and a variety of minerals including halite, mirabilite, thenardite, and trona. In wet years, these minerals form a chemical soup in the form of a small brine pond within the dry lake. When conditions are right, bright pink halophilic archaea spread across the salty lakebed. Also, on especially hot summer days when ground temperatures exceed one hundred and fifty Fahrenheit, water is driven out of the hydrates on the lakebed creating a muddy brine. More commonly, periodic winds stir up noxious alkali dust storms that carry away as much as four million tons of dust from the lakebed each year, causing respiratory problems in nearby residents."

"Eager beaver."

"Wikipedia?" Sofia cocked her head.

"Yes. When we decided to stop here, I looked it up and memorized a part."

"Why?"

"This way I train my brain, which can be very helpful when we're back in school and have to learn a lot of things, we don't really care about, but have to know for a test. It's knowledge I keep for a short time and then it's gone away. By tomorrow I can't repeat what I just told you."

"I'm not that impressed anymore."

"Me neither." Steve got up. "Can we continue? Are mom, Jules and the stinkies running?"

"No, we get them back here." Greg got up. "Beautiful ladies, Eric, time to go back to the cars, we have to continue. Next stop Mono Lake, taking photos for Sara and having lunch."

"Why can't we stop at a place with burgers or any other kind of fast food?" Steve complained.

"Because we have like five dozen sandwiches in the esky." Lea grinned.

"Esky?"

"Cooler. I'm learning Australian English, when we go to OZ we have to understand them."

"Since when are you and my son going to Australia?" So many news she had never heard of.

"Sofia, you get him back. We might just leave for a while to learn something new, experience a new country. For a few months."

"What happened to college?"

"We try to keep as many possibilities as possible."

"What about Jenny?"

"Who says she can't come with us?"

"Mom, we will finish high school first, so the next two years you have me here."

"Good, I want my baby boy close." Sofia pulled Steve in her arms and kissed his cheek.

"This is so embarrassing." Steve rolled his eyes. Luckily nobody was around to see his mother treating him like a baby.

"Wow, this is so...wham!" Sofia turned around after the first steps she took in the villa. "I love this place! Look at the kitchen, it's huge. The table, we can have a few more children."

"There are twelve chairs, we are ten people, with the two unborn twins all seats are taken." Sara said.

"Which means, you think about coming back here next year?"

"I think about coming here for Christmas, Lou Lee has a crush on you, all you have to do is ask him and he'll give you what you want." Sara chuckled.

"He'll be the godfather of one of the boys, I'm sure we get the house."

"Hell, yeah, look at the TV!" Steve starred at the blank wall.

"I can't see a TV." Jules furrowed her brows.

"You see the beamer up there? We have our own cinema! Or play video...oh shi...shields, we didn't take the PS4. Lea, right now I hate you for not taking it with us. Board games. Gosh, we could play our games her life-sized."

"You'll survive."

"What a view." Greg pulled Jules into his arms. From their living room windows, that were from the floor to the ceiling, they could overlook a part of the lake. Deep blue water, shining in the late afternoon sun, the green trees of the forest between them and the water, no other buildings in view on the left or right side. The only sign of other human beings around were two small boats on the lake.

"It's great, isn't it?"

"Yes. I want our bedroom facing this direction."

"Don't we all want this bedroom?" Sofia asked.

"The bar is stocked." Sara caught Eric, who tried to climb on a stool. "Stop right there, young man, this is too high for you. Let me show you your room."

"Sara's room?"

"No, you get a room with Jorja, I share my room with Sofia."

"Why?"

"Because she's my wife. Like your daddy shares his room with your mommy. Only Steve and Lea have their own rooms."

"So he can talk the whole night to Jenny and I can sleep."

"You're just jealous."

"The kids are fighting, go and pick a room. Remember, Greg and Jules want one with a lake view, so do your mothers."

"I take the room far away from all of you so I don't have to listen to your night activities." Steve took his big sports bag, he used for his clothes and started climbing up the stairs.

"He's such a lovely boy." Sara took Eric on her arms. "Come on, we look for a room for you." She carried him up the stairs. There were three bedrooms on the second floor and three on the third, each floor had two bathrooms. "Look Eric, you can sleep here, I sleep in the room next to you."

"Mom?"

"Your mom sleeps in the other level below us. You and Jorja are big, you can walk up and down the stairs, Susan and Louise have to be carried. Can you stay up here? With Steve, Sofia and me?"

"Yes. Big boy."

"Exactly." Sara kissed her godson. "Look, you have big windows facing the forest. Maybe you can see a deer in the evening or in the early morning."

"Bambi?"

"Maybe."

"I've got...the bag with the water bottles." Sofia gasped for air.

"Are you sure we want to stay up here? Your wife is pregnant and..."

"As long as my wife thinks she can work, she walk stairs. Quite easy." Sara kissed Sofia. Yes, the level below would be easier for Sofia, but some exercise couldn't hurt.

"Thanks."

"You're welcome. You can stay up here, discover the rooms with Eric, I get the luggage."

"Me too. Big boy."

"You want to carry something too? Okay, you can get our games and your dolphin. It needs to know where your bed is."

"Here." Eric pointed to the bed on the left. In this room were two queen sized beds. "Big bed."

"Yes, very big. Okay, let's get your dolphin. Do you want to stay here, Honey?" Sara pulled Sofia in her arms for a second.

"Please, I need to get some air and can unpack. We take the room with the lovely king sized bed on the left?"

"Yes, I can't share a smaller bed with you, the twins take too much space. Steve get two beds."

"What a shame Jenny isn't here."

"I doubt they'd need two beds."

"Right." Sofia walked into their bedroom. A big room, five by five, big windows overlooking the forest and the lake. On the left she could see a few other buildings. It would take them five minutes by car to get into the village, to the next shop or restaurant. A hidden place, a quiet place. When she looked down she saw a patio with a hot tub. If Greg and Jules picked this room they had a nice extra. One, they had to share. Sofia intended to be in the hot tub tonight when the kids were in bed, with a glass of...juice, watch the stars and have her wife in her arms.

One whole week lay ahead of them. One week away from home, away from work, away from the rest of their friends. She'd miss their evening in the garden, the mornings with Don, meeting Lynn and Kyle. Then again, she wouldn't miss the noise, the sirens, all the people, it was hard to be alone somewhere in Los Angeles during the summer. And it was hot down there. Here it was fresh, not even eighty degrees.

"Mom, did you pack bricks?" Steve dropped Sofia's suitcase on the floor.

"Books, clothes and other important things."

"Like what?"

"Your PS4."

"Seriously?"

"Yes."

"Oh mom, you're the greatest." He kissed her cheek. "You really brought the PS4?"

"I knew Lou would have a huge TV screen, the perfect place for your new games. There'll be a time when the babies are in bed, your moms are busy with each other, Greg and Jules

locked in their room and you and Lea are left alone in this boring place."

"You did see the table tennis table and the billiard table downstairs?" He smiled. The downstairs area did have not only a big living room, an open kitchen, a bar and a huge dining table, but also a table tennis table and a billiard table. As was a pinball machine.

"I did. All fun, we have to try them all."

"Absolutely. I get the bags of the stink bomb."

"Your wonderful sister. Thanks."

"Stinky."

"Bad brother. Will you be nicer to your brothers?"

"Will they use the toilette?"

"In two or three years."

"I like them after kindergarten."

"You'll like them right away."

"Whatever." He left the room and almost fell into the arms of his other mother.

"Slowly. Or are you a runaway?"

"I'm a hard working young man."

"Sure." Sara put her suitcase down. "Are you okay?"

"Yes. I love the room, the view, you. Not particular in this order." The blonde smiled and kissed her wife. "Where is Susan?"

"She and Lea are getting Susan's bed ready. All her stuffed friends have to be there otherwise our daughter can't sleep."

"Right. We should go down too, shouldn't we? Unpack, get the barbecue started. It must be behind the house."

"It is, I had a look. As well as a small heated pool. We can unpack the most important things, one starts the barbecue, one gets the salad, the fridge is really stocked, so we don't have to go shopping. And two can look after the kids."

"I know my godchild wants to get into the water. So will our daughter."

"Do you want to get into the water too?"

"No, I take the barbecue. For now. Later I want to be in the hot tub with you."

"I'm all yours."

"You'll be mine all night, something I really look forward to."

"Lou wishes us a wonderful time and when we need anything, we are supposed to call the number of the lady, who takes care

of the place." Sofia slipped next to Sara in the hot tub. The two of them had taken the non alcoholic sparkling wine Lou had left for them in the fridge and some strawberries upstairs after the children were in bed. Steve and Lea used the beamer and experienced a new version of Playstation 4 on a huge screen while Greg and Jules sat on the other side of the hot tub with a bottle of champagne.

"I can't imagine we need anything else. His house has everything. Did you have a look in the basement? There's a sauna. And a gym and a room with mattresses. Maybe for Lou's girlfriend to practice."

"Perfect. I told him we want the house for Christmas. You and I have the holidays off, Greggo, Jules doesn't work anyway and Sara can surely work something out with Shane. Christmas and New Years Eve up here, surrounded by snow."

"What if Lou wants to use the place for himself?" Sara asked.

"He doesn't. His girlfriend wants them to visit her parents."

"His girlfriend isn't somebody, you should argue with."

"Exactly. When we want, we can have the place."

"I talk to Shane, promise him he can have the next premiere tickets for Lou's movie and he should agree. Jules? Greg? Do you want to join us?"

"Our parents won't like the idea, neither will your parents, Sofia." Jules said. "But I like the idea. When you're at home, you always find something to do, it's never a real vacation. Here we have to worry about nothing. Plus I can't remember the last time I had snow on Christmas Day. Honey?"

"When we visit my parents early December it should be okay. I'd love to have snow for Christmas too."

"You tell your parents-in-law." Sofia smiled at Sara.

"Oh, I will invite them."

"I beg your pardon?"

"We'll have a spare room, I doubt Lea is allowed to stay away, they can have her room. Gives us two more babysitter."

"Be honest, you'd miss your in-laws when they're not around." Greg laughed.

"Yes, I would. I like them a lot. Don't you miss your in-laws?"

"Uhm, I like them, but I can spend Christmas without them." He looked carefully at his wife. Was the honest answer the wrong one?

"Me too, don't worry. We accept the offer. Do you think Steve wants to join us?"

"Who says we ask him? We're his mother, when we tell him to come with us, he has to obey." Sara grinned.

"Yeah sure, you know how good that will work." Sofia chuckled. "No, we'll ask him, hopefully he joins us, when he wants to stay in Los Angeles to be with Jenny...he's old enough to be alone for a few days. Well, he is not really alone, there are other people in the house."

"Maybe Don wants to join us, be with his children for Christmas."

"I'm sure our son shares the room and even the bed with Tanya, I doubt he wants Don in the same bed."

"Our son is over Tanya and this is a huge place, we can work something out. Our twins needs their own baby cots, the other four can share two queen sized beds. The beds are more than big enough for them."

"We take a tent with us, build it up in the basement, in the room with the mattresses and tell the kids, they can camp down there. I'm sure they prefer that over an ordinary room. Two Native Americans tents, some decoration and they'll be happy down there."

"And will never go to sleep."

"They will. Later than usual but they will sleep. I can see my godchild in a tent." Sara looked at Jules.

"It's fine with me. Our vacation is their vacation too and when they stay up a little bit longer, they'll sleep longer. I'm sure Louise and Jorja want to sleep in a tent too. Leave the babies with you and your wife."

"No sex for the vacation time, babies in the room." Greg smirked.

"We send them to my parents."

"Oh Sofia, they'll have sex too."

"Don't put this picture in my head." The blonde covered her ears.

"We'll work something out. First Sandy and Saloso have to be with us. In a way we all can see them."

"You see my big belly? You see your sons."

"No, I can see you, not the boys. Can't see their deep blue eyes and brown hair."

"I wonder if one of them wants to be a blonde." Greg cocked his head. "Should be Sandy. A Sandy should be blonde."

"You're stupid. Jules, your husband is stupid."

"I think he's sweet, Sofia. Very sweet." Jules kissed Greg.



"Most times. Now he was stupid."

"Shane said something like that too. Our Sandy will have brown hair - until he decides he wants to be a blonde. Like his mother." Sara smiled. "At one point I want to see you as a brunette too, Darling."

"I keep that in mind. Maybe I turn brunette for your birthday. As a present."

"Nice idea." Sara was sure Sofia looked stunning as a brunette. Her wife looked always stunning.

## Sunday, July 20th

Sofia felt like she was on a cloud, drifting through the air, under her deep blue sky and far, far down was the earth, too far away for her to see it. Not that she wanted to see it. She was fine here on her cloud, half asleep, shades on, in a bikini, ignoring her belly. Although she had the feeling it threw a shadow on her face. Did it really? The blonde lifted her head to check. No, no shadow on her face, only a giant belly, glistening in the sun. Welcome to the Californian sunshine, my baby boys.

From a distance she heard voices, other people, who were on other clouds? As long as she was on her own cloud, like her own universe, she was fine. Okay, maybe a little bit lonely. A companion would be nice. A lovely one. Like a wonderful woman, a sexy brunette, who could make sure her back got enough sunscreen. Give her a massage, letting her hands knead her shoulders, arms, back. Oh and her tongue could give Sofia's tongue a massage too. Yes, she wanted this brunette angel. Now!

Slowly she rose and looked for Sara. There she was, flying in the sky...okay, swimming in the lake while Sofia was on the paddleboat, savoring the sunshine. Susan was sitting next to her with Louise, both were secured with a harness to the boat, so they had no chance to fall into the water. Right now Louise was asleep in the shade of the sunshade while Susan threw her toys into the water.

"Honey, what are you doing?"

"Boom."

"Yes, boom all your toys are in the water."

"Boom."

Susan threw the last toy into the water.

"Honey?"

"Yes?" Sara, who was around ten yards away swimming with Greg, looked at her wife. Immediately she saw the trail of toys in the water.

"Your daughter threw all the toys away."

"Our daughter." Sara looked at Greg. "Your godchild."

"Let's get the toys back." They swam to the toys and picked them up, took them back to the paddleboat.

"Don't throw them away anymore, Susan." Sofia reprinted her daughter. "When they're away, you have nothing left to play

with. Keep them, look after them." The little girl took a toy and lifted her arm to throw it away. "No!" Sofia took the toy. "Don't!" She took the rest of the toys. "No more toys for you." With big eyes Susan looked at her and started crying, trying to get the toys. "You can cry as much as you want, you don't get the toys back." Louise, who woke up, looked irritated at her friend before her eyes fell on her father.

"Dad."

"Hey Sweetie, how are you?"

"Dad." She opened her arms.

"Your daddy shall come to you? Okay, I can do that."

"In this case I swim to Jules and the twins. We should get back to the shore anyway, our time is over. Where are Steve and Lea?"

"There." Sofia pointed to the paddleboat of their son and his friend. They were like one hundred yards away, climbing back on the boat and jumping of in various ways. Steve did a handstand on the edge of the boat before he fell into the water while Lea jumped with a somersault into the water.

"Oh look at them, how they enjoy the boat and the water. We should get back and buy them another hour with the boat." Sara said.

"You're right. Let them have some more fun, we stay at the shore, let the little go into the water and wait for the big kids to get tired. They'll fall asleep early tonight."

"Not with all the energy they have. I feel so old when I watch them."

"You are old."

"Thanks, I love you too." The brunette pinched her wife. Some payback for calling her old.

"They're getting back to the beach." Lea said when she saw the other two boats driving back to the shore. "What time is it?"

"Almost three. Our time is over. Bugger." Steve pulled himself back on the boat. "Why can't we rent these boats for a whole day."

"We can; for a little fortune."

"Okay, let's get started to catch up with them. I'm starving anyway. We should grab a few burgers and get back to the house. The Playstation is waiting for us."

"Your moms won't be happy about us sitting in front of the PS the whole day and - to be honest - I don't want it neither. We're

in Tahoe, there are other things to do. Things, we can't do in Los Angeles. We can leave the Playstation for tonight, when it's dark."

"We can sneak into a casino."

"We are not old enough."

"Oh come on, for these little details we have faked IDs."

"Since when do we have them?"

"Since I organized some."

"Nobody believes we're twenty-one."

"Until they realize that we're out."

"Or they hold us and call our parents. No, no casino. I don't want my parents telling me to come home ASAP. How about some rock climbing?"

"Sounds good too. I have to call Jenny first."

"Of course."

"Hey! I'm a good boyfriend. Why don't you call Lauren?"

"Why should I?"

"Because you miss her, want to hear her voice?"

"No to both."

"I really don't understand you." He started kicking the pedals fast. "A sexy girl appears, she is interested in you, makes it obvious she wants more than being a friend and you push her away. A girl, who is exactly what you are looking for."

"Wrong time."

"There's never a wrong time to fall in love, to be with somebody special."

"I'm sure Lauren has a lot of fun without me, has forgotten about me already. Los Angeles is full of sexy girls, who are easier to handle, out of the closet and happy to spend some time with her without slapping her face."

"Honey, you're worse than I was. Did I give up on Marlene when I learnt she has a boyfriend? No, I decided it was worth waiting for her until he's gone to college."

"Then he was gone, you were nothing else than a friend and she took off with the next boy, who was old enough to buy her all the interesting things, you can't get. A future doctor. Was it worth waiting for her? For nothing."

"I had some nice evenings with her, the difference between Marlene and me and Lauren and you is, you know Lauren is interested in you. While Marlene was never interested in me."

"One way or another, it ends in pain."

"You don't know that."

"Steve, you know what happens when my parents find out I'm not the daughter they think I am. My life is over. And Lauren ...it wouldn't work out."

"I'll tell her not to give up because, if your parents weren't there or they weren't totally jerks when it comes to this, you'd give her a chance."

"Do whatever you think is right."

"Don't worry, I will. "

"Why don't you worry about you and Jenny."

"Nothing to worry about us, we're fine. I only wish her parents had allowed her to join us."

"Next time."

"Yeah. She'll be there when we come back next Saturday."

"How many hours left?"

"No idea, I don't count the hours. Counting hours when six days are left, is very depressing. Friday I can start with that. You can take my mind off her."

"One could get you totally wrong."

"One knows exactly what I mean. Entertain me."

"For that your mom brought the PS."

"Yes, she's great. She knows what I need - and I think she wants to play too. After all, with that huge belly she can't do much sports, the PS is a nice change."

"Don't mention her belly or she believes you call her fat."

"I know." He rolled his eyes. "Horrible. She's not fat, she's pregnant. A beautiful pregnant woman."

"You won't be a man, who leaves or cheats on his wife because she's pregnant with his baby."

"I don't cheat on the one I date anyway. It's a question of self-respect."

"And one of the reasons why I like you." She grinned. "Come on, keep your lazy legs moving, our time is already up. High speed for the last yards."

"Coffee. Decaf." Greg smiled when he put the mug with coffee next to Sara, who had Susan in her arms. The little girl was asleep, holding on to her mother's shirt. A picture, he had to safe with his phone. A relaxed Sara, half laying on a sun lounger with her sleeping daughter in her arms, under a tree, in the garden behind Lou Lee's villa.

"Thanks. Where are the others?"

"Sofia is asleep, the twins and Louise are playing in the little pool with Jules and Steve watching them, Lea prepares dinner. Pizza with cheesy crust and one with cheese and salami in the crust. A lot of cutting and rolling dough. She asked what we think about going to a lookout for sunset."

"To me it sounds like a great idea - if we can get there by car. Otherwise it's hard with the little ones And for Sofia."

"Steve will look something up online." He sat down next to her, watched her. "You look so happy, like you're exactly where you always wanted to be."

"I am. I've got a family, am with my best friends on vacation, for what more could I ask?"

"You tell me."

"Nothing. Everything is perfect."

"Despite the fact your mom died a few days ago?"

"Yes. Call me cruel or self-absorbed, it gave me a few nightmares the first night, since then I'm fine. My mom spent her last thirty years locked away, she's free now and I'm sure, if there's a life after this one on earth, she won't be sick and can enjoy herself now."

"I hope so. Maybe now she can be the mother she was supposed to be. Watch over her children. Grandchildren. I'm not sure about the whole God thing, but I do believe in guardian angels."

"We won't know." Sara kissed Susan's hair. "Do you like your vacation?"

"Absolutely. This house is a dream for men and I'm here with three beautiful women. I feel like a king."

"You're the Playboy of the year. Or you can feel like it, because most men won't be jealous when they see the women you're with. As beautiful as my wife and your wife are to me, none of us are what the majority call sexy. We're too old and are too fat."

"None of you is fat."

"Compared to the models we are."

"I'm the king, I decide who is sexy and who isn't. You are very beautiful, always have. Why do you think I wanted to go out with you? Fifteen years ago, when I saw you the first time."

"Because you hit on every woman in the lab?"

"Not true."

"Ninety percent. Your problem was, none of the women was interested."

"Yeah, you turned me down. Why?"

"Because you are a great friend but not what I was looking for when it came to being my boyfriend."

"No, you were into the older guy. Or the cheater."

"We don't want to talk about the cheater and the older guy...he was the reason why I came to Las Vegas."

"And the reason why you were so bitchy to Sofia. The one, who was too close to your man, who got the dinner while you were put down..."

"Are you trying to make me hate Sofia?"

"No matter what I say, you love her and there are no words anybody can say to change that. Because she is the one for you, the perfect match. I hate to say it, she's even better for you than I'd be. Only a little bit, but she is. She makes you happier than anybody else could."

"True."

"She gave you the beautiful daughter, you have in your arms. The one, who looks like you. I'm sure my son will fall in love with her."

"Your son is more like your wife. Your daughter is like you."

"In this case my daughter will fall in love with your daughter."

"A relationship I'm absolutely fine with. You have three kids, I'll have three kids around their age, I want them all hooked up."

"Now you sound like Sofia."

"She is my wife. My beautiful wife."

"She is." He sipped on his beer. "Do the guys in Vegas know about Sofia's pregnancy?"

"Only when you told them."

"You didn't tell them? Why?"

"Because...you know I'm terrible when it comes to keep in touch. And very private about my relationships."

"What do you think about going to Vegas for two or three days? When Sofia finished working. We can take weekdays, visit our old colleagues. I'm sure they're delighted to see her highly pregnant and meet your lovely daughter. They've never seen Susan, have they?"

"Only on a picture."

"Honey, we're so going to Vegas soon. How about in three weeks? Sofia works another two weeks or so, we will work enough days to stay away three days."

"When Sofia is fine with this, we can go. What about Jules? She can't take three days off during the week."

"I know, I have to leave her in Los Angeles. Can I sleep in your arms?"

"Sorry, they're already taken."

"I'll never have the chance to stay in your arms."

"Actually, you did spend a night in my arms. Remember, when you came over to Los Angeles, Sofia was out to be with the alley cat and you made sure the nightmares won't haunt me too much. Something I'm very grateful for."

"Right, that was a great night."

"Well, not sure if it was a great night. That time my nights weren't my favorite time of the day."

"I can understand why." He took her hand. "I'm glad your nightmares stopped, that you're in peace with your past. I like the Los Angeles Sara, the happy, settled one. I could fall in love with her."

"You did fall in love with me years ago."

"Nevertheless I married another woman."

"You couldn't get me."

"That's true. But I've got a wonderful wife, I'm sorry to tell you, but I wouldn't leave her for you. Sorry to break your heart."

"I'll survive." Sara smiled.

"Good. I love you."

"I love you too. Can I take another photo of you and your daughter?"

"Yes."

"I think I might want it as a poster, the two of you look so wonderful together."

"Don't push your luck."

"Okay." He kissed her and got up. When he showed Sofia the photos, she'd be the one, who wanted it as a poster.

"Your sons like this place a lot." Sofia sat back on the bed and lifted her feet up.

"How do you know?" Sara pulled the curtains aside so they could see the lake. Or the lights of the boats on the lake and of some buildings around the lake. The sky was dark, the moon sent a soft light down, barely enough to see the shades of the trees.

"I decided they kick me all the time because they enjoy it here so much and can't wait to run around the place themselves."



"One of them will have the owner as his godfather, I'm sure we can stay here a couple more times. It's a cheap holiday for us, it makes the kids happy, the perfect place."

"Yes, it's cheap, nevertheless, I want to go back to Europe with you. Our Ireland trip was a long time ago and there are so many more things I want to see. My parents surely look after the kids for two weeks. Or their father. He'll take them to New York at one time, something I don't want to think of. This week without Susan was a nightmare. Our baby was away from us, a whole continent between us."

"He can't take the boys any time soon. They'll be born in September, I don't want them on a plane before next year. Flying is not good for babies, the air pressure, the air in the plane isn't the best and the stress. No, if he has to take them to New York, he has to wait until next year."

"Agree." Sofia petted on the space next to her. "Why don't you sit next to your wife?"

"I want to check on Susan one more time."

"Honey, she's asleep, we have the baby phone here, can hear when she or Louise cry. Greg and Jules are downstairs, so is Lea. Our baby is safe."

"She's not that far away from us at home."

"Your godson isn't that close to you when we're at home. You can't have it all. This week you have to share the level with your son, your wife and the twins."

"I'm a strange woman, right?"

"You're a mother, who loves her child. A wonderful mother. Come here."

Sara walked to the bed and sat down. Immediately she was pulled into Sofia's arms. "I love being with you all the time, I love being with you on vacation even more. Why can't we be on vacation all the time?"

"Because then it wouldn't be special anymore."

"We could try to get away more often."

"We could, the last time we tried, it didn't work out. Something is always getting in the way. Work, housework, other appointments."

"I'll put in a week off, no let's say two weeks off, over Christmas. If Shane covers for me."

"When we get him the premiere tickets I'm sure he will. It's a good way to impress his girlfriend and his other friends. He might meet Lou there, take photos. What could be cooler?"

"Ice?"

"You're so nice." Sofia laughed.

"Thanks."

"I thought about the time after the birth today. When I go back to work."

"With which idea did you come up?"

"I might not go back to work unless the middle of January. Or is it too long? Four and a half months?" When she spent all the time with the kids today, she had to think about how wonderful it had to be when she was with her twins and Susan. How could four or six weeks be enough?

"You give birth to twins, you can take four to five months. After Susan's birth you went back to work quite soon, it was hard, you were tired and not up to one hundred percent. We both know you hate being not being on top - in every way." The brunette smirked. "So take the time, stay at home with our babies."

"Can we afford it?"

"Yes. We'll rent out the room downstairs for that time."

"Uhm, what about Kim? We can't kick her out."

"She hasn't booked the room for the rest of the year. Remember, she met the Kiwi guy."

"Right, her sheep... shepherd. She forgot us over him."

"Love makes you change your vacation plans and New Zealand is supposed to be a magnificent country. One day when we're rich we go there too. For a month or two."

"Right after we did all the other things we're going to do when we're rich."

"Exactly." Sara snuggled into Sofia's arm. "There are so many things I want to do today. I want to walk around the lake with you, watch the stars, use the hot tub, have a swim in the moon light, watch our favorite movies on the huge screen, but all I can think of now is sleeping in your arms."

"Real sleep?"

"Yes. Sorry."

"Nothing to apologize for. Sleep is a thing, we usually cut down because we have other things to do and this week is supposed to get us more sleep. Why not use the time to fill up our batteries, our daughter will wake us up around seven, from that time on, she'll demand our attention."

"She will. Any plans for tomorrow?"

"Besides having breakfast in the garden? We'll see how we all feel. Even when we stay here, there are a lot of things to do. At one point I want to use the sauna with you."

"Deal." Sara closed her eyes. Yes, tomorrow was soon enough to decide what to do. Or maybe they could do nothing at all. That would be a wonderful change.

## Wednesday, July 23rd

"Is the little nerd inside you satisfied?" Sofia smiled when she and Sara stepped out of the building. They spent two hours at UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center, their tour guide explained everything in a very passionate and patient way and was happy about every question they had.

"Why my little nerd? What about your little nerd?"

"Absolutely happy about the tour and that we're back outside in the sunshine."

"Would you like some ice cream?"

"Are you serious?" The blonde chuckled. "Has there ever been a time when I didn't want any ice cream? Especially when I was pregnant?"

"No." Sara pulled her wife into her arms and kissed her softly.

"Why don't you sit down under one of the trees and I get us the ice cream? You walked for two hours with only little breaks, I'm sure your back and legs want a little rest now."

"You are the perfect wife, do you know that?"

"I do have my moments, yes." Sara blinked at her wife and went to the shop, that sold ice cream.

"You have so many moments, Honey, it's amazing." The blonde sighed and went to a tree a little bit further away from the street. They couldn't see Lake Tahoe from here, but it was nice to be surrounded by all these tall trees. The sunshine peeked through the leaves, made pattern on the ground. Sitting down, the blonde leant onto the tree and moved her feet into the sunshine.

Perfect. Just like their entire vacation had been so far. The change of air made the children sleep longer, which was something their parents really appreciated. They were every day at the lake, went for a swim, used the pool and the other indoor activities in the evening, had barbecues and the hot tub was their last destination every night. If it was up to Sofia they'd be here more often. Not only over Christmas - if this plan worked out. Also for long weekends and other occasions. She had to talk to Lou, what he wanted when they rent the place frequently.

"Chocolate, chocolate almond, chocolate fudge, chocolate cake and peanut butter and chocolate flavor. The man looked very irritated when I ordered your ice cream cone. It's slightly different to my fruit flavors."

"And slightly bigger. Why do you have only three?"

"Because it's enough for me. You need two more, one for each baby."

"You're such a smart woman, no wonder I fell in love with you." Devoted Sofia got her attention on her ice cream.

"Perfect."

"I know what satisfies you."

"Usually nothing and nobody satisfies me as good as you do. When we're in public I have to replace you or we'd end up in jail for public nuisance."

"Yes, you can't do to me what you're doing to the ice cream." Sara smirked.

"Not here, I can do that later in the villa."

"Later we have to watch four children." To have some adult time, Greg and Jules watched the kids this morning and in the afternoon it would be Sara's and Sofia's turn. Four hours for every couple, a nice change. They had no idea what their friends had planned for their afternoon off, all they knew was, they'd be back at six when it was time for their barbecue.

"Right. Do you think Susan misses us?"

"Not as much as we miss her. She'll be busy playing with the others."

"Steve and Lea are...actually I have no idea where they are. Did they tell you?"

"No. We might get a call from a casino later, telling us to pick up our children."

"I'm not sure Lea's parents would be cool with that."

"Would we be cool with that?"

In order to be cool parents we have to." The blonde laughed.

"No, serious, I think there are worse things than being in a casino."

"Absolutely, but I can't see them gambling. I think they're somewhere with more action. Or they surprise us with being on a hike."

"Somewhere on the phone? Talking to Jenny and Lauren?"

"Another possibility." Sara closed her eyes, put her head on the shoulder of her wife. "It will be difficult to have some time for ourselves when the twins are born."

"My parents look after them."

"Yes, I know us, we want to be with them as soon as we have finished work. Look at us now, it was hard to leave Susan for four hours, we think about her all the time."

"We're her parents, of course we do. It's part of the job. Mom said, when I moved to Los Angeles, she worried about me a lot. All alone in a strange city, no friends and family around and when I bought the house, she was close to a nervous breakdown. A bug responsibility, a building, that bounded me to another city. Your children can be over thirty and still you want them close and worry about them all the time."

"Great, we'll worry for the rest of our lives."

"Yes. Like we'll love for the rest of our lives."

"And be loved."

"Exactly."

"Come on." Sara got up and offered Sofia her hand. "Let's have a little walk before we go back to our big family."

"I think I'll sit the whole afternoon in the little pool, watch them."

"Maybe you should not sit in there for hours, that can't be good for you."

"Sometimes you're too sensible, kill all the fun."

"Sorry, it's also part of being a parent."

"Your part, I'm for the fun and cool parts." The blonde grinned.

"Babies!" Eric touched Sofia's naked belly.

"Yes, two babies."

"Why?"

"Why? Because sometimes, when you're really lucky, you have two babies in your belly. You and Jorja were in your mom's belly too."

"Did mom swallow us?"

"Uhm no." Sofia looked slightly irritated. Jules didn't swallow her babies, what a strange thought.

"How get in?"

"Uhm...Honey?" She didn't want to explain to Eric how babies got into the belly of a woman. He was way too young for this ...and it was the job of his parents to tell him about this.

"Yes?"

"Your godson wants to know how he and Jorja came into Jules's belly. He thought, she swallowed them."

"Did you swallow Sandy and Saloso?"

"No!" Sofia didn't like the tone of her wife, the mock. She enjoyed this situation way too much. Time to make her sweat too. "Your godmother can explain it to you, she's a smart woman."

"Sara no babies in belly. You babies in belly."

"He has a point." Sara smirked, knowing what her wife tried to do.

"Your mommy can explain it to you."

"Mommy no baby in belly."

"Forget it Sofia, you're caught. You're the one with the babies in your belly, he wants to know how they got in. You're the expert."

"Thanks. For nothing." The blonde grumbled. "Okay, you and Jorja came into your mom's belly because your mom and dad love each other a lot and wanted a baby."

"How get in?"

Okay, he wouldn't let her off the hook. "You know that you have a penis and your daddy has one too. Your mother has a vagina. When the penis is in the vagina sperm, like baby fishes, come out and when they find an egg your mommy has in her belly, they make a baby with it."

"Mom is chicken?"

"No, your mom is not a chicken. A lot of animals and women have eggs inside their belly to create babies. You were once a tiny little egg and then you grew in your moms belly and became a baby."

"How baby in your belly? Dad love you?"

"No, your daddy has nothing to do with these babies. I went to see a doctor, who used a long needle to get some of my eggs out. Then she used Don's sperm and put it back into my belly with another needle. Our of these eggs the babies developed."

"Why doctor and needle?"

"Because I love Sara and we can't make a baby. Only a man and a woman can."

"Why?"

"That's a good question. I think Mother Nature is very smart, but she forgot to consider that some men love men and some women love women."

"Why?"

"Because the only important thing is that you love, it doesn't matter who."

"Don's babies?" He placed his hand on her belly.

"Yes, Don is the daddy. Like he is Susan's daddy."

"Me daddy too?"

"You can be a daddy too when you're grown up."

"Who mommy?"

"Maybe Susan. You and Susan can get married in twenty years, when you're both as tall as your mom and dad are."

"Okay."

"I want that as a written down contract." Sofia cheered.

"As much as I like the idea too, we should let them decide again in twenty years. Or thirty. Well done, my dear." Sara sat down next to her wife. "You can give Susan the same speech."

"I hope she'll ask later." The blonde looked at her daughter, who played with Louise and Jorja in the little pool. Suddenly one of her babies kicked and Eric, who had his hand still on Sofia's belly, pulled it away irritated.

"You don't have to be afraid, that was one of the babies. They kick, you did the same when you were in your mom's belly."

"Why?"

"It's a sign that they're awake and feeling good. You can run and play, when they move, they hit or kick me because there's not a lot of space."

"Pain?"

"Sometimes, yes. When they kick really hard. Here, put your hand down again, they'll kick again. I think they woke up."

Carefully he placed his hand on her belly. A few seconds later he could feel another kick. "Baby!" The excitement in his voice got the attention of the other three children. All of them left the pool to see where the baby was.

"You want to feel the babies too?" Sofia asked. "Sit down and put a hand on the belly. You must wait a little bit and then you can feel them kick and hit. They say hello." One after the other put their hand on Sofia's belly and waited for another kick. When they felt one, all of them called "Baby!" and put their hands back on the belly. For the next minutes they'd be occupied with waiting for baby kicks.

"Do you want your hand on my belly too?"

"No." Sara sat behind her lover. "I think they're better here." Slowly she started to give the blonde a massage, worked her way from the shoulders to the back and the arms.

"Feel free to continue for a few hours."

"Only your back and shoulders?"

"No, you can give me a full body massage."

"Later. For now you have to be happy with what you get. As a science project for toddler, you have a huge responsibility."

"Yes."

"Sofia?"



"Yes Jorja Darling?"

"How baby got in belly?"

Sara started laughing. Now it was time to explain the little wonder of life to the next child. When Greg and Jules came back, their two oldest children knew all about babies and how they came into the belly of their mother. Not by swallowing.

## Saturday, July 26th

"Bye-bye perfect holiday vacation. Bye-bye luxury villa, bye-bye lovely forest. Off we go to Los Angeles, the city of angels is waiting for our return." Steve sighed. He wouldn't mind staying here another week. Or two Or a month. "Mom, can we stay here?"

"No." Sofia said.

"Why not? I don't have to go to school. There is no reason why I can't stay up here."

"Because your mothers can't live without you."

"Bull..."

"Stephen!" The blonde looked at Jorja, who was standing next to them.

"Sorry. Can we come up here again? When I call Lou and he doesn't mind."

"Don't you have a job to return to?"

"Yes. The last two weeks are without work."

"Because you're supposed to study."

"I can study up here. It's nice and quiet."

"When you're up here, you'll do a lot of things. Studying isn't one of them."

"You could come with us."

"I could, if Sara came with us too."

"She has to work."

"When she's in Los Angeles, I'll be in Los Angeles. There's no chance I go somewhere without her."

"You're clingy."

"Luckily you never missed Jenny." She grinned. "It's why you called her every night."

"Did you eavesdrop?"

"No, I'm a CSI and a former cop, I know people."

"At least I did come with you despite the fact my better half is in Los Angeles."

"And your mother and I are very grateful for that. We would have missed you a lot."

"Would you have told me to come with you?"

"No. If you wanted to stay there, we would have let you stay. You're old enough to survive a week without your mothers and I'm sure your grandparents would have looked after you. Or spoiled you."

"Thanks. I miss Jenny a lot, but I'd miss you too and I have never been up here. Plus, I like family vacations. I know, most boys my age don't, but they had plenty of family vacations when they were young. To me it's still new and exciting. Family is not a burden, it's a gift and I like being with you and mom."

"And we're very happy you want to be with us. We miss you when you're not around."

"Soon, you'll be busy with two new babies, no time for Susan and me."

"Do I have to give you the speech, I gave you when I was pregnant with Susan, again? Two more babies don't mean I love you less. Or Susan. I'm sure you'll be a great big brother. A superhero for your younger siblings."

"The one, who gives up his room so the twins can have their own room."

"I don't want you out of the house."

"Mom, I'll have my own place when I go to college."

"But you come home. At the weekends. Don't you? At least sometimes."

"Yes mom, I'll be home to see you." He hugged her.

"Thanks. I love you, Honey." She kissed his cheek. Gosh, he grew. She had to stand on her tiptoe to kiss his cheek. What was he? Almost six foot by now? When they first met, they were eye to eye.

"Love you too, mom. So, where will we have our first stop?"

"San Francisco. The B&B your grandparents owned a long time ago."

"Will mom be okay?"

"I hope so." Sara didn't appear to her mother's funeral, which didn't mean she was all right. Maybe she was avoiding her past, maybe she tried to forget it. But when she saw the place of her parents today, the place, where she was raped by Trevor, it would bring back a lot of memories. Sofia was very glad Jules was there and could - if needed - step in as a psychologist and therapist.

"We'll be there for her. Although I have no real idea what to do."

"Me neither. Jules will. She knows more about Sara and her past than I do."

"You're her wife."

"She was her therapist, they talked about it for hours. Sara only told me some details about her past. It was very hard for her to talk about it and I never pushed her."

"It would worry me when somebody else knew more about my wife than I do."

"It worried me first, then I realized, it doesn't mean Sara loves me less. She loves me more than anybody else, she didn't or doesn't tell me about it, because first she didn't want me to be worried and now it's not important to her anymore."

"She didn't go to the funeral."

"No, because she thought a day in present with all of us is more important than a day in the past, that gave her nightmares for years."

"We'll have an eye on her in Frisco?"

"We will. All of us." Sofia smiled. They all knew about Sara and her connection to the place, where they'd stop first. They'd all have an eye on the brunette, make sure, she was okay.

Four hours later they were at Tomales Bay, around thirty miles north of San Francisco. A calm community, with dairy farms on one side and oyster farms on the other. You could see Inverness Park across the bay. Not too far away, on a street, where a few houses stood, which all had seen better times, Sara stopped the car. Behind her Greg and Lea stopped as well.

"Which one is it?" Sofia asked. She didn't see a building, that called itself a B&B.

"It's not here anymore." Sara got out of the car and looked at an empty lot.

"Which house is it?" Steve asked when he got out of the car. He opened the trunk so the dogs could jump out and ran around. It was a quiet street, bushes opposite of the houses, meadows, Scooby and Rantanplan could use the stop to do their business or stretch their legs.

"None of them, right?" Jules put her hand on Sara's shoulder.

"How do you know? I never told you how the B&B looked like."

"I can see on your reaction."

"Shrink." Sara smiled and pulled Jules in her arms. "It was left to the last house. They must have pulled it down. It wasn't in the best shape when we lived there."

"You have no idea when they did it?"

"No. Why?"

"Because I'm sure people up here read about the trial too. They might have pulled it down afterwards. Not the best advertisement when you rent out holiday homes. Come and live next or in the B&B, where a child was raped."

"True."

"You're doing good."

"For seeing the place where it happened?"

"Yes."

"I've got my family with me, I'm safe."

"And your friends."

"Honey, you're family. My sister-in-law without the law knowing about it."

"Okay." Jules kissed Sara's cheek. "What do you want to do now?"

"Nothing. I'm fine with looking at the place for a few more moments."

"Do you want to be alone?"

"Yes I know you'll have an eye on me."

"Two."

"Oh doc, you like to watch?"

"When it comes to you? Always."

"We shouldn't let our spouses know." Sara smiled, kissed Jules and stepped a few steps away. Time to reconnect with her old home, with the place, that kept so many memories, so many nightmares. Were there good memories? Yes, there were. Summers, when Sara went to the beach for a swim, to surf, to watch the fishermen and their boats. Or when she learned how to ride a bike in the garden. She fell so often, but the grass was soft and Sam was there to catch her, help her, make her continue. Sam. There were some good memories about him. When they were both young. Her brother was her hero for a while, a short one, but he was. Was it wrong not to call him? Not to help him with the funeral? Should she let him know she was in Tomales Bay? Should she visit him in San Francisco?

"Darling?" Sofia stepped behind her wife and pulled her into her arms. "Are you okay?"

"Yes. Just thinking that not everything here was bad. And wondering if I should call Sam."

"Would you like to? Meet him for lunch?"

Sara thought about it. It was the best possibility for a meeting.

"No. This is enough. I remembered some nice things about my childhood, there weren't only bad things, that's enough. You

know mom baked all the Christmas cookies I wanted one Christmas?"

"No, I didn't."

"She did. And dad bought me the book about physics, he never wanted to buy because it's not a book girls read. They weren't not only bad. To remember that, that there were good times, is more than I hoped for when I asked you to come here."

"We can stay as long as you want."

"I'm done here. We can drive home. Pacific Coast Highway. A few photo stops lay ahead."

"And dinner at Triple Burger."

"Really?"

"Please? I'm sure Steve and Lea agree."

"If Greg and Jules are fine with it, we can stop there."

"I love you."

"Me or the burgers?"

"You more than anything else." The blonde kissed her wife.

"Okay, let's go home. Next stop...I don't know, where do you want to stop?"

"Seventeen Miles Drive." Steve said. "One of the best parts of PCH."

"Okay. Beach time for lunch."

"Perfect. Do you want to drive?" Steve looked at Lea.

"No, it's your turn until lunch time."

"Okay."

"It's your turn too." Sara gave the keys to Sofia.

"My pleasure." They went back into their cars. Sofia checked on Eric and Jorja, who fell asleep during the drive and were still asleep when they got back into the car.

"Let's go south."

"I like going south. Especially on your body." Sara smirked.

"A few more hours and you can show me exactly what you mean."

"I will. There is not much time left until you give birth and then we can't have sex for a long time." Not that didn't have a lot of sex the last week. It was in the past and the sex in the past didn't satisfy their horniness today.

"It's the last time we have to stay away from each other. The last pregnancy, after that we can have sex all the time."

"Stop it right there or I pull over and jump you."

"Honey, don't make me horny." Sofia grinned. "There are children on the backseat."

"Too late."

"Right....back to... here. Are you sure, you don't want to stop in San Francisco?"

"Yes. It's not necessary and we have a long way to drive."

"Okay."

"We stop somewhere around the Seventeen Mile Drive and then another stop later before we get to Los Angeles." The whole drive was over twelve hours, they started at seven in the morning and would be back around nine in the evening. Maybe they had to skip Triple Burgers.

It was a shame they had to hurry down the Pacific Coast Highway. Sara saw various spots, she would have loved to see a little bit longer, take a few pictures or sit on the beach for a few moments. Paradise was close to them, why did they never take the time to see the wonders, which were close by? Other people managed to get away for a couple days, they worked hard too, why couldn't they?

"Sara?"

"Yes Darling?" She looked into the mirror to see Eric.

"Thirsty."

"I get you something." Sofia got a bottle with cooled water and gave it to the boy.

"Ta."

"You're welcome. Can you share your water with Jorja?"

"Yeah." He drank a little bit and gave the bottle to his sister.

"You're a great brother. Do the two of you want a lolly?"

"Yeah."

"There you go." The blonde gave each of them a lolly.

"When home?" Jorja asked.

"Oh it will take a little while, Honey. We're only halfway there."

"Boring."

"I know. But you know what I have found in my bag?" She pulled out a CD with an audio book out and showed it to the children. "Do you want to listen to it?"

"Yeah!"

"Okay, clean your ears, here it comes." She put on the CD. A few seconds later the voices of happily singing children filled the car and Jorja and Eric started singing with them.

"Now they're occupied for a while." Sofia sighed with relief. An hour ago Eric and Jorja had been very bored and

everybody, who went on vacation with children knew, what it meant to have bored children in the back. Not only the question: "Are we yet there?" or the hint: "I'm sooo bored" could drive you crazy. Also fights between siblings, who had nothing better to do than pulling each other's hair, shirts or slapping each other. Better to start a fight than be bored. As much as they loved Eric and Jorja, they were ordinary kids, no angels, and did all these things.

"I'm sure Susan and Louise are not much better."

"No, they'll do the same things, they're kids. When we flew to Ireland I was very bored in the plane and felt like doing something to distract me. Things, the people around me wouldn't have liked."

"You had an entertainment program in front of you."

"I know, it was boring anyway. Sitting on this narrow seat for hours, not being able to walk around, stretch. Without you I'd have gone insane."

"We keep each other sane and happy." Sara took Sofia's hand.

"Are you okay? With the sun shinning on you directly."

"I feel warm, which isn't a bad feeling. The twins kick me sometimes, they must be in some kind of competition. Like: who can kick mommy most. I'm really glad when they move out and into the room next to ours."

"Me too. Although it will mean a lot of work for us. Two babies and a toddler."

"Greg and Jules have been through almost the same, they made, we can make it too. We have a lot of support. Other women have to deal with this kind of situation alone, without a partner or family."

"I know. We're complaining on a high level."

"Yes, we're wimps. Ouch."

"Or a punching ball."

"According to my mother I kicked a lot too. Surely she wished me a couple of times babies like me, now I've got them. My mom cursed me."

"Her curses make us happy."

"Most times." The blonde made a grimace. "I know we're right in the middle of nowhere and it's too early, but when the contractions would start now, some parts of me wouldn't be too unhappy about it."

"You want to have our babies on the beach?"



"Why not? It's a lovely place, they can little mermaids...there are male mermaids, right?"

"If they were real, there'd be male mermaids too. Otherwise they can't reproduce themselves."

"Right. Two little male mermaids. The next time we have two more babies...how do organize the trip then?"

"Babies to us, twins to Steve, Susan and Louise to Greg. Dogs to Steve too, luggage into the other two cars and on each car a roof luggage rack."

"That's something we should buy soon."

"I put it on our list - the very long shopping list." The brunette threw a view to the right, to the ocean. Deep blue ocean, her favorite spot on earth; right after being in her wife's arms.

They skipped Triple Burgers and drove straight back to Silver Lake. As dinner they called their favorite pizza delivery man and arrived at their house the same time the delivery man did.

"What a wonderful timing." Sofia got out of the car and greeted the man.

"Looks like you need some good food."

"We do, have been on the road for over twelve hours."

"In this case, you deserve the extra dessert too. The boss put in a tiramisu for you."

"He's great, say thanks to him." She gave him the money and a tip. "The luggage can wait until tomorrow, let's get into the house, have pizza."

"I'm starving." Greg had Susan on his arms. "This little angel wants her bed, I get her upstairs. Shall we all eat there?"

"Yes. Is Louise awake?"

"No, she sleeps too." Jules had her daughter in her arms. "I get her into bed too."

"Welcome home." Don stepped out of the building. "How was your trip?"

"Exhausting. Your daughter needs her bed." Greg said. "You carry my little daughter, I carry yours."

"Deal."

"I carry the pizza." Sara took the pizzas out of Sofia's hands.

"You can carry yourself."

"That's heavy enough." They got into the house, let the dogs into the garden and walked upstairs. There waited Tanya, who had prepared drinks for them.

"Hello family, nice to have you back. Have a seat, we have drinks prepared, chips and chocolate. Jorja, there is pizza, don't you want to start with that before you go to chocolate?" Tanya asked her goddaughter. "Look, here's a nice..." Tanya opened the box. "Salami pizza. Have a slice."

"Kay." Jorja took a slice of pizza and sat down.

"How was the trip?" Don came back with Greg, got two beers out of the fridge and gave one to Greg.

"Great. I lived in a villa with three beautiful women. I'm such a lucky man."

"You had some great kids with you too. Two of them aren't that small anymore."

"Teenagers." Steve came out of his bedroom, Jenny in his arms. "Look who I found in my bedroom. A beautiful teenager, I love a lot." He kissed her. "Why didn't you wait for me downstairs?"

"Then I had to carry your luggage. It's nicer to wait on your bed."

"You can stay there the whole night."

"I planned to do that."

"Where is Lea?"

"I took her right to her parent's place, they didn't want her to stay here tonight."

"Oh."

"Yes, oh. Not as cool as my parents."

"Your moms are the best."

"Thanks." Sofia dropped on the couch. "I loved Tahoe, being back home is not too bad neither. Our pizza guy is the best. What have you guys been up to? Did you miss us?"

"I missed my daughter, it was a long week without her. And her mothers."

"We missed you too." Sofia kissed Don. "And Susan missed her daddy too."

"Good to know."

"The second part of Team Pregnant says hello to you."

"Is everything wrapped up?"

"Yes. It was a good idea to involve them. Well done, Honey."

"Thanks. So, what have you been up to? Did you buy presents for your daughter because you missed her so much?"

"No, I bought something for Steve."

"For me?"

"Yes, something nice."

"I'd say a trip I can take with your girlfriend, but the....ouch!" He held his side. Jenny had slammed her arm into his kidneys. "...then my girlfriend would be mad. So, what did you get me? Please, nothing that has anything to do with school."

"Well, it has...in a certain way..."

"Wow."

"Have a look, it's still downstairs. In Sofia's garage."

"It's impolite to stay here?"

"Yes." Sara said.

"Okay." He sighed and got up. "Honey, I'll be right back."

"I join you, want to see your face." Jenny grinned.

"The way you grin it must be really...great."

"It is." They went downstairs.

"What did you buy him?" Sara asked.

"Oh, he'll tell you when he's back."

"Do you know what he bought?" Sara looked at Tanya. "I do. So does Jules."

"You do?" Sara looked at her friend.

"Yes. No, I won't tell you." Jules kissed Sara's cheek. "You'll know in a few moments. Oh, and the answer to your question is: no."

"I haven't asked a question."

"You were about to. Ask me if Greg, the kids and I don't want to stay over tonight. No, we go home, but we love you."

"Every time I ask this you break my heart."

"We stayed with you the whole last week. And will stay with you over Christmas when we all get the days off."

"True. I want Christmas now! And oh, Donald, how about you asked your boss to get Christmas and New Years Eve off? Come with us to Lake Tahoe? A huge villa, hot tub, sauna, gym, billiard, table tennis, a screen that is a wall so you have movie feeling all the time. Live like a movie star for a week, go skiing."

"I'll ask right away tomorrow morning."

"Great. Tanya, are you coming with us?"

"Of course. He doesn't go there without me because he'd miss me too much. Right, Honey?"

"Sure."

"Now that you mentioned it." Greg added and laughed. "Eric, you have half of you pizza on your face. Go to your godmother and let her clean you."

"Sara." Happily Eric came with the rest of his pizza to her, offered her the pizza and showed his face, covered in red spots of tomato sauce.

"Hey Sweetheart, let's have you cleaned." She got a tissue and cleaned his face. "Why not use your mouth for the pizza? Aren't you hungry anymore?"

"Chips."

"Okay, give me your spinach pizza and go to your chips."

"Ta." He kissed her and went to his sister, whose hand was already deep into the bowl with the chips.

"Cute little boy."

"Soon you'll have two cute little boys of your own."

"Yes, they'll look like Sofia; deep blue eyes and dyed hair."

"Not funny." Sofia bopped her wife. "They might look like me. Or like their daddy. One way or the other, they'll have stunning blue eyes. Dusty's time as the favorite blue eyed creature in Silver Lake is over."

"We'll see."

"They're our sons, of course they'll have wonderful blue eyes. Like Susan has wonderful brown eyes...and looks so much like her mother. Every day more. I think I have a crush on my own daughter, which sounds so wrong."

"Yes, it does."

"You are the best!" Steve came upstairs, ran directly at Don and hugged him. "The best! The best! The best of all!"

"Wow, what's this about?" Sofia asked amused.

"Do you know what he bought me?"

"No. Nobody cared to tell us."

"Before you get too excited, you have to pay for it, it's not a gift."

"How much?"

"Five thousand."

"You're the best!"

"You bought him a gift, he has to pay for?"

"Yes."

"Moms, he bought me a car. A Mustang!"

"You bought Steve a Ford Mustang?" Sara looked puzzled at Don. That was a surprise for her too.

"Yes. He was looking for a car since his birthday. I came along the very nice Mustang last week, it was in impound, I used some connections and got the Mustang for five thousand and five hundred dollar. It's in a great condition. a 1993 Mustang,

red, a Cobra. The sexiest car we had in impound for a long time. I had to get it for Steve because I knew, it's the kind of car he wants. Just after a Ferrari, a Porsche, a Mercedes or a BMW."

"I love it. Let's drive it around the block. The town, The country."

"You won't be able to sleep if you don't that, right?"

"Right."

"Okay." Don pulled the keys out of his pocket. "It's all yours."

"Yeah. Thanks. Jenny, what do you think about a little tour around Silver Lake?"

"Sure."

"See you guys later. I have to take my baby out. And my girlfriend."

"What about your mothers?" Sofia asked.

"Not cool!" He left before Sofia could protest.

"We are not cool? How dares he? Honey, say something."

"He has only two seats in the car, can't take his siblings with him. How handy. A car only to impress and take the girl out. One. And the car is in a good condition? After all, it's twenty-one years old."

"Yes, I let it check, it's a great car. Usually worth a lot more in this condition, that's why I had to pull a few strings to get it. I know his limit and yes, for the same money, he could have gotten a younger car, but not a Mustang. It's a boy's dream."

"Did you have one when you were younger?"

"Of course. Impressed the ladies."

"Men are all the same."

"Did you not pay more attention to the boy with the cool car than the one, who rode his bike to school?"

"That depended on how the guys looked. Riding a bike does give you a nice ass and nice legs, but most times, I preferred the boys on motorbikes. They were cooler than the ones with the car."

"See, I knew. Imagine is everything and your son's imagine got cooler with the car."

"He doesn't have to impress the girls anymore, he has a girlfriend, who loved him without a car."

"Every boy doesn't mind when there are more than one girl, who drools over him."

"Jenny will kick his ass when he overdoes it." Sara smiled. She had no doubt that the girlfriend of her son knew how to stop Steve, in case the car got into his head.

"First she'll enjoy the fact her boyfriend can take her out now. They can go to the beach whenever they feel like it. Their new freedom." Sofia remember how it was for her when she got her first car. A lot of new possibilities opened up and felt like now she could conquer the world.

## Sunday, July 27th

"Are they gone?"

"All gone."

"We're all alone?"

"Yes, only the two of us."

"Wow, I can't remember the last time we were a whole day alone." Sara pulled Sofia in her arms and kissed her passionately. Steve, Jenny and Lea just left the house, Tanya and Don had picked up Susan half an hour ago to take her out to the beach and whatever else they had planned for the day. Sofia and Sara were all alone, no obligations and a whole day off.

"Me neither. Can you promise me one thing?"

"What's that?"

"Today we do nothing we're supposed to do. Like laundry, housework, paperwork or any other things, we don't like. Today we do only what we feel like. Like we were irresponsible teenager."

"I promise." Sara kissed her wife again. "And have the first problem."

"Can I help you solve the problem?"

"Yes, you can make a decision for me. I'd love to have breakfast with you."

"Where is the problem?"

"I can't decide if I want to have breakfast in bed with you or go out for breakfast. Both is nice. Cuddling in bed, being with you, having a bite of you between the other breakfast or being somewhere, sitting in a nice spot, watch people, have other people bring us everything. Both screams vacation and I don't know, which one is better. So please, you have to decide."

"Difficult. I think I'd love to have breakfast with you in Santa Monica or Venice, somewhere, where we can see the ocean, walk the boardwalk later, maybe go for a little swim, stay on the beach for a while, have lunch there, another walk, some shopping and later sunset dinner with ocean view. We have nothing to care about, the dogs are gone with the kids, we should do all these things, we can't do when we have them with us. Or maybe we can rent a bike for an hour or two and cycle around the beach. We haven't done that in a while."

"Sounds pretty good to me. Is it not too much for you?"

"We don't have to hurry, do we? We can take our time, when don't get farther than from the Santa Monica Pier to Marina del Rey it's okay."

"Or we go somewhere else. How about Malibu? Treat ourselves with some luxury."

"I'd like to have some fresh fish." The blonde twisted her hair around her finger. "Neptune Net. Is that okay for you?"

"Sure. We haven't been there for a while. And when we walk south we meet our son. They went to Huntington Beach Dog Beach. Perfect for the dogs and close to Triple Burger. I bet they have breakfast and lunch there."

"We're talking about a group of teenagers, of course they'll have fast food and you get the best burger at Triple Burger."

"Are you trying to tell me, you want to go there too?"

"No, I want fish. It's better for our sons too. I'm a responsible mother."

"You were the last days, yes. I'm very proud of you." Sara could see a huge difference when she looked at her wife now compared to how she looked a week ago. This week off had been very good for Sofia, had given her time to relax and enough sleep.

"Thank you. So, we have breakfast in Santa Monica and go for a late lunch to Malibu?"

"Will we also exchange a lot of kisses and look like teenagers in love?" The brunette smiled.

"I insist on that! I want to hold your hand too. And maybe I buy you a heart, you know this candy hearts, that say things like I love you."

"Like teenagers in love."

"Yes, like teenagers in love. Only over twenty years too late."

"Better late than never."

"Okay, then we should get up, take a shower and drive to Santa Monica. I'm getting hungry."

"You could eat a little bit of me, let me be your snack."

"Yes, now that you mention that, I'm not that hungry anymore." Sofia let her hands ran under the shirt of her wife. Why hurry to breakfast when the best snack she could have was right next to her? And free from calories.

"Okay, we need some matches to find out, who has to stay out of the water and look after our belongings and the dogs." Steve looked into his backpack.



"No need to, I stay here." Lea offered. "I have a chapter in my book to finish and it's quite exciting at the moment. You guys go and the wolves I stay here."

"Are you sure?"

"Of course."

"Okay, then we take the chance and hit the waves." He pulled Jenny up and grabbed his surfboard.

"Today I'll win over gravity." Peter took his surfboard.

"In your dreams." Paul laughed.

"It must be bad for boys when they don't get themselves up."

Lauren grinned.

"Bitch! Don't talk about things you have no knowledge of."

Peter kicked sand to the blonde girl.

"Don't worry, that happens to many men, that they don't get it up ...I mean, that they can't stand up...oh well, you what I..."

She took her bodyboard and ran into the water before Peter could catch her.

"Children." Steve shook his head. "Are you sure you want to spend your day with her?" He looked at Nicole, who came here with Lauren.

"She spent her afternoons with me the whole week, I think I can handle her." The girl tied her brown hair into a ponytail.

"Craziness is not always dangerous, sometimes it's funny and very entertaining."

"True. Time to hit the waves. Let me know when you want to get into the water, Lea, I can replace you."

"Okay. Go and have fun." Lea turned and opened her book. For the first time in a while she had a book in her hands, that had nothing to do with school. She started it when they were at Lake Tahoe. One of the books to the TV series "Castle" and she got addicted to it. She loved the series and she loved the book, already ordered the next three. Being a fan she recognized some of the scenes, she had watched. What a funny idea to have the main character of a TV series write books and then actually release them. She wished she could get them signed by the actors. Maybe she could, they filmed in Los Angeles, all she had to do was go to the ABC studios and wait for them...for a while.

Was it difficult to write a book? She supposed it was. It took her ages to finish papers for school sometimes, a book was a lot of more work, she'd need ages to finish something. Well, first she needed an idea, a very good one and then write it down,

build an interesting story around it. Definitely a lot of work. Could you learn to write a book? Like you learned to ride a bike? Or was it a talent you needed. There were courses offering to learn how to write a book. They made it sound like anybody could do it. Really anybody? Possible. The thing was, when you wrote a book, you were only successful when people read it, were willing to buy it, spend their time caring for your words. How could you know you were good enough?

Steve's cell phone rang. Knowing, he didn't mind when she answered his calls when he was away, like she didn't mind when he answered hers, she picked up the phone.

"Hi Sara, how are you?"

"Very good, how are you? Not in the water, I suppose."

"No, I watch the dogs and the towels. Or they watch the towels and me after we let them swim for a while. Scooby snores very loud."

"Rantanplan is worse when he starts."

"I'll wake him up. Is everything okay or do you miss your daughter and son?"

"Everything is fine and yes, we miss our oldest kids."

"I can hear voices in the background, where are you? Don't you spend the day in bed?"

"We were tempted to, but we decided to treat ourselves. First breakfast in Santa Monica and Sofia wants fish for lunch, so we'll go to Neptune Net. If you can bear old people around you, we can bring you some burgers and fries, Triple Burger is not far away."

"You're not old and you're always welcome."

"Do you think your brother says the same?"

"Unlike most other teenagers, he isn't ashamed of his mothers. Well, not unless you kiss and tell each other how much you love each other and even then, he's only pretending. Yes, come along, you can't miss us, we're the two huge sunshades and the tent. Bring some treats for the dogs, so they don't want our burgers."

"When you have burgers, they want them too."

"True. When will you be there?"

"Give another three hours or so. Or are you starved by then?"

"Not with all the chips we took with us."

"Teenagers. Okay, I go back to my wife before she turns into a teenager and orders everything with chocolate. See you later."

"Have fun, later mommy." With a smile Lea ended the call. Sara and Sofia would join them later and bring some burgers. A great surprise. And she knew, none of her friends would mind them around. They'd never wanted their own parents around, but it something totally different with Steve's mothers. They were cool, that was the reason why they spent most of their times at their place.

When she wanted to get her attention back to her book a shadow appeared and made her look up.

"Hey, am I allowed to sit down?"

"Sure."

"Thanks." Lauren sat down.

"Where is Nicole?"

"In the water. She and Jenny fight against Paul and Steve while Peter still fights gravity."

"She's nice."

"Yes, she is."

"Where did you meet her?"

"In a café...a scene café. I had a lot of time on my hands last week, went to this café on Monday, it was nice, she was the waitress there and it was fun with her."

"Sometimes you're at the right place, at the right time."

"That was the Monday before."

Lea stayed quiet, looked at her book without reading the words. She knew exactly what Lauren was saying.

"I missed you."

Swallowing Lea tried to decide which was better. Ignore Lauren's word or react.

"Nicole is only a friend."

"It's not my business, Lauren."

"Yes, it is. I told you I like you. In fact, I like you a lot. Nicole is a friend and she had a boyfriend until she caught him cheating last month. She worked in the café because it belongs to her aunt. She's really only a friend."

"Lauren." Lea turned and sighed. "I can't."

"And I'm not pushing, just telling you the truth before you might get wrong ideas."

"Okay."

Lauren buried her feet in the sand and watched them like they were to disappear when she took her eyes off them. "You never called, never sent a text message."

"No, I didn't." Lea knew she made it hard for Lauren, very hard, but she had no idea how to make it easier without doing something, she might regret. "I wanted to find out if I miss you when we don't have any contact. Find out if you are important to me and if so, how much."

"Did you? Miss me?"

"Yes."

"Nevertheless you didn't sent a text."

"No. I knew Steve did, you knew how I was."

"I did. It's not the same."

"I know."

"You don't want to talk about it anymore."

"No, I don't. It's...complicated, it's not fair towards you and...I can't give you what you want."

"I told you I'll wait until you're ready. I meant it. You take all the time you need, I'll be there."

"I don't ask you to wait."

"No, you don't. I do it anyway."

"Okay. Thanks." Lea took a deep breath. Time to change the topic, she wasn't feeling comfortable in this conversation. "Sara called, she and Sofia will come around later, bring some burgers."

"Aren't they perfect parents?"

"Yes, they are. More than perfect. Steve is very lucky to have them."

"Our son is enjoying himself in the water. Our daughter says we're welcome to join them with burgers." Sara sat next to her wife. "Did you order all desserts?"

"Why do you think I would?"

"They have chocolate and when you see chocolate, you want only one thing."

"You."

"Covered in chocolate."

"Oh, that is a fantasy...when I gave birth to the twins and can have sex again, is there a chance you and I go to a motel, or for a weekend to Vegas, and make this fantasy come true? We can bring some sheets so nobody knows what we did."

"Who looks after the twins? Susan?"

"My parents. I'm sure they give us two or three days off for some ...time for ourselves."

"For sex. They know it's what on our minds."

"And they know it's healthy and normal." The blonde kissed the cheek of her lover. "When I can cover you in chocolate, you can cover me in fruits."

"If pouring chocolate sauce all over me makes you happy, you can do it. I want my wife happy." The brunette smiled. "I love you."

"I adore you. A long Vegas weekend it is. Or three days within the week. We could visit our old colleagues."

"We should. In October?"

"That's another two months."

"Honey, that doesn't mean you and I won't have sex until then. I'm very positive we'll have sex today."

"Here?"

"No. We're not teenagers anymore."

"Right. And I'm not in a physical condition to have sex in a toilette stall or a backseat. Which is a pity. And I'd like to have sex on the beach again. Not the cocktail."

"October?"

"When the twins are born earlier, we can have sex earlier."

"We can plan about it after you gave birth to our boys."

"Our last children."

"You know, it's kind of sad. You're such a wonderful mother, being pregnant suits you so much."

"It would suit you too."

"No, I don't think so."

"I do. A pregnant Sara. Wow. I'd love to see that."

"I don't. And I don't think I'd get pregnant, you're the super prolific one. Beat all the odds. It's a miracle you didn't get pregnant before, when you dated men."

"I made sure to take the pill and they had to use a condom. Better safe than sorry. I was so right. Not to imagine I'd have like four kids already, you never wanted me."

"Not sure about that."

"Four kids or so would not have scare you away?"

"For of your babies? Four little Sofias? I love you and I'm sure I'd have fallen in love with you anyway. Babies don't change you ...well, they change you a little bit, they make you more sexier."

"So you feel more like jumping me when I'm pregnant?"

"I always feel like jumping you."

"You have no idea how much I love this answer. And hate the fact we are in public."

"It's less than two hours ago that we had sex."

"It's an eternity, isn't it?"

"Yes." Sara took Sofia's hand. "But we decided for the breakfast in Santa Monica and against the bed."

"Now I regret it. We could skip lunch and go back home."

"We told our kids we'll be at the beach with burgers."

"We could go home, have sex, go back to Malibu."

"No. We finish breakfast, go to Malibu, take a walk, get the burgers and see our kids."

"Why are you this grown-up?"

"Because if I'm not, we don't make it home, but will end up at the police department for public nuisance."

"And everybody would understand why I can't take my hands off you."

"Or the other way around." Sara slipped onto the other chair to be closer to her wife. "I'm glad we have this extra day off. Our last week was great, the perfect vacation, but this day with you is nice too. It's the wrong time to say this because soon we'll have baby twins with us, but we should do that more often."

"Hey, they've got a father, who wants to be involved in their lives. He can take them and his daughter for a whole daddy day and we have a whole lover day."

"Daddy Don, who also starts to play daddy for Steve."

"Yes." Sofia laughed. "Only a father buys a car for his son. A red one."

"Fast and sexy without a backseat. He doesn't want our son to have sex in his car."

"Our son has sex anyway. He had sex last night."

"Did you hear that?"

"I don't need to hear that, he spent the night with his girlfriend, whom he hadn't seen for a week. Of course they had sex."

"Right. He missed Jenny a lot."

"Yes. And he was afraid she'd move on when he's away. No girl, who loves her boyfriend, moves on after one week. It's not like they separated, they were only apart."

"How did you feel when you were his age and a week away from your lover?"

"Like somebody wanted to punish me."

"See."

"We asked him if he wanted to come with us, he did."

"Of course, it's a villa. Lou's villa."

"Lou, who sent us tickets for his next movie. The premiere. Next week."

"I got the hint, we'll go." Sara smiled. "Although I have no idea what the movie is about. Usually they show trailer of them on the TV, this time you heard nothing."

"I think it's a low budget production and they don't have the money for all these commercials."

"Low budget? Lou gets like five million dollar for every movie, how can that be a low budget production?"

"Maybe he asked for less money. You know, a movie, he wanted to make, an affair of the heart. We can look on the internet, they should have information about it. Everything is online."

"Can you find online how much I love you?"

"I don't know, did you create a website with declarations of love to me? If not, you can do that, I don't mind." The blonde pulled her lover over and kissed her.

"Who would have thought sea food brings people together?" Greg hugged Sara and kissed her. "Thanks for the little tip."

"My pleasure." The brunette smiled. She had sent her friend a text, she and Sofia would treat themselves with lunch in Malibu and if he and his wife weren't interested in joining them. Like Sara and Sofia, Greg and Jules had a children free day. The twins and Louise were with Jules's parents, who wanted to see their grandchildren after a week again.

"Are you enjoying your time off?"

"Doc, I tell you, I really love my children, but this morning was wonderful. We didn't have to get up, didn't have to change a diaper, breakfast was served with an ocean view, we went people watching in Venice, bought some trash we don't really need and then stopped a couple of times on our way up here to take photos. It really feels like another vacation day." Sofia took the hand of her wife.

"Same here. Well, we did have to change diapers, but before breakfast my parents picked up the kids and we had breakfast in bed."

"Oh, breakfast in bed, we had that on our list too. The ocean won."

"The ocean is nice, breakfast in bed gives me the chance, to drop some honey on my wife and make it disappear." Greg

grinned widely. "The possibilities are bigger because you don't have to worry about people watching you."

"I know what you mean." Sara snuggled into the arms of her oldest friend. "We missed some privacy after breakfast. And we're not in an age anymore, when you drive to a parking lot and use the backseat."

"Your wife is also not in a physical condition for that."

"No."

"How comes you went to Malibu and not home?"

"It's our day out, from tomorrow on we'll be back at work. We both want to be at the ocean. The days we can come here without caring about anybody are rare."

"True. Honey, what can I get you for lunch?"

"Lobster."

"Okay. Lobster for the lady."

"Red lobster." Sofia looked with a wide grin at Sara. "I remember one lobster, I fell in love with. I join you Greggo, have a look what they offer. Honey, do you want salad and fries?"

"Yes, thanks. Ice cream for dessert."

"I love you!" Sofia kissed her wife happily. Ice cream. Of course ice cream belonged to a day like today. When you were at the beach you needed ice cream. A lot of ice cream. Especially when it was a hot day.

"My cousin sent me a text an hour ago, she, Don and Susan are at the Kidspace Children Museum in Pasadena."

"Spoiling the little one. She has to share her boyfriend with his daughter."

"Tanya doesn't mind, she likes Susan and Susan likes her."

"Yes." Sara leant back. "Do you think she wants Don to move out?"

"Why would she want that?"

"They're together for quite a while, isn't it time to move in together? Her apartment is not very big, don't young couples want a place of their own, their own house or something like that."

"I think it's more likely she moves in with him."

"You think?"

"Sara, his daughter lives in the same house, he loves her, soon there'll be his two sons. Don is a very good father, he loves being a father, I can't imagine him moving away from his



children. He's not a daddy for the weekends. You and Sofia knew that, it's a reason why you asked him to be the father."

"But does it make Tanya happy?"

"Yes. She knows, when she asks Don to move in with her in their own house, he wouldn't be happy, miss his children. You can't have a good and happy relationship when your partner is unhappy and misses his children. And there's no reason not to move in with him, in his place. Unless you and your wife don't want her in the house."

"When Tanya wants to move in she's more than welcome. I'm sure Sofia says the same."

"Maybe you should tell Don about this."

"True." Sara took Jules's hand. "I have another nice idea."

"Which one?"

"Why do you hold hands with my wife?" Greg sat down, gave Jules her plate with a lobster and had a plate with fries and shrimps for himself.

"You come here to eat shrimps?"

"There's a difference between the shrimps here and somewhere else. It's better here."

"One salad and fries for you, my dear." Sofia handed Sara her lunch.

"What have you got?"

"Fish tacos with pineapple slaw, avocado, cilantro and crema. Something different."

"Yes."

"What idea do you have, Sara?" Jules asked.

"A great one. In twenty years, when all our kids moved out, Tony and Sally moved in their own houses because they're married, the house is empty...besides for the fact that Don and Tanya will live there...but all these empty rooms, you and Greg could move in. There's no reason why you should keep the big house for yourselves. We can be a huge happy community."

"I love the idea!" Sofia cheered. They all together in one house was perfect.

"Why am I not surprised you love the idea?" Jules laughed.

"Can we talk about this in twenty years? And bear in mind, our kids might want to come home and need a place to stay."

"She's always spoiling the fun." Sara sighed.

"No, I am realistic."

"Greggo?"

"I like the idea, but I think we have to wait until it's time. It's a financial questions. Our kids will cost money, when we sell the house and move in with you we can save money. Let's talk about it after Saloso and Sandy moved out."

"I'm glad when they move out for the first time in a few weeks." Sofia said. It was always the same, first she wanted to be pregnant, then she was pregnant and wanted her baby to leave. But wasn't it the same for every woman?

"Yo sis, what's up?" Steve dropped next to Lea in the sand.

"Why don't you go into the water for a while?"

"I'm fine here."

"Is your book this good? Or are you avoiding somebody?"

"Lauren comes here when she feels like it and I don't leave."

"Nicole is not..."

"She's a friend."

"Yes." He made sure nobody was around and listened to them.

"Why do you push her away?"

"Because I'm not ready. I'm too afraid. About what happens when somebody finds out about us, what my parents will do. And I don't want to live two lives to live in peace."

"You're living two lives already. The difference is you are unhappy in both and when you do what your heart tells you, you're happy in one. To me it sounds like a good thing. I'd rather be happy and scared than unhappy and scared. Because you're scared anyway, you worry anyway."

"Do we have to talk about it?"

"No, we don't. She's like twenty yards away from us. I can leave you alone."

"No, stay. Please." Lea took Steve's hand.

"Sorry, my better half waves at me. You can join us in the water."

"That's cowardly."

"It is. Later sis." He kissed her cheek and left.

"Hey, do you want company?" Lauren asked before she sat down.

"We have our stuff here, you have every right to be here."

"I know, but you want me here or would you prefer to be alone?"

"I want an easy life."

"Sorry, can't help you with that. Even when I stay away, it doesn't make your life easier, does it?"

"No, it doesn't change my problems."

"Are you sure your parents would have a problem with you being a lesbian?"

"Yes. They didn't want me to work in a scene café, they have no problem with Sara and Sofia, but when it comes to their own family, they want the old-fashioned way. I'm supposed to date and marry a man. Everything else is wrong."

"That sucks."

"It does, but I can't change it." Lea turned so she faced Lauren, who lay next to her. "I really like you, you're...you're exactly what I dreamed for and yet...I can't get myself to do the next step. I'm...I'm too damn scared." She swallowed hard to fight the tears.

"Hey." Lauren took her hand. "I told you to take your time."

"Maybe I should get drunk. You don't think when you're drunk."

"You tempt to skip the thinking part yes, the problem is, the next day you regret a lot of things. Been there, done that."

"Maybe...do you think we could go out and watch a movie together? Alone. I mean, there will be other people around..."

"Yes, we can do that." Lauren smiled. "Which movie would you like to watch?"

"Lou Lee has a new movie."

"You really like him? The macho man. Mister Boombastic."

"He's fun and it was very kind of him to let us stay in his villa. And yes, I have a soft spot for him. And he has one for blondes."

"I keep that in mind in case I ever want to date an old movie star."

"He's not old and I'm sure his girlfriend will not like your idea. She does kick boxing, don't mess with her."

"She can kick his ass."

"I'm sure she does when his hands don't stay where they belong." Lea laughed. From what she had heard, Lou's girlfriend was the one, who made the decision.

"It's like we called them to come out of the water, but we never said a word." Sara laughed when she saw the group of teenagers hurry out of the water.

"Our words had never made them come out of the water this fast, a bag with fast food does." Sofia put the isolated box with the burgers and fries down in the sand. "My babies, how are

you?" She hugged the dogs, who seemed to be torn between greeting her and getting their nose into the box with the food.

"Hey, how was the morning off?" Lea asked.

"Pretty good. We got company for lunch, haven't seen Greg and Jules in a while."

"Like sixteen hours?"

"That's a long time, I miss them all the time."

"That's why we came with you. I hope you don't mind more adults around." Greg sat down.

"The right adults are always welcome."

"Burgers!" Steve hugged Sofia, kissed her happily and opened the box. "Thanks moms, you're the greatest. I'm starving."

"Me too." Peter got a burger.

"Look at them, like wild animals." Sofia shook her head.

"Or like you when you open a bag of chocolate after a long diet of two days." Her wife teased and pulled the blonde into her arms.

"I never made a two days diet. Not one which didn't include chocolate. Why torture myself?"

"You don't have the self control to do this. I love you for it."

"Thanks. Oh, a new face." Sofia looked at Nicole.

"That's Nicole, I found her last week while you were in Tahoe, she works in a café."

"Lauren spent the whole week in the café because of me. My aunt says I'm very good for her business."

"If you do this with other people too, I can see why. Which café?"

"All Love."

"Oh, I know that one, it's nice. We tried to get you a job there, remember?" Sara looked at Lea.

"Yes. Give me two more years and I can do whatever I want. Or let's say: when Steve and I live somewhere around the college, my parents don't have to know everything."

"Steve, please cover your ears, you don't want to hear what I say now." Sara ordered. "Parents never need to know everything. You have a right to your personal life and secrets."

"I heard every word." Her son smirked.

"This rule doesn't apply to you."

"Why?"

"Because your grandmother is the captain."

"Oh, right." He got a second burger. "How many did you get?"

"Two for each and enough fries for a football team."

"My moms are perfect! I love you."  
"We love you too. Don't forget to chew."  
"Mom!"  
"Am I not cool again?"  
"Yes."  
"Sorry." Sofia's attention was caught by a van a quarter of a mile away. "Is that van down there selling ice cream?"  
"Yes." Paul answered. "Pretty good ice cream, we had some earlier."  
"Honey, don't you think we should take a little walk?"  
"You had ice cream after lunch."  
"Yes, I did. Now it's the time Sandy and Saloso get some ice cream too."  
"I'm not walking there to get you ice cream."  
"Of course you are, I'm pregnant."  
"No."  
"Do you want me to cry?"  
"That's so not cool."  
"I go with you." Greg offered. "Honey, do you want some ice cream too?"  
"No, but when they also sell cold drink, I'd like to have a cold diet coke."  
"Okay. Come on Sofia." Greg pulled Sofia up. "When we go alone, nobody knows how much ice cream we buy."  
"You're such a perfect man. Why did I never fall in love with you?"  
"I have no idea. I took you to my apartment, you had the chance to get me and you never took it. At that time I was over Sara...kind of. Never mind, we don't want to talk about that now. Anybody else, who wants to join us?"  
"Me." Steve finished his burger, grabbed a bag with fries.  
"Provisions for the road. Jenny?"  
"No, thanks. I'm fine with burgers and fries. Maybe later."  
Peter got a bag of fries. "Provisions for the road sounds like a good idea. Honey, do you want something?"  
"Cold coke."  
"Okay. Ladies?"  
"No, I'm fine, thanks."  
"Me too."  
"I have no idea how to make her eat less sweet things and more fruits." Sara sighed. "Is there no chance to manipulate her? Jules, what can I do? Do you have any tricks for me?"

"No. I can understand her. When I was pregnant, I was the same, sent Greg out of the house to get me ice cream in the middle of the night. It's a part of being pregnant."

"Probably." Sara pulled Jules in her arms. "Do you go into water with me later? You could have another surf lesson."

"You want to see me fall into the water again."

"Honey, if I could I'd catch you and carry you back to your board."

"Of course you would." Jules kissed Sara's cheek. "You're my heroine."

"And you're mine."

"For a heterosexual woman you're very comfortable with Sara." Paul observed. "You look like a couple."

"Why would I keep a distance between her and me? I love her, she's my friend. I'd do the same with a male friend."

"For some people there's a difference."

"I'm not homophobic."

"No, your friends are homophobic enough."

"They're not homophobic."

"Weird people."

"Isn't she a sunshine? No wonder I love her." Jules slapped the backside of Sara's head and rolled her eyes. One day she would make Sara like her friends. Or at least accept them and not insult them when they weren't around.

With the dogs Sara and Sofia stepped into their home. They had taken the dogs with them so they could get a cool place in the house. After all the hours at the beach the cold stone floor in the kitchen was exactly what they needed.

"Any idea what you want to do now?" Sara asked her wife after she poured fresh water in Scooby's bowl.

"Let me see, we slept in, had sex, breakfast and lunch at the beach, took a walk, drove around the most scenic road the city offers, met our friends, our son. I'm not hungry otherwise I had suggested a barbecue, maybe later. We could be boring, cuddle up on the couch and watch TV. Or a movie."

"How about we do that in bed? You never know, the movie might inspire us."

"What kind of movie do you have on your mind?" The blonde smirked.

"Something nice, romantic. A chick flick."

"Pretty Woman."

"My pretty woman is right next to me."

"Ditto."

"Do you want to end the day with me in bed? Well, we do have to get up later again, our daughter will come home at one time and wants to see us."

"Yes, after a long day with daddy and his girlfriend, she'll be exhausted, might be already asleep."

"I want to kiss her good night anyway." Sara took Sofia's hand and went upstairs with her.

"Me too. And I want to see the photos Don took today. I'm sure this day deserves a page in Susan's personal photo book of the year." Sofia started to create a photo album with photos of her daughter, following her through the year. In a few years their daughter could look back on a collection of special days in her life.

"You did take photos of Steve too, didn't you?"

"Yes. Our son in the water, on the surfboard, with his friends. It makes me very happy to see him like this. He has changed a lot. There's nothing left of the boy, who we met two years ago."

"The Beatles were right."

"With what?"

"All you need is love." Sara kissed her wife gently. "Worked with us too. All we needed was our love and now we're happy and arrived, where we always wanted to be. With you my life is complete and perfect."

"That sounds like you want to propose. Less than one year after we got married."

"I might do that after the twins are born. Marry you again. Somewhere."

"Vegas?"

"Maybe. We can sin a little bit in Sin City."

"I love to sin with you." Sofia pulled Sara closer. "Do we really want to watch a movie? Or make our own love story?"

"You are such a horny woman."

"I didn't talk about sex. Okay, it was part of the thought, but not only."

"What else do you have in mind?"

"What can I do to make you read out a story to me?"

"I beg your pardon?"

"You know, we snuggle up, you read a story, I listen."

"You're not a baby."

"No, but I love your voice, love listen to it. Please."

"Okay." Sara sighed and got her tablet from the nightstand. "I see if I can find a short story online. Anything special you want?"

"How about a fairy tale? Since I read them for Susan, I start to like them more."

"I'm about to read a fairy tale to my wife. This sounds so weird and wrong."

"In my ears it sounds like a wonderful declaration of love and a beautiful relationship."

"You always make me do things I usually don't do." Sara stroke softly over Sofia's back. "The twins behave?"

"Yes. Soon they'll kick again."

"Kicking means happy and healthy." Sara found a fairy tale website. "All right, get ready for your story and when you fall asleep I won't wake you up."

"Just take me in your arms and fall asleep next to me. Imagine, we sleep until tomorrow morning, a really long night, perfect to get ready for work."

"I'd rather stay at home with you. Another week off would be nice."

"True." Sofia closed her eyes. Why couldn't she turn back the hands of time, go back to last Friday and have the whole week of vacation coming up.



## Monday, July 28th

"I don't want to get up, I want to stay in bed, stay in your arms, forget the world and continue our vacation. It's too early to go back to work, we haven't rested enough, our batteries aren't full yet." Sara held on strong to her wife, trying to shut out the alarm clock, that told both women it was time to rise and shine.

"We can call in sick, but I don't think we find a doctor, who puts us on a sick leave." The blonde kissed the hair of her lover. "Nine days of vacation are over, now it's time for you to educate children in the forest and I have to catch killer, burglars and other bad people."

"Don't forget to tell your boss you want to stay at home soon. Two or three more weeks of work for you, then you can concentrate on the twins."

"Which is good, I don't think I could work as long as I did when I was pregnant with Susan. There is a huge difference between being pregnant with one child or two. Week thirty-two didn't feel like this the last time. I feel like I'm about to burst."

"You have eight more weeks."

"I know. I see what my boss will tell me when I come up with the idea of stopping work in two weeks."

"He'll understand, you do have a lot of pain."

"I am and I hate to admit it, walking gets more and more difficult with the prosthesis. The extra weigh is not good."

"When do you see your orthopedic again?"

"Two weeks. Do me a favor, don't call doctor Bendler, it's not that bad and I'll stay more inside until I stop working at all. And use the crutches."

"It must be very bad when you want to use the crutches without me nagging you." Sara looked worried at her wife. Usually the blonde was way too proud to use her crutches. When she suggested it herself, it had to be bad. "Why did you not say something last week?"

"Because we were on vacation, bad thoughts don't belong to our vacation. I took pain killers, they helped."

"Honey..."

"Not too many, but every day. Often I forgot the pain because I was so happy, the time with you and our huge family was so great. You're better than pain killers."

"Can you see your doctor?"

"I will. Remember, I've got an appointment with doctor Blumfield today."

"We have an appointment with doctor Blumfield." Sara took her lover's hand. Those appointments were their appointments. Sofia didn't have to go there alone.

"Right. We. The reason why we have to get up, our early morning appointment."

"The best reason to get up early."

"We get a new photo of our twins. When do we choose who is who?"

"When we see them. Or do you want an order?"

"No. Right now I can't imagine to give a name to one. What if we give Saloso the wrong name? What if he should be Sandy? Or the other way around?"

"I'm sure we'll know when we see. You never know, we might come up some different names because the babies look like...I don't know...Sean and Seamus."

"Sean and Seamus? How did you...?"

"It were the first names beginning with an "S" that came to my mind. You never know, maybe our sons look like boys, whose names don't start with a "S" at all."

"Donald Junior?"

"His father would be proud."

"We didn't call Susan Sara Junior only because she looked like you, children are supposed to have their own name and not inherit the one of their mother or father."

"I'm with you. Now, time to get up, my darling, or we're both late for the appointment with doctor Blumfield. Which will mean we'll be late for work too."

"I'd so much want to be late for both, stay in bed with you, have you massage my back and belly." The blonde sighed and rose. Sara was right, they had to get up and hurry. Doctor Blumfield was a busy woman and they had to go to work afterwards.

"On crutches, what happened?" Doctor Blumfield asked when Sara and Sofia came into the examination room.

"The twins are very heavy and my left leg doesn't like the extra weight. I thought I support it with the crutches." The blonde answered and sat down. "Sandy and Saloso must have a secret fast food delivery service, they can't get all the weight through me. I don't eat this much."

Sara grinned. Saying her wife didn't eat much was in the eye of the beholder. In her eyes Sofia did eat a lot, a lot of not healthy food and she was sure, there was more she didn't know of.

"Did you have a good time at Lake Tahoe?"

"Yes, it was a wonderful week and I didn't want to come back. Living in a villa, in a forest with a lake in front of the house, is something I can get used to. The only downside is, I'm in pain. Not pregnancy pain, back and leg pain because of the weight and I had to take pain killers."

"These are not good news, let's check how your twins are. You might want to consider cutting down work, give yourself the chance to rest more. The pain won't decrease, quite contrary. Your job is exhausting, you're pregnant with twins and - even when you don't look like it - you are not the youngest one anymore. Twenty years ago this pregnancy would have given you less trouble."

"Twenty years ago I didn't know Sara, my life is better now; with thirty-five."

"And a few months." Sara added and kissed her lover.

"Don't be a nitpicker, Honey. Doc, I thought of stopping work earlier, maybe you can back me up with this. I thought of two more weeks."

"I think it's a good idea, you feel yourself, how everything exhausts you more, how the pain increases, which makes you take more pain killer. They're not good for you nor the babies. I doubt you could work until four weeks before labor."

"No, not another six weeks. The stairs in the house can be a challenge sometimes, I'm free of pain sometimes, it's not like the whole day is like hell. We were walking around Santa Monica and Malibu yesterday, not far, slowly, took many breaks, it was great and I barely felt any pain. But when I have to walk faster, when there are hills or I can't have breaks all the time, the pain gets worse."

"Your body tells you to slow down, prepare for labor, you should listen to it. Talk to your boss, tell him you can't work crime scenes anymore and have to take breaks in order to stay eight hours in the lab. Eight, Sofia, not more. Give yourself the rest you need."

"Okay."

"And when he agrees - which he should - stop working in the middle of August. You continue working, don't you, Sara?"

"Yes, I'll work until Sofia comes home from hospital. Then I've got a week off."

"Not a lot of time."

"No, but it's high season. Luckily Sofia's parents are here, they can help."

"I remember Susan was a lot of work, now the work is double. We definitely need my parents because Susan is still here. Three babies to look after. Or two babies and a toddler."

"What about the father of your child?"

"He's there too and he'll take the second and third week off. They don't leave me alone." Sofia took Sara's hand. It was much easier to forget all the things doctor Blumfield did to and with her, when she kept talking and had Sara by her side. The doctor didn't seem to mind working and talking at the same time, her voice kept calm and friendly, made the blonde feel safe and good.

"That's good, you'll be very busy with your two boys. Will you breastfed them?"

"I don't think so. Or is it better?"

"Doctors fight about it, that the mother's milk is better for the baby, about the bond between mother and child during breastfeeding, but in my opinion there's no difference. Take a look, this is how your boys look now." Doctor Blumfield pointed to the screen, where the twins were.

"They look the same like the last time."

"Oh, they gained some weight, have toe nails now. See here." The doctor used a laser pointer to show the toe nails. "The left one is a little bit taller than the right one."

"Is that bad?"

"No, they are twins, but they're individuals. We're talking about less than an inch."

"You're having babies, not clones." Sara reassured her wife.

"One might come after Don, one after you. Don is taller, you look better."

"Thanks." Sofia smiled. "But they are fine?"

"I can't see anything that says different. Two healthy babies, both developing the way twins are supposed to, nothing to worry about. Only their mother needs some care-taking. When was the last time you saw your GP?"

"Two or three months ago. I got checked in hospital two weeks ago."

"Your orthopedic?"

"Around the same time, but I've an appointment there in two weeks."

"You might want to see your GP before you go in labor, have him check on your pain and the medication."

"I don't want to take too much medication, it's not good for the babies."

"No, it's not the best. But when you're in pain all the time, it's also not good."

"Okay, I get an appointment there too. When I'm off work."

"Good. We're done here, I see you again next week. Sara, make sure she does rest and don't work overtime. No case is as important as your twins."

"I couldn't agree more." The brunette kissed the forehead of her wife. She knew it wasn't easy to pull back when a case got into you, but in Sofia's case, she had to let go, let somebody else take over.

Sara found Sofia in the garden, sitting in the garden swing, the dogs in front of her, wagging their tail when they saw Sara, but didn't get up.

"Somebody worked overtime."

"Yes, a lot of work waited for me." The brunette sat down.

"When did you come home?"

"At four. After eight hours."

"Wow, I'm impressed."

"William said it's okay when I come the next two weeks from eight to four, then I cut down to four for another week and in three weeks I can stay at home for the rest of the year. Unless there are some court testimonies I have to attempt."

"Three weeks, not two."

"It's okay, four hours a day is not much and I can be in the lab. No more crime scenes, which is very boring, but better for the twins and me."

"Sorry for that."

"Oh, I'll survive. We have a new lab rat, really nice and I'm the coach."

"Really?"

"Yes, maybe this sounds a little bit familiar to you: around six feet, crazy dirty blonde hair, green eyes, unbelievable smart to the books, a jerk when it comes to social areas."

"Greg?"

"The hair and the height yes, the rest is so you."

"Do I have to worry about this guy? That he'll make you forget me?"

"Honey, I'm thirty-two weeks pregnant with our babies, how could I forget you? How could I make anybody believe, I'm not taken? I'm super knocked up."

"You're more than beautiful." Sara kissed her wife. "Or did your new Greg call you fat?"

"No! He brought me hot chocolate the whole day. And he listens to heavy metal...you are right, he is a new Greg."

"Yes. What is his name?"

"Jonathan. He's a fan."

"He must be, he brought you hot chocolate."

"No, a fan of you. He's from San Francisco, worked at the crime lab during his university time and met somebody, who studied there with you. A professor Williams."

"Ronald? He became a professor at the crime lab?"

"Head of the crime lab. He wasn't happy when Jonathan decided to go to Los Angeles, but he said, here are much better surf beaches and sexier beach bunnies."

"Greg." Sara laughed.

"Yes."

"How old is he?"

"Twenty-three. When I'm done with him - I mean training him - I don't have to worry about the lab during my time at home."

"You think he can cope when you're gone?"

"I'll bring him up to date with all the important things in the lab he has to know. Like who dates whom, when and where you get the best food, what you have to do when you want to go home early, when the boss is in a good mood and when you better stay away. For the rest, like handling the evidence, he doesn't need advice. And if he does, Juana will be all over him to help him. She likes him."

"Oh, a workplace romance?"

"You never know, I'll do what I can in the next three weeks to make that happen. I like it when love is in the air and everywhere I look around." The blonde sang.

"You're so crazy, I love you." Sara kissed her wife gently.

"Love you more. How was your day? Except for long?"

"Good. Shane missed me and he was very jealous when I told him about the house. He gives me two weeks off for Christmas when we invite him over to Tahoe for Christmas Eve and

Christmas Day. I told him it's a deal when he sleeps on the couch?"

"What did he say?"

"He'd sleep in the bathtub if that gets him into Lou Lee's villa."

"We'll so have a white Christmas. With four children. So many presents." Sofia cheered. Maybe they had to rent a big car to get all their presents up to Lake Tahoe. The cars were already packed this time, the next time there were two more babies, their clothes, thick winter clothes and Christmas presents. They needed a truck!

"Sara, do you have a minute? Or two?"

"Even five or ten." Sara said and looked at Lea, who stood at the doorway and looked unsure at her, like she had no idea, if she was doing the right thing. "Come in." She patted on the place on the couch next to her.

"Thanks. Hey Jim." Lea lifted the cat up. "How are you? Do you enjoy the air condition?"

"Yes, it's too hot for him outside. I wonder when this heat will end."

"Not any time soon. The perfect summer holidays."

"Which are now. Are you excited to go back to school?"

"Yes, I can't wait. Wahoo." The girl sighed.

"It's not school, that's on your mind, right?"

"No...I shouldn't bother you with this, I should talk about it with ...nobody. It's ridiculous. I have to figure out my own problems."

"Or you tell me what's up and I decide if you bother me or not. And it's always better to share problems, they become half then."

Lea closed her eyes. "How did you know Sofia is the right one?"

"She made me happy, she was always there for me. Every day I spent with her made me feel like I'm right where I belong, with the person I am supposed to be."

"But how did you know it's her? You didn't wake up one morning and knew she's the one you want to marry and be with the rest of your life?"

"No, I didn't. It was a long way."

"What make you take this way? Was it that easy?"

"No, I fought it in the beginning. It felt wrong, I have never been with a woman before and it seemed to be wrong or weird."

Jules made me understand that the things I wanted weren't things only a man could give me. It were things, most of them Sofia gave me at that time already."

"Wasn't it a risk?"

"It was something new, that's not the same like a risk. I knew about Sofia's feeling, she told me about them." Sara paused a moment. "It's about Lauren, isn't it?"

"Yes. She...she says she likes me."

"Do you like her?"

"I don't want to like her."

"Why?"

"Because the last time I liked somebody, she broke my heart. Why would it be any different now?"

"A good question." Sara got her arm around Lea. "Let me tell you a story. Once upon a time there was a woman, who was engaged to a man, she loved so much, she gave up her life just to be with him. She went to his city, he ignored her, ignored the signs she gave him. In fact, he was with other women, pushed her into the arms of another man. She couldn't forget him, he couldn't ignore his feelings forever. Finally they talked, gave each other a chance and were happy. For over two years everything seemed to be perfect. Then it wasn't anymore. She left him because she wasn't truly happy. After a while, visiting various countries, she came to a new city and met somebody she knew from her past. And this person turned out to be the one, who was the perfect match for her. It took her some time to realize it, but when she did something out of her own character, overcame her fears, she found true happiness."

"The story of your life?"

"The story of a part of my life."

"You're telling me I should give Lauren a try because she might be the one I'm going to marry?"

"Talking about marriage is a little bit early, the chances your first relationship is your last because it's the right person, are low. But what's wrong with being happy for a while?"

"Nothing."

"When you spend with her, does she make you happy? Do you enjoy your time together? Does she make you laugh?"

"Yes, she does. And her lips are soft like silk."

"You kissed her?"

"She kissed me. Three times. When she did it the last time, I slapped her face, made her bleed."



"Ouch."

"Yes. She wasn't mad, quite the opposite, she promised to give me all the time I need, wait for me."

"So the girl she brought to the beach wasn't her new girlfriend?"

"No. And stupid stubborn me ignored her the whole time when we were at Lake Tahoe. Didn't send her a text or an email."

"What did she say about it?"

"That she missed me. And likes me. Really likes me." Lea sighed. She felt stupid and guilty.

"You like her too."

"Yes. What if I give us a chance and my parents find out? They'll get crazy. Will ground me until I'm twenty-one. And send me to a shrink so I get normal again."

"Sofia and I could talk to them."

"I doubt they'd want to talk to you. In fact, they might get the idea, you turned me into a lesbian. A bad influence."

"I can recommend a shrink. Doctor Weinberg is pretty good in what she does. And you know she won't tell you anything stupid."

"Not letting them know is much easier. There's so much to lose, so many risks to take."

"Unfortunately you only achieve true happiness when you are willing to risk something. Of course you can stay single until you're eighteen and moved out, but why do you want to miss out two years of happiness?"

"I don't. I...damn it, she is exactly what I want."

"Then give her and yourself a chance."

"We could go to the movies, I asked her if she could imagine we go there alone and she said yes."

"Honey, what are you waiting for?" Sara hugged the best friend of her son. "Go, watch a movie, hold her hand, share popcorn. You deserve happiness, Lea. She makes you happy, you have no reason to hold back."

"You're right." Lea smiled. "Thanks. For listening and clearing my mind. I'm sorry if I bothered you too much."

"You didn't bother me at all."

"I should have this kind of conversation with my mom - if she was somebody else - or a friend."

"Well, I adopted you, so I'm your mother and it's my job to look after you."

"Steve is a lucky boy to have you as his real mother. You know, he told me one day, that after you and Sofia told him you wanted to adopt him, he understood what karma means. All the times when he had been taken back to the children's home from foster families, when he thought he was useless and didn't deserve a family, it was because they were the wrong family. They had to take him back in order he could be adopted by you. When he understood this, he could make peace with his past. He said, being with you makes up for all the pain he felt back then. Your son sees in you and Sofia his saviors, Sara."

Sara had to swallow. This was the most beautiful thing Lea ever told her. It made her proud and proved they made everything right when they decided to adopt Steve.

"Thanks for telling me."

"He loves the two of you unconditionally. You could ask whatever you want from him, he'd do it."

"All we want is that he's happy and healthy."

"As far as I know he's both. Thanks to you."

"You make him happy too, Lea. He's a lucky boy to have a friend like you."

"I'm a lucky girl to have him as my best friend."

"Now make him happier, give Lauren and yourself a chance. He wants you happy, do him the favor."

"I will." Lea smiled. "I promise."

## Tuesday, August 5th

They did it! After all the times they talked about this, planned it and never made it come true, Sara and Sofia did take their packed suitcases in the car after they came home and took off to Las Vegas. Without Stephen, who had to work with Mel and didn't want to leave Jenny alone again and without Susan, who stayed with her father. Possible was the short trip because both women had Wednesday and Thursday off. For Sofia it was the last time before she started her maternal leave. Probably it was also the last time she was able to leave the city before she gave birth.

Instead of going to relatives of the blonde, they booked a room on The Strip and arrived there around eight in the evening. All they did was leaving their suitcases in the room, using the bathroom - which Sofia had to do like every thirty minutes on their drive to Sin City - and went downstairs into the restaurant. It was not only the hunger, that brought them there.

"Wow Sofia, you are so pregnant!" Nick called out when he saw them coming into the restaurant. "Sara, what did you do to her?"

"It's unlikely this was Sara." Doc Robbins commented.

"No, that looks more like a man." Hodges said.

"And Sara doesn't look unhappy about it." David added.

The rest of their old colleagues from the crime lab. As happy as Sara was to see them all, it made her sad. So many people weren't in Las Vegas anymore. Okay, she was the last one to judge, she left herself, but when she thought of the team when she came here. Grissom was gone, Catherine with the FBI, Warrick died.

"Don't start the party without me." Brass walked to them and hugged Sara immediately. "You look great, Sara."

"So do you, Jim."

"Don't lie to me, I look old and tired."

"Bullshit."

"You look like you kick the ass of every bad guy." Sofia hugged her old boss. "I bet you still do that. Captain Brass."

"Times were better with you around, detective Curtis."

"Well, I couldn't be a detective anymore." Actually, if she had never left Las Vegas, she would still have a whole left leg. It was a thought, that came to her mind frequently. Physically her old home town would have been the better choice. For the rest

of her life Los Angeles was better. She met Sara there, fell in love with her, something that would have been impossible in Las Vegas. Or maybe not?

"How is you mother?"

"Busy as a grandmother. You should come over and meet her for coffee."

"She'll be even busier soon. You'll have two boys?"

"Yes, two future police captains. According to my mother."

"Of course she'd say so. Have a seat, you must be tired."

"I'm tired, hungry, thirsty and ready to go to the toilette all the time. Pregnancy is more work than any crime scene."

"You decided to have babies and you have them without a father, who could help you." Hodges said.

"Wrong. Their father lives in the same house, he'll look after them like he looks after his daughter. Besides, a man couldn't help me more than Sara does. Or can a man go to toilette for me?"

"Where is Susan?" Doc Robbins hadn't met their daughter and was curious.

"With her father. Well, if he won against my mother, who usually doesn't give up her grandchild without giving you a hard time. I tell you, as devoted she was to her job, she's more devoted to her new position as a grandmother." Sofia sat down and took Sara's hand.

"Uncle Nick would have liked to see the little girl too."

"Uncle Nick can come to Los Angeles and visit us. There are three of us, it's like a little team meeting. Like now."

"I talked to Grissom, he might come along later. If that's okay with you, Sara?"

"Why wouldn't it, Nick? There's no bad blood between Grissom and me. We met in Los Angeles too. Had dinner with him and Heather. We're adults, we don't have to play pranks on each other or call each other names."

"Most couple, especially when they were engaged and break up because the woman leaves the man without telling him why, are not exactly friends."

"Hodges, you haven't changed a bit." Sofia rolled her eyes.

"Did you really expect him to change? You worked with him for years."

"You're right. Ouch."

"Are you okay?" Doc Robbins was not only a medical examiner, he was also a physician. He could see Sofia was in pain and it had something to do with the babies.

"They kick a lot, very active. My doctor says it's good, I'm not sure about it all the time. When I want to sit down in peace, sleep or work I wouldn't mind when they rest too. They want to run and to exercise, they can do it in seven weeks when they're out and have a lot of space. The space of my womb is limited, it was barely big enough for Susan, with two boys inside, the place is packed."

"Did you pick names for them? Which one will you call Nick?"

"None. The names of our children all start with an 'S'." Sara laughed.

"Stokes?"

"That's not a first name for a baby."

"Did Marie try to come up with the names?"

"You know my mother too well, Jim." Sofia chuckled. "No, we made it clear, the names are our business. They'll be called Sandy and Saloso."

"Almost the same like Stokes."

"Hodges, why don't you order your food and shut up?" Doc Robbins said.

"I'm glad my colleagues in the lab in Los Angeles are no weirdoes."

"So you don't miss us?"

"All of you - except Hodges. I'd go crazy when I have to work with him eight hours a day."

"Thank you, Sofia. I don't want to work with you. Any minute you might get into labor and then I'd have to deal with that mess. And do all the work you left behind."

"He'll never have children; I hope for the children." Sara kissed her wife. "I'll be there when you're in labor, the whole time, hold your hand and stay with you."

"Bring me chocolate afterwards?"

"Of course."

"That's why I love you. And a million other reasons."

"Who would have thought this happens after the first times the two of you met. You were such a bitch." Nick blinked at Sara.

"She hit on my boyfriend."

"I didn't!"

"You did. In your sexy red dress...she did look very sexy, didn't she, Brass?"

"If I said otherwise I'd lie. She changed clothes in front of his eyes."

"I put on my jumpsuit first and then took off my dress. I wore underwear, nobody saw anything and I had to change because we had a crime scene and I wore a dress because of Ecklie's party. By the way, is he still an asshole?"

"He changed, his daughter works here now, she transferred over from Los Angeles. We started to recruit CSIs from there after we lost three to the City of Angels."

"They have good CSI there." Sofia said.

"You guys were better. How is Greg doing?" Nick wanted to know. "A daddy of three, married. I never thought he'd start a family before I do."

"Well, you like the ladies a lot, he loves one lady a lot and, maybe she manipulated him with her psychological knowledge, he has only eyes for her."

"We only met her once, she is a great woman."

"She's amazing, my wife has a crush on her and if I didn't know Sara doesn't leave me, I'd be very jealous. She falls asleep in Jules's arms, tells her all her secrets and when misses her whenever they haven't met for a few days."

"Like you and Don."

"No, you and Jules are worse."

"Worse? You mean closer."

"In this it's the same. It's you and another woman. You sent her a text when we arrived."

"I sent a text to Greg, Jules is out with her doctor friends."

"They're the reason why you'd never leave me for her, you hate her friends and like mine."

"Yes, that's the only reason." The brunette chuckled.

"Why didn't you fight like this eight years ago?"

"Because back then, Nick, Sofia was way too arrogant."

"And Sara way too nasty to be liked." The blonde bent over and kissed her wife. It was good they could joke about this now. Sofia's cell phone beeped and a photo of her daughter appeared. *Good night moms, have fun in Las Vegas, I'm safe with my daddy. Love you, Susan.* . She saved the picture as her new screensaver before she showed the others the photo.

"He really looks like Sara, a very young Sara." David was amazed.

"Do you have a photo of your son?"

"Sure." He pulled his smart phone out of the pocket.

"Oh, it's baby time.. Can I add grandchildren?"

"I'm stuck in a virtual kindergarten." Hodges got up. "I get the waiter, maybe we can get to why we're here: food."

"We're here to see Sara and Sofia, catch up with them. They've got two children, expect two more, of course there are photos of them." Nick said. "One day I want to have one of them."

"First you need one of them." David pointed to the women on the next table. "I don't mean them, but a woman to get a baby. Which reminds me, I have to call my wife, ask how Joshua is."

Sara blinked at her wife. They weren't the only ones, who worried all the time about the little one. It was good to know other people were as crazy as they were.

"It was great to meet our old friends - and Hodges. Kind of." Sara pulled Sofia in her arms when they entered their room and kissed her wife gently. "Are you okay? Do you need to lay down?"

"Actually standing is good right now, we sat for a while. And yes, it was good to meet them all; and Hodges. He hasn't changed a bit. It's hard to believe he almost got married. Must have been a very patient woman."

"Or she was after the Green Card. We don't know. Are the twins asleep?"

"Probably, at least they don't kick at the moment." The blonde looked at her cell phone. "Steve wrote, he says having the whole level for himself is great, we can take our time and stay a few days longer. And he wants a few very cool souvenirs, like the huge cocktail glasses you get at some places."

"With or without cocktails inside?"

"He likes cocktails, so with. Being good parents, we get him the glasses and...buy them empty because I can't drink and you don't drink."

"Unless we order non-alcoholic cocktails."

"Sounds like a great idea. Why don't we order some cocktails, sit on the balcony and watch the craziness of Las Vegas from up here."

"You have...no, you don't want to sit. I order some cocktails and snacks, I'm sure you'll be hungry soon. Why don't you..."

"Go to the toilette? Great idea. And then I change into something more comfortable."

"Deal." Sara smiled and got the phone. She ordered two cocktails in souvenir glasses and a medium sized snack

collection. Ten minutes later they had their order and sat on the balcony, watching the busy life on The Strip. The temperature was still around one hundred degrees, a summer night in one of the hottest city on this planet.

"We should have done this more often." Sofia put her feet on the railing.

"You mean, we should have done this at all? We never went to Vegas for two days. We should have."

"Don't make it sound like we missed a lot of opportunities."

"We did. But we had other great moments, we only wasted days off when we did housework and paperwork."

"So we wasted them quite often."

Sara's cell phone rang. "Yes Darling?"

"Hey, how are you?"

"Great. Let me put you on speaker, my wife looks very angry right now." Sara turned her cell phone on speaker and laid on the table. "Do you miss us?"

"No, I only call to make sure you got my message." Steve answered amused.

"We did and we're having cocktails right now. How many glasses do you want?"

"A couple, I want to have a cocktail party before the holidays are over. How is mom?"

"Happy with her cocktail and the snacks. How is your sister?"

"I have no idea, she's with her father and I have no intentions to go downstairs and check on her. This is a cry and stink free area."

"There's a reason why your grandmother called you a little piece of shit. Be nice to your baby sister."

"Why? She can't defend herself."

"Exactly."

"Sorry, I've got a cool car now, a baby sister is so not cool. Especially when she cries the whole time."

"Why did Susan cry? Is she fine? She seemed okay when we left." Sara asked concerned.

"She is fine, she misses you and no, you don't have to jump into the car and come back right away. Don takes very good care of her and Tanya is here too."

"What about Jenny?"

"Jenny is here too, she has to cook for me."

"Don't play macho, nobody believes the act. What about Lea?"

"Next door with Lauren."



"I'm so glad she gave her a chance, they're so cute together. Do Lauren's parents know?"

"No, besides Jenny and I you two are the only ones, who know about them. I'm sure Peter and Paul suspect something, but they haven't asked."

"How do they explain Lauren's parents, that Lea is over all the time."

"Because I'm too busy with my girlfriend and she doesn't want to be the odd one out."

"All these lies only because her parents are so narrow-minded. I don't get it, they're fine with us, what's the difference to Lea and Lauren?"

"Lea is their daughter. Don't worry, my older sis is fine, she's happy and sometimes she forgets her parents. Less than two years and she can move out, do whatever she feels to do."

"Luckily you don't have to move out, your parents are perfect."

"I move out anyway, my parents wanted more kids, they need a room. I'll be a visitor at their place."

"The place, like you call it, is your home. Always. Nothing changes that. Am I clear?" Sara grumbled.

"Yes mom. Mom, why are you so quiet?"

"Her mouth is filled with crackers."

"The twins are hungry."

"They only had a huge dinner two hours ago. If your mother doesn't give birth soon, she'll burst."

"Bitch!"

"Mom! They can hear your words."

"They're asleep."

"She comes up with excuses all the time. How are the dogs?"

"Fine. Downstairs, with the cats, on the couch. Jenny and I took them for a walk an hour ago, tomorrow we take them to the beach."

"Don't you have to work?"

"Until noon. You know, when you work hard for your money, you need some time to spend it."

"You spent a lot of money on your car."

"It was worth it, Don picked the perfect car. I wonder who owned it before? A pimp? A drug dealer?"

"You'll never know."

"Don changed the color, so I won't be shot because somebody thinks I'm somebody else."

"No, you'll be fine."

"I know, I'm cool. Okay, you two enjoy Sin City, get me all I want and we see each other in two days. The house will be fine, not a mess and stinky and the dogs will be happy to see you."

"Take care of you."

"Of course mom."

"I love you."

"I love you too." Sofia said, her mouth still half filled with snacks.

"Love both of you. Bye-bye."

Sara finished the call. "Our son misses us a lot."

"Of course he does, it's why he called."

"Do you need anything else?"

"No, I'm fine. Thanks. I don't want to burst."

"Where is my little pout?"

"Bite me."

"Later I will."

"Can't wait for that. Your mouth all over my body."

"Nice dream. It's a little bit early to go to bed, isn't it?"

"We don't have to sleep."

"We haven't finished our cocktails."

"They are good." Sofia got up and stretched. "Why don't they come up with a kind of swing, you can be in without getting a sore ass, legs or arms? Something, you can hang in like in water."

"No matter what kind of material you use, at some point it will feel uncomfortable."

"True." The blonde leant onto the railing. "Honey, did you think about renting out the room downstairs?"

"For a longer time? Yes. We can put an advertisement in the newspaper."

"Or...we save the money for something better."

"How do we get the new housemate?" Sara got up, stepped closer to her wife. "You have somebody on your mind, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Who?"

"Jon. Jonathan. He has a contract for six months, the time I won't be there. The first two weeks he lived in a hostel in Santa Monica, then he moved to one in Hollywood, he has to move soon to a new place."

"Your new Greg."

"He could be our new Greg."

"Does he fit in?"

"Yes."

"Okay. Offer him the room and then he comes over, meet the rest and when everybody is fine with him, he can stay."

"For half a year. I don't think he'll stay when he gets a longer contract. Most people want their own place after they have good work contract."

"Some stay forever." Sara smiled and kissed Sofia. Her plan had been to stay for a few days or weeks, until she had a job and could afford her own place. How a plan could change, how quick you could change your mind and do things, you never thought you'd ever do, she was the best proof it was possible. But she had the best reason in the world.

## Friday, August 8th

One more week before Sofia could stop working. Today was the last day she worked eight hours, the next six days were only four hours a day. From eight to twelve, a perfect time to work. She could take Susan to her parents, pick her up for lunch, spend the afternoon with her, go to the beach and visit Sara in the forest.

Rantanplan and Scooby came to the door to greet Sofia when she came home and growled at Jon, who was behind the blonde.

"Down boys, he's not a burglar."

"Watchdogs, very handy. Do you guys like a treat?" Jon pulled two dogs treats out of his pocket. Immediately they stopped growling and wagged with their tails. Blackmailing always worked.

"You just made two friends."

"I'm sure they're the best friends I can have in this house - and the most important ones. If you don't like me, I'd be in trouble whenever I come here. In case the other housemates want me here."

"We'll know soon. They should be in the garden."

"Mama! Mama!" Susan came running to her mother.

"Hey Sweetheart, how are you? Sorry, I can't pick you up, I can barely manage my own weight."

"Arms."

"Sorry, I can't. See this big belly?"

Susan looked disappointed at her mother before her attention moved to Jon.

"That's Jon, he might move in. You can say hello to him if you like."

"Hi."

"Hello beautiful lady, you have a lovely teddy."

"Ta."

"Is your mommy in the garden?"

"Yeah."

"Then we should go there." Sofia took the hand of her daughter and they went into the garden, where Sara and Steve sat next to the barbecue. Smoke rose up into the sky, a bucket with ice and cold drinks was placed in the shadow under a tree.

"Hey." The brunette got up, pulled her wife in her arms and kissed her. "I missed you. How are you?"

"We are all three fine. Honey, that's Jon. Jon, that's my wife Sara, the best CSI I've ever worked with and our son Stephen."

"The amazing Sara, who is famous in San Francisco and the Playstation fan."

"You play too?"

"I'm more a Wii person."

"Wii is cool too."

"I saw you have a nice big TV in the living room, pretty good for some games."

"Absolutely. Mom said you're living in a hostel at the moment, where do you play?"

"Usually I play when I have the day off. We have a community room, I've got a beamer, when you offer to play against life-sized opponents, most people want to join and it's a lot of fun."

"You have a beamer? I want this guy in our house! We can rearrange the living room, get a free wall and have great games nights."

"Why am I not surprised you say so?" Sara laughed. "You've got the first one on your side, Jon."

"Perfect. What am I supposed to do to get you on my side?"

"Sofia told me, you make her take breaks, bring her hot chocolate and fruits and carry the heavy boxes for her. That's enough for me."

"Cool. Three votes for me. How many more people do I have to impress?"

"Three. Or four. I have a feeling, we need to give Tanya a vote too. When my move-in-radar isn't mistaken, she'll move in with Don soon. Like this or next month." Sofia grinned.

"What makes you say this? Did they mention anything?" Sara asked.

"No, it only makes sense to me. Tanya is here a lot because Don wants to be around his daughter. Next month his sons will be born, he wants to spend time with them. It's easier for them to share a place and there's no chance Don leaves his children alone. Tanya likes it here, it's close to her favorite cousin, her godchild and next month she'll have a godchild here. They don't have a huge place, but all the space they need. She rents out her apartment more and more often and for longer terms. I think they'll let us know soon she moves in and her apartment is nothing more than a way to make money and a backup place in case it doesn't work out between them."

"She doesn't need to ask the other people if she can move in?" Jon wondered.

"No, we all know her for a long time, she lives her most times, it's okay. In fact, it's good for Sara and I, we'll have another babysitter and the father of our babies won't be away anymore to see his girlfriend. For us it's a win situation."

"So she's welcome because she's useful. What is my job here?"

"Pay the rent and do your parts of the housework. We have a lovely list, who is supposed to do what."

"I pay rent and have to do housework?"

"Yes, it's a hard contract."

"A challenge. Interesting. Wow, also very interesting." Jon cocked his head when he saw Tanya coming into the garden.

"Hi, I smell steaks and sense beer."

"I get you whatever you want when you share the room with me."

Tanya gave Jon a good look over. "Cute, another high school kid. Why do they always have a crush on me?"

"I'm not a high school kid, I'm a CSI."

"And I'm a dentist and my boyfriend is a cop. He'll be here in a few seconds, you better rethink your action."

"Ouch."

"You want her on your side, be nice." Sara chuckled. "Tanya, that's Jon, our maybe new housemate."

"Don will shoot him within days, make sure he pays in advance."

"Who will I shoot?" Don followed his girlfriend into the garden.

"Jon, the kid who hit on me."

"Really? So he has a good taste in women."

"He also owns a Wii and a beamer." Steve added.

"He gets points for that if he shares them with all of us. Which doesn't mean he's allowed to get his hands on my girl. This gorgeous woman is my girlfriend, I know she's very sexy and a woman, a man dreams of. You can dream of her, keep your dreams to yourself and leave it to dreams. Otherwise I'll make sure your life is hell."

"Nothing is more refreshing than being threaten by a possible new housemate. All right, she's off the market. A dentist. Bugger, I like doctors."

"He's the first one, who likes dentists." Tanya said. "A nice change."

"Are we late?" Sally and Tony hurried into the garden.

"The sausages are ready to eat, the steaks need a few more moments. Who wants a beer?" Steve got a few beers out of the bucket.

"You don't, you're too young." Sally took a bottle.

"Mom?"

"One beer is okay."

"Thanks."

"It's illegal, we have a cop in the garden."

"I'm off duty. When Steve wants a beer, I can't see anything bad about it. When I was his age, I drank beer too. Not in front of my parents because they didn't allow it, but I did. And I had more than one every time."

"One is enough, the taste is not that great. It's okay with a steak, but not for the whole evening. I prefer cocktails. My moms brought me great glasses from Las Vegas."

"You can have one later - but go easy on the alcohol, okay?" Sofia said.

"I prepared a gallon already - without alcohol. We have a long night of video games coming."

"Friday nights are so much fun since you live here, Steve." Tanya cheered. "They are even more fun when Don has Saturday off and can join us. There's nobody I'd rather play against. He's such a sore loser."

"I don't lose."

"You lose all the time."

"Not when you don't cheat."

"Before we watch world war III, Tony and Sally, that's Jon, he is a colleague of me and would like to move in."

"Do you like loud parties?" Tony asked.

"Not when I have to work the next day. I like loud music, that's why I have headphones."

"Do you bring home another chick every night?"

"I'm not that lucky. Most girls I've met so far were criminals. Or backpacker."

"Do you steal food? Drinks?"

"No."

"Do you clean up after yourself?"

"Of course."

"Do you mind people in garden? Your window faces the garden."

"Are you having loud parties when other in the house have to work?"

"No, we keep the noise down after ten. Our neighbors appreciate that too. There might be people around until late, but not loud. It's one of the house rules."

"And everybody sticks to the rules?"

"Yes, we made the rules together and I can't remember the last time one of us broke the rules." Tony looked at Sally. "Can you?"

"No. Do you like the dogs?"

"The more important question is, do they like me? I'm a dog person. Why?"

"Because they're here all the time and they are Sofia's, but we all look after them. Means, we don't feed them unless we're asked to do so or when Sara and Sofia can't come home on time to do it themselves. Then we leave a note so nobody else feeds them again. We do take them for walks when we feel like having some exercise, again, we leave a note. And we always lock the front door because they know how to open it."

"Okay."

"For me he passed the test." Tony decided.

"I think you passed the test for all of us." Sofia smiled.

"Welcome to your new home."

"Wow, thanks."

"First rule: you have to organize a barbecue for us."

"I can do that. How about next Saturday?"

"Perfect. Big party next weekend!"

"I pack my stuff tonight, load everything in the car and go shopping after work for the barbecue. One more thing: can I also see my room?"

"You get a complete house tour after dinner. First food then walk. Honey, can you give him the tour?"

"Of course." Sara got her arm her lover. So they had a new housemate. A nice one. She was sure, they'd all be happy with Jon.

"So, when is your turn to move in?" Sara asked and sat next to Tanya.

"Me? How do you come up with this idea?" Tanya laughed.

"You and Don spend more and more time together, you've been together for quite a while, he wants you close, but with the babies here, he won't move out because he's a wonderful and



loving father; a part of his personality you love. His apartment isn't huge, but it's big enough for two and you have the rest of the house and the garden."

"Sounds like you really want me here."

"We all do."

"Don and I did think about it, we wanted to talk to you about it soon. You're right, he wants to stay here, close to his kids. I can understand it and have no problem with his decision. Like you said, it's a part of his personality I like. He takes responsibilities and is reliable."

"You can't get a better man."

"How about a better woman?"

"Sorry, Sofia is taken."

"Pregnant with the babies of my boyfriend."

"Pregnant with your godchild."

"Yes. My second. And this time I'll have a boy."

"Let me guess: you want the one, who looks like Don."

"If one of them looks like him. His DNA didn't have a chance against yours."

"This time one of them should look like him. Wouldn't it be nice to be close to your godchild? Play family with your boyfriend and his kids on the weekends? Breakfast together, family trips."

Tanya laughed. Sara really tried to make her move in. Somehow it was funny. "What happened to the part he has no responsibilities and doesn't have to care about the kids?"

"We both know Don, he wants to be involved."

"Yes. Okay, I'll talk to him later, there shouldn't be a reason why I don't move in soon. Which means, I'll rent my apartment out, get the most important stuff over. Care to carry a few boxes?"

"Sure."

"Your wife thinks the same about me moving in?"

"Sofia is sure you'll move in soon because when the twins are born, Don will be all over them. His sons, little Dons."

"Should that make me jealous?"

"No, only aware of the fact, you won't be his number one anymore."

"Who said that?"

"I did."

"Honey, I'm always the number one or I'm not interested anymore. Being second best was never an option."

"I sense trouble in dentist - detective paradise."

"Your sense is wrong. I'll be mommy number three for your kids. Take them on vacations, go to theme parks. Everything except for the pregnancy shit. I feel sorry for Sofia the whole time. The heat, the weight, the pain. Walking up to your level is hard for her, work is hard, hell, everything is complicated when you put on thirty pounds within a few months."

"A nightmare."

"Your wife wanted this nightmare."

"She wants babies."

"Both of you want them."

"Yes. But I'm like you, I don't like the idea of being pregnant."

"It's why you liked me right away. After you knew I was not a baby kidnapper."

"Better safe than sorry. I had to protect my godchild and my friend."

"Then we protected them together. Which reminds me, Jules wants a party at her place. With her friends and us."

"Doctor friends. No offense."

"No offense taken. We'll make the boring doctors understand what party means."

"I can't let Sofia alone."

"She can come too, she's invited."

"Great, a lot of strange women looking at us like we're aliens, taking about Sofia's pregnancy and feeling for sorry for the babies because they don't have a father. Only two lesbian mothers, you can't give the babies what they need. Poor Susan will become a lesbian too with parents like us"

"Don't you love all the prejudice?"

"Especially from educated people - or people who call themselves educated."

"You, Sofia and I will share a table, don't talk to the rest."

"Jules won't be happy about us."

"And not surprised." Tanya bopped Sara. Her cousin didn't expect anything else from them.

"I can smell pizza." Lea came into Steve's room.

"In the oven, you can get it to me later."

"Go get it yourself, food is your job."

"My job are the drinks. They're in the fridge, ice is in the freezer. Chips and chocolate?"

"Are almost there. Lauren has them, she got stuck with Susan, who has to show her a new toy."

"Your little sister is stealing is your girlfriend?"

"Yes, she likes her."

"Looks like."

"Where is Jenny?"

"On her way. She had to look after her siblings for a while because her mother worked overtime."

"That sucks."

"What sucks?" Lauren came into the room.

"Jenny looking after her little siblings and being late."

"True. Your little sister is happy and on her way to bed now."

Lauren sat next to Lea and kissed her. Finally she didn't have to pretend anymore they were only friends. Here they could act like an ordinary couple, hold hands, kiss each other.

"Finally."

"Why?"

"She was in one of her moods earlier. Not sure what made her cross. Guess it's a women thing. I'm glad the twins are boys."

"Idiot. You will spend the night with women."

"I know, all women like me, want to be with me."

"Sorry to destroy your fantasies, macho man, I'm here because of my girlfriend, who is here to play some video games and have some time with me." Lauren said amused.

"To be honest, my main reason to be here is you. The video games are not that important anymore."

"I'm sure Jenny will come here because of me and not because of the video games." Steve grumbled a little bit.

"Probably. She'll stay, won't she?"

"The plan is to play the whole night, isn't it?"

"Not for me. I prepared the couch in the twins' room. My parents don't expect me back until tomorrow afternoon. Lauren?"

"My parents believe we play the whole night."

"They won't know if we play the whole night or play until two and go to bed then, will they? There's no reason for you to go home, you could stay with me."

"Sex in my little brothers' room?"

"Who said anything about sex? I want my girlfriend with me, we never have the chance to be alone somewhere. Don't tell me you have a problem with that."

"Not at all." He grinned and pulled Lea in his arms. "You know you can tell your folks you stay here as often as you want. My moms and I back you up, no matter what."

"Thanks. We can use a little support."

"My parents would support us."

"I know but...one day I want to tell my parents about us and I'd feel strange when they ask if your parents knew about it and I say yes, from the beginning."

"It's not like they do anything to deserve honesty. You'd tell them about your relationship if they talked in a more open-minded and educated way about your love. They're okay with my moms, there's no difference to you and Lauren."

"There'll be for them."

"I guess there'll always be people, who think it's wrong. Why can't they mind their own business? I don't tell anybody with whom they should or shouldn't be. It's love, so it can't be wrong." Lauren shook her head. "Anyway, doesn't matter. Let's get the pizza and start the game. Not sure if I want to play the whole night, the thought of having Lea in my arms and fall asleep is nice too; nicer than video games."

"If I had to choose between Jenny in my arms and video games I'd choose my girlfriend. I think. Of course I would... unless... maybe not when there's a new edition of my favorite games."

"We better don't tell Jenny." Lauren laughed. A video game was more important than she was, not what a girl wanted to hear from her boyfriend.

When Sara pulled Sofia into her arms and kissed her throat gently the blonde purred like kitten. The lips of her lover were like magic and they made all the pain and all the stress disappeared, replaced them with happiness and security. In the arms of her lover, with her lover by her side, nothing could ever happen to her.

"I love what you're doing."

"I love you, no matter what you do."

"One more week and I'll be available for you in bed all the time."

"While I have to earn the dollars."

"Money moves in next week. You like Jon?"

"Yes. So do the others. He'll be fine here, we'll be fine with him. I prefer to have him here than a stranger because we know him and don't have to worry about the kids."

"Our oldest son is already happy about him, another video games fan."

"Yeah. More video games nights. Well, better that than cruising around the city and getting into trouble." Which was one of the not so nice thoughts she had since Steve had his own car. He was mobile now, could drive to wherever he wanted and they had no control over him.

"Exactly. They're having another long video games night today." Sofia wished she could join them for a few games, but she was way too tired to stay awake a little longer and she had her doubts, that when she didn't have to work anymore, she had enough energy to sit a few hours in the evening in front of the TV. At the moment her body was happy about every break and every opportunity to sleep. Preferably with her wife in her arms.

"Tomorrow is no work, they can enjoy their weekend. Lea prepared the couch in the twins' room."

"Does that mean Lauren stays here too instead of going home?"

"Maybe. Are we bad mothers because we let them stay together although we know, Lea's parents are not happy about this. If they knew about it."

"No. We decided a while ago we're on Lea's side because it's the right side. It has nothing to do with being parents, it's about her right to choose with whom she wants to be and Lauren is not a person, you have to protect somebody from. One look and you see how happy they are together, we're doing the right thing. And if that means, we give them a place to have sex, so it will be. I feel more comfortable with them sleeping together in the twins' room than on the backseat of a car in park or somewhere on the road."

"Me too." Sara sighed and pulled Sofia closer. She was glad nobody gave her a hard time because she was in love with the blonde. In fact, the only one, who gave her trouble about it, was she herself.

"Oh, I got a call from JJ today. Agent Jareau."

"Your back doppelgänger."

"Yes."

"How is she?"

"Fine, her pregnancy makes her slow down a lot, but she's fine. She says, she lets me know the next time they come to Los Angeles and asked if we could meet."

"Do I have to be jealous? A sexy blonde calls you and wants to meet you."

"No reason to be jealous, this sexy blonde - and this was a quote of you, not what I said - is married and I'm married to the most wonderful woman in the world."

"She'll be here spontaneous, won't she?"

"Yes, you can't plan cases. Is it okay when she comes over or we meet her somewhere for dinner?"

"Of course it is, why wouldn't it?"

"I don't know. There is no reason and yet, I want your permission because I don't want to do anything, that makes you unhappy or uneasy."

"I love you and I trust you, why would I be unhappy when you meet a friend?"

"Because women get jealous all the time."

"True, mine does."

"Hey." The blonde protested. "I'm not jealous."

"No, you're not. You let Greg sleep in my bed...oh no wait, you fucked another woman while Greg SLEPT in my bed, you had no time to be jealous. Like you were fine with Mel complimenting me and inviting me to dinner and beers. Oh no, you made her your personal number on your personal United States Enemy List. Yes, you are so not jealous."

"If I'm jealous, you're jealous too."

"Not when it comes to JJ, I like her too much. It was nice when she was over for the barbecue."

"Now I am jealous."

"I knew it." Sara kissed Sofia and laughed. "I like JJ and I love you."

"Better. Ouch."

"Kicking in for the night?" Sara placed her hand on Sofia's belly. To her it was a wonderful feeling when their sons kicked and she could feel their movements. But she didn't have to feel the pain of the kicks. But in a few weeks she could feel them kicking, hear them laughing and crying and hold them in her arms. And then they'd ruin their nights too.

"Yes. I tell you sons, when you're out, I'll find a way to tire you out so you will sleep at night."

"Imagine two babies, who fall asleep around ten and don't wake up until seven the next morning. A dream."

"Susan never did that the first weeks." In fact, their daughter gave them quite a hard time. Hopefully the boys would be

better sleeper and don't ruin the nights of their mothers.  
Weren't boys easier?

"We have the secret medication from her grandmothers, we use that for the boys."

"Good idea. Want to catch some hours of sleep as long as we can?"

"Absolutely." Sara snuggled deep into Sofia's arms. A few hours with her wife before work pulled them apart. It was about time for their next vacation...

## Friday, August 15th

The last day of work was over. No more crime scenes, no more lab work, no more paper work for the rest of the year. She was a free woman. Well, kind of free. There were two babies in her belly, who needed her and were with her all the time.

"Are you really going to leave us now?" Juana asked, sorrow in her voice.

"It's noon, my shift is over, time to go home and forget about all the bad things in the world, in this city. There's a different world waiting for me; with babies and wonderful people."

"You watch TV, crime shows, you read newspaper and you'll continue studying the forensic science magazines, all the bad things will stay in your world."

"So I can teach you a few things when I'm back."

"Don't leave and you never have to stop teaching me."

"See this enormous belly? With this slowing me down, giving me pain, I can't work anymore. You're welcome to visit us. You know the way." The blonde pushed herself out of the chair. "Mommy is going home to her baby daughter."

"Sara is at work?"

"Yes, it's summer, her days are long. When she comes home, we'll have a lovely barbecue in the garden, snuggle up in the garden swing and watch the sun go down from the balcony, overlooking Silver Lake and Los Feliz."

"I'm jealous."

"Settle down and start a family, these are the things you get from it. Things, only a family can give you."

"Tell Mister Right to show up and I'm more than happy to welcome him in my life."

"If I happen to stumble over him during my few months at home, I let him know, where he can find you. Can you make sure you're fine when I'm back and look after our little boy, he has a lot to learn."

"He'll live with you."

"Yes, and I'll look after him at home, you have to look after him here."

"I will, when you come back, he's housebroken."

"Perfect." Sofia laughed and hugged her colleague. "Don't forget to come along every now and then, have a look how your old room is."

"Will he change it?"



"He lives in there he can change it as long as he changes it back to normal when he moves out. You changed a few things while you lived there."

"Only decoration."

"Decoration is important to feel comfortable and at home. Sara and I decorated the twins' room different than we did when we expected Susan. Not only that we need another bed, we also wanted something new."

"Don't tell me you got everything in blue because they're boys."

"No, Susan had blue colors too, still has. She chose wall paper, blue with white clouds and suns. Our daughter likes blue and green, sometimes pink but so far she is not a pink junkie like Jorja is."

"How can your daughter be a normal little girl when she has two mothers? Impossible." Juana chuckled.

"Is that a quote?"

"It's what somebody in a talk show said yesterday, when they talked about if it's right or wrong that same-sex couples can adopt children. Apparently children can't develop the way they should when they don't have a mother and father."

"What about the children of single parents?"

"It's not as bad as having two mothers or two fathers."

"Interesting theory. Why don't we ask Stephen what he thinks about having two mothers. If he experienced already some... wrong developments."

"Your son adores you and Sara and he's the best proof this guy was more than wrong. You're great mothers and a child needs love, no matter who gives it to them."

"Now you're welcome at our place again. Stop watching bullshit like that."

"There were some intelligent people too."

"No intelligent person goes to a talk show - except if it's Ellen. She's gorgeous."

"Now I know what to get you for your birthday or for Christmas. Tickets to Ellen."

"Make that two, I want to take my wonderful wife with me. We both love her."

"Okay. Now go, enjoy your maternal leave and don't forget to let us now ASAP when your boys are born."

"I will. Bye."

"Don't forget to say goodbye to Greg."

"He'll see me like every two days." The blonde smiled. The good thing about living close to her friend was, she could see them whenever she walked like two hundred yards.

Sofia didn't plan to start her long time off work this way. These itchy red bumps on her belly and buttocks drove her crazy. She was scratching the whole time, forced herself to stop before she made herself bleed. On Monday she met doctor Blumfield, on Wednesday her orthopedic, she didn't feel like seeing another doctor. Plus it was Friday afternoon and her GP was off for his weekend. All she needed was some lotion and she was fine. Hopefully.

After a walk with Susan and the dogs around the reservoir she went into the garden and sat down with a book. Her daughter had other plans than let her mother read, she demanded her attention, so Sofia ended up playing ball with her daughter until the little girl was tired enough to sit down and play with her toys.

"Hey, are Steve, Jenny and Lea there?"

Surprise the blonde looked up. She could hear Lauren's voice, but didn't see her. The girl was definitely not coming into the garden through the living room door.

"Up here. The fence!"

"Oh there." Lauren leant with her arms on the fence and watched Sofia and Susan. "No, they're not here."

"Lo." Susan discovered the older girl too.

"Hey little girl, how are you?"

"Ay."

"Perfect. Are they still at work?"

"Yes. Are you on a ladder?"

"Positive."

"Why don't you come over? Wait, let me get our ladder and you don't have to..."

"You're not supposed to carry heavy items."

"I know, Sara." The blonde grinned and got up. The ladder was not far away, in a corner of the garden. Carrying over to the fence, she built a shortcut for Lauren to come over. No more walking around half the block, the girl could just climb over the fence and was here within a few seconds.

"Thanks." Lauren sat next to Susan. "You have so cool toys, want to play farm with me?"

"Yeah."

"Okay, then let's build a barn for the animals."

"She likes you."

"I know, children tend to like me while I'm not sure what to do with them. And some of them cried when I held them, so I started to stay away from them. Susan never cries, she involves me in her life. It's nice."

"You sound a lot like Sara a few years ago. When Jules told her, she'd be the godmother of Eric, my wife worried a lot. If she could be a good godmother, if she made too many mistakes and then Eric was born and right from the first time she held him in her arms, all those fears and thoughts were gone and she was head over heels in love with him. Sometimes you need a baby to make you understand, they're exactly what you want in your life. It was the same with Susan. Sara worried if she could be a good mother and there's no day she isn't the perfect mother to our daughter. And Steve. He loves her a lot, she's the most important person in his life."

"How do you know you and Sara are not equal important to him?"

"He loves me, I know that. But there's something between him and Sara, Steve and I will never have. It's nothing that makes me jealous, it's a connection they have because they share a past. I'm fine with that and I'm glad they're both happy. Do you want children one day?"

"I'm not sure."

"They're great."

"I know, but I might prefer to work with them rather than have them myself."

"You want to work in a kindergarten?"

"No, I want to be a pediatrician."

"A doctor like your mother."

"Yes. As a doctor you can help people, as a pediatrician you help children."

"Again, a lot like Sara."

"Lauren? Where are you?" They heard Anna calling.

"Over here! With Susan and Sofia."

"You didn't climb over the fence, did you? Tell me you didn't."

"Mom, I'm not supposed to lie to you but okay, I won't tell you what you already know."

"When will you grow up?"

"When I'm allowed to do all the things I want. Hi mom." Lauren grinned at her mother, whose face appeared over the

fence. Who was climbing up the ladder now? Like mother like daughter.

"Hello Sofia, how are you?"

"I'm fine, thanks. How are you?"

"Clueless what to do with my daughter. At least you didn't jump down and break your ankle."

"If I had, my mom is a doctor, she can help me."

"You're a nightmare."

"Why don't you come over? Have a cup of tea with us? Some cake." Sofia offered.

"I should clean the house...then again, my daughter sits here, why should I not take a break too."

"Careful old woman, don't fall over the fence and break your back." Lauren teased.

"Nasty daughter."

"They're all the same around that age. Lauren, could you make some tea?"

"Sure. Susan, do you help me in the kitchen? We make tea and get you some berries."

"Yeah." Taking the taller girl's hand, Susan walked into the house with her.

"Why does she do whatever you ask her to do while she ignores whatever I tell her to do?" Anna sat next to Sofia.

"You answered the question yourself. I ask her to do something while you tell her to do it. For teenagers, it's a huge difference. We were the same when we were there age."

"They always respond better to other people. How do you feel? You look like you're ready to give birth."

"I am, the twins aren't. Six more weeks."

"Any problems?"

"The tests on Monday were all fine."

"Sorry, it's not my business, I shouldn't ask you these things, I'm your neighbor and not your doctor."

"You are a doctor, it's in your nature. Like the CSI and cop questions are in my nature. You can't change who you are just because it's weekend."

"No, you can't. And I don't have a weekend."

"You don't happen to know where red bumps can come from?"

"What kind of red bumps?"

"Are there more than one kind? These ones." She lifted her shirt so Anna could see the red bumps on her belly. "They itch

and moved from my belly to my rear end. Guess they like wide places."

"May I?" Anna held her hand over Sofia's belly.

"Sure."

"It looks like a rash. Did you eat something new? Used a new lotion?"

"No."

"Any new clothes? You haven't washed? Or did you change your washing powder?"

"No to both."

"To me it looks like pruritic urticarial papules and plaques of pregnancy, or short PUPPP. It sounds worse than it is, it's a chronic hives-like rash and strikes some women during their pregnancy, strangely enough, mostly when they're like you pregnant with boys and carry more than one child. Again like you."

"Is it bad for the twins?"

"No, only annoying to you because it itches a lot, but does not hurt you or the child. Did it start on your belly?"

"Yes. Will it spread?"

"Unless you don't get a lotion, yes. It spares your face."

"At least something. Do I have to see a dermatologist for it?"

"Would be the best. Your GP can prescribe a lotion too, a dermatologist is the better choice."

"A specialist is always the better choice. Can you recommend something for me before I see my GP?"

"Better, I can write you a prescription so you can go to the pharmacy right away. Itching is very annoying."

"It is, but I can't get myself down to the pharmacy. Susan, the dogs and I walked around the reservoir, I'm done with exercise for today. My feet hurt, I'm tired and don't feel like a drive down to Glendale and Riverside. But if you write it and give it to Sara later, that would be great."

"Of course."

"Thanks."

"Tea, berries and some cookies. Why do you have Christmas cookies in the middle of the summer?" Lauren came back with a tray.

"My father loves baking, we all love his cookies. No matter if it's winter or summer. Every few months our kitchen smells like Christmas and we all love it."

"This is a great place, no wonder I like it here so much. Mom, we should do the same."

"By we you mean me, who has to shop, bake and clean, right?"

"You're the mother."

"You're old enough to do these things yourself. Of you want cookies, make them. The kitchen isn't locked."

"She's not nice to me."

"I'd say the same to Susan. It's my father, who likes the cooking and baking. And your mother is right, you're almost a grown-up, you can do these things yourself."

"Great, you bounded with my mother. Susan, come on, we take our tea, berries and cookies and continue with the barn."

"Yeah."

"How did you make your daughter eat healthy, Sofia?"

"It must be Sara's genes, she prefers berries over cookies too. Praise her, not me. If it was me, I'd eat all the cookies and ignore the berries." The blonde laughed. To her there was no choice between berries and cookies, it was too obvious what was good to choose. Cookies, especially chocolate cookies, won all the time.

Moving homes was always stressful. You had to prepare and organize a lot first, then you had to carry all your belongings into the car, drove to the new home, unload the car and arrange your new home. It was much more fun and less stressful to watch somebody move into a new place. It was exactly what Sofia did, sitting on her balcony and watching Jon carrying his belongings into the house.

"How far is he?" Sara came to her wife, two glasses of water in her hands.

"Almost done."

"We're not nice housemates, watching him carry all the stuff by himself."

"I'm too pregnant to help, you had to go to the pharmacy for me and then help me with the lotion. We had no time and no it's too late to offer our help."

"Nice excuse." The brunette sat down. "Did the itching stop?"

"Yes, it's much better. Having a doctor as your neighbor is very helpful."

"You'll have another one around soon. In the house."

"I know." Sofia kissed Sara. Tanya told them she'd move in from the first of September. Or more that she found somebody

to live in her apartment from the first of September, the last days the dentist had been busy to get her stuff into Don's apartment and the blonde was sure, the move was over this weekend. Two new housemates on one weekend. Now their place was full. Well, almost. Two babies were missing.

"With Saloso and Sandy the house is full. We're a little community."

"We're eleven people by the middle of September. One more and we have a dozen."

"There's no space for another person. Or...what are we going to do when Sally wants her boyfriend to move in? Or Tony his girlfriend? He does have one, doesn't he?"

"The mysterious woman in Florida. He flew four times over to see her this year. It must be something serious and when I'm honest, I'm afraid it's more likely he moves out than that she moves in. We never met her. Tony keeps her a secret."

"The actress. You didn't make him tell you who it is? I'm disappointed, my dear." Sara teased. Usually Sofia was the first one, who wanted to know, with whom one of her friends was involved.

"Don't make fun of me, I'm pregnant, I'm not up to my full power and energy. In fact, I slept two hours before you came home and feel tired again. The twins use all my energy."

"You can sleep in tomorrow."

"No way, I want to have breakfast with you. We won't see each other a lot because you work long hours, this means, the time you are here, I want to be with you. We have breakfast, if Susan is still asleep when you're gone, I lay down again and get up when she's awake."

"Okay, but when you're too tired, stay in bed. I can prepare my breakfast and eat in the bed, while you sleep next to me. I kiss you goodbye and we talk when I come home. Or, when you feel like it, when you and Susan come over to the forest and visit me during my lunch break."

"We'll be there. Not every day, but often."

"Good. I look forward to see you."

"Why don't you look at me right now? Into my eyes."

"If you want to make me jump you..." Sara's brown eyes, these lovely deep brown eyes, full of love, when they looked at her. The eyes, she fell in love with, the eyes, that told her every day, how much she was in love, how much she was loved. "...it's working."

"Later."

"Why later? Why not now?"

"Because we've to go downstairs soon and welcome Jon again."

"He's fine, Stephen will welcome him - and his Wii."

"Talking about our son, Tanya told me, Marlene asked about him today."

"Really? How comes?"

"Maybe she misses him."

"She has this medicine student boyfriend."

"Not anymore. He cheated."

"Wasn't that the same problem with her ex? She seems to have a hand for boyfriends, who aren't faithful."

"If you are after the hot guys, the possibility is high you get burnt. These men know they're sexy, that they can have every woman they want, why should they stuck to one woman? There's no reason to stick with one when you can have them all."

"My wife happens to be very sexy and she stays with me - although I'm fat and full of PUPPPP."

"You're pregnant with our babies, beautiful and the only one I want. You're the sexy blonde, who could have had anybody, but picked me. Over a movie star."

"I picked the best one I ever met." Sofia kissed Sara. "Nobody can hold a candle to you."

"Nobody can hold a candle to you, Sofia." Sara kissed her wife gently. Wasn't she a lucky woman to be married to this blonde goddess?



## Tuesday, September 2nd

Thirty-four weeks ago she got the message that she was pregnant and felt like the happiest woman on earth. Pregnant. Allowed to carry a baby in her womb for the next months. Her and Sara's baby. Allowed to give to life to her baby. A little person, who had her DNA, who was a part of her, who made it possible, that she'd live on. Then they found out she was pregnant with twins, two babies, who would love her, make her happy and give everything, she ever dreamed of. Her and Sara's two boys. Sandy and Saloso. Now, being in week thirty-six, she felt like the last months, or weeks, were like eternity.

Worse, the last week felt like hell. The decision to stop work sooner, to stay at home, was the best decision, she made during this pregnancy. Even if she wanted, she couldn't work anymore. Worse, she wasn't able to eat normal. Her breakfast had to be divided into three smaller meals, her stomach seemed to shrunk the same way her bladder did. It was impossible to stay away from a rest room for longer than half an hour, which made it almost impossible for her to leave the house.

How small could they get in four more weeks? And what if the twins took their time and didn't want to be born on time? She wanted them to be September babies, the same month her wife was born. Another connection to her mother, something else, that made the boys their sons. This was one of her worries. Would Sara feel like she was as much the boys' mother as Sofia was? Her wife was, when it came to these things, complicated and did not always think straight.

"Hello Sofia."

"Marlene, what are you doing here? Did I miss an appointment and you're here to get me?" The blonde looked surprised at the teenager standing in front of her. She couldn't remember that she was supposed to see Tanya today. Not at the dentist's workplace.

"No, your next appointment is in two months, together with Sara and Susan."

"Don't tell her I told you, she does have toothache but refuses to let Tanya know. No time for it."

"In this case the pain isn't big enough."

"No, it isn't. What can I do for you? Did you come here because you want to see a really fat woman, who can barely move but has to see the bathroom frequently?"

"You look gorgeous."

"Don't lie to me, I know how I look."

"Gorgeous. Is Steve at home?"

"No, he's with Lea."

"They're still inseparable?"

"Yes."

"How does Jenny like that? Jenny is her name, right? Feel about it?"

"She knew how close they are before she and Steve got together and has no problems with it. Otherwise I doubt Steve would be with her. Lea is way too important to him to let anybody get in between them."

"He's very loyal. She's a lucky girl to be his best friend."

"Like he's very lucky to have her as his best friend." Sofia paused to reconsider if she should say, what she had on her mind. It was something, that wasn't her business, then again, it was her opinion, nothing more, nothing less. "You know, he really liked you."

"I know."

"When you started to date the other guy, you broke his heart."

"I'm aware of it. I liked him too, still like him. He's a great friend. Was a great friend. Sometimes you make very stupid mistakes. Some of them you can't take back, no matter how much want to."

"Because it's too late when you realize it was a mistake."

"Yes." The girl sighed and shook her head, like she wanted to get it clear. "Anyway, would you tell him I say hello? Or no, don't tell him I was here. It doesn't matter."

"I let him know you were here, maybe he calls you, maybe he won't. Your number is still the same?"

"No, I changed it. Last BF was...it was better to change it. Wait." Marlene wrote down her number. "If he wants to meet for a coke or a pizza, it would be nice. But I can understand when he doesn't want to see me anymore."

"He'll let Jenny decide."

Marlene smiled sadly. "He doesn't do anything behind her back, doesn't want to hurt her. He is a great boy. Better than any medical student." She sighed again. "Can I get you anything before I leave? Help you with anything?"

"No, I'm fine, thanks. The more I eat and drink, the more I have to go to the toilette."

"I hope you and your twins will be fine. Make sure you come in when you have them."

"You won't be there, you're in college."

"Dad makes me work in the surgery quite often, he started to get me into the examination rooms so I learn more. Tanya knows the days."

"Okay, we'll come around. Latest when I have my next appointment."

"I make sure I'll be there by then. All the best, Sofia."

"Same for you, Marlene." The blonde would have liked to give the teenager some positive words on her way, but it was her own fault, she was in the position, she was in now. Sofia had been there herself before. More than once. It was easy to fall for the wrong boy and difficult to spot, who was the right one, when the right one didn't fit the picture of the perfect partner, you made up for yourself. Or worse, when he didn't fit into the picture others made for you.

"Hello beautiful lady, what are you doing here?" Sara smiled when she saw Jules sitting in front of the door.

"Waiting for you, beautiful lady." The therapist got up and hugged the ranger.

"Did you miss me?"

"I did. Somehow my Fridays are not complete without you in my office. Without us having muffins."

"I miss you too. Not the therapy although it was good to talk with you about everything, I feel much better since I know, I'm fine without therapy and don't have any bouts anymore. Why didn't you wait inside?" Jules had a key, she could herself in whenever she wanted.

"Except Sofia nobody is at home and I didn't want her to get up and open the door."

"You have your own key."

"And I know how it is when you're pregnant with twins. You're happy for every second you can sit, don't have to look after somebody and can just be you."

"You're not somebody and she doesn't have to look after you. You understand who it is with a peanut bladder, a peanut stomach and the hunger of an elephant."

"Yes. It's hell and the most wonderful thing at the same time. Feel the babies kick, imagine how it is when they're born and smile at when. When you hold them. Kiss them."

"I have no idea how you and Sofia do or did it. To me, it seems impossible to be pregnant."

"A not so long time ago, it seemed impossible to you to feel comfortable around babies. You feel more than comfortable around them now."

"I do. Your son changed me just as much as his mother changed me. And he doesn't have a doctor title and never went to university."

"No, he's a natural." Jules laughed.

"He is like his mother, I had no other choice than fall in love with him." Sara pulled Jules in her arms and kissed her.

"Thanks for everything, Jules."

"My pleasure. I knew you were special, I had to keep you."

"Now I'll never let you go because I love you."

"I love you too, Sweetie."

"We're lucky Sofia is not around. A pregnant woman can get furious."

"With chocolate you calm her down."

"True." Sara poured some iced tea into a carafe. "Can you get the cake from the fridge? There should be some chocolate cake in the fridge, in the red box. Unless a pregnant woman we both know, ate it already."

"If she did, we love her anyway."

"True. Why didn't you bring your kids?"

"Because your wife is happy when there're not three more kids jumping around her. A pregnant woman needs quiet time and they're with their grandparents until tomorrow evening. Greg and I go out for dinner later, romantic candle light dinner."

"With or without a hotel room?"

"We have an empty house, what do we need a hotel room for? No, this money we save for our honeymoon."

"Did you pick a date for that?"

"Not yet. Europe has the same climate we have, we don't want to go there when it's cold and rainy, we'll wait until next year. Maybe May. Depends. We need somebody for the kids."

"You can call me Somebody. I take two weeks off and look after my godson and his siblings."

"My mom said something like that too and Greg parents did offer the same."

"Two grandmas versus godmother fight."

"Honey, let them take their grandchildren, you can have us over Christmas and New Year. They want a vacation with them too. Especially Greg's parents, who don't see them so often."

"Okay. Deal."

"Thanks." Jules blinked. "Let's go upstairs and see your wife."

"Did you know she has another personal doctor?"

"No, who is it?"

"Anna. She looks after Sofia every day."

"You can never have enough doctors around you when you expect twins."

"At least not when they're good and Anna is a good one."

"Does she know her daughter dates Lea?"

"How do you know?"

"It's my job to see those things."

"Like you knew right from the beginning Lea isn't interested in boys?"

"I told you, one day you'll find out why your son and Lea will never be more than friends."

"Mind reader."

"Great therapist."

"Best therapist." Sara corrected. Jules was the best, there was no doubt about it. The best therapist and the best friend Sara could have wished for. How could she have been unhappy about Greg falling in love with Jules? She was the best that ever happened to him.

Sofia stared into the darkness of her bedroom. Why did she have this pain again? It had annoyed her earlier this evening, now it was more than annoying. Cramps. She didn't want to wake Sara up for nothing. Her wife worked long hours, had to work long hours tomorrow and didn't need a night entertainment. They were happy when Susan went to bed at seven and they could lay down too. Shortly Sara fell asleep and Sofia followed her wife although it was barely after eight in the evening. When you were tired and your body needed to rest, it didn't matter what time it was.

Another kick. Why were the twins awake? Wasn't it enough she was awake? Did they have to make it worse? Did they give her the cramps? Horrible. They almost felt like...

"Oh fuck!" Did she say these words out loud? She had to, Sara was moving and waking up.

"What's going on?"

"You won't like it."

"What?"

"I have cramps and they feel a lot like contractions."

"Are you sure?"

"The last time I had them, they felt the same." How could she forget this pain?

"Okay." Immediately Sara sat up. This was the best way to wake her up within seconds. Contractions. Sofia was about to go in labor. "Don't panic, keep calm, everything is fine, you're fine, the babies are fine, keep calm, it's all..."

"Honey! Calm down!" Sofia said and shook Sara's shoulders.

"Don't forget to breathe. If these are contractions, then they only started." Like two hours ago, but there was no point in telling Sara this. She'd only get more nervous and get mad because the blonde didn't tell her before.

"Sorry. What shall I do?"

"After you took a deep breath? Why don't we wait if it's not a false alarm. I have another four weeks, it's most likely to be nothing."

"Jules got her twins earlier."

"Not in week thirty-six."

"Okay." Sara turned on the light. "I get your bag ready, just in case you need it."

"I'm sure it's nothing. Or only Braxton Hicks contractions."

"We have to wait."

"Yes. Ouch." The blonde held her belly. This was worse than a kick, it was real pain. She didn't want to have contractions now, it was too early.

"Are you okay? Do you want something to drink?"

"No, I'm fine. I'll get over these and go back to sleep. Exactly what you should do, you have to get up early."

"But..."

"If something changes I let you know. Come on, lay down." Sofia pulled her wife down and kissed her. "In a few moments everything will be over and I'll be sound asleep next to you." It had to be a false alarm. Week thirty six was too early.

"Okay. But wake me up in case something changes."

"I can't go anywhere without you and I don't want to." She wanted to stay in bed, sleep and be one day closer to have her boys in her arms. These false alarms would appear a few more times the next days and weeks. It was a part of the pregnancy.

Not only Braxton Hicks contractions were a part of a pregnancy, the other contractions, the ones, that told you, your baby was ready to be born, were a part too. And after two more hours, the blonde was sure, she had these contractions. These real contractions.

"Great, it's almost midnight and I'm having contractions. Why can't babies be born during the day?" She clenched her teeth and sat up. Okay, time to wake her wife up, she had to go to hospital and even when she managed to leave the room without waking the brunette up, she couldn't leave without her. She needed Sara by her side, needed her to hold her hand.

"Honey?"

The brunette mumbled something, turned and continued to sleep.

Sofia switched on the lights. "Honey?"

"Mhm?"

"I think we have to get up."

"Do you have to use the toilette?"

"No, I can do that myself...but you might want to get up and get dressed to get your wife and your sons to hospital. It feels like they want to get out this night."

"Seriously?" That was enough to wake Sara up completely.

"How are you? Are you having contractions? Shall I call the EMTs?"

"I think it's okay when you take me there. Saloso or Sandy does push a little bit."

"Okay, okay, we keep calm...and get dressed."

"You first, I call Don. He has to drive us, we need Tanya to look after the kids."

"Okay." The brunette jumped out of bed and fell over her own feet. "Damn it."

"Slow down, we're not on a hurry, only...in pain..."

"You being in pain means we're in a hurry." Sara put on some jeans and socks, looked for a fresh shirt and some clothes for Sofia.

"Don, your sons are in a hurry, we have to get to hospital. Now. Okay, we get ready, see you in a few moments." Sofia said and ended the call. "Oh, my parents, I have to...ouch! Damn it!"

"We get you ready first, then we call your parents." Sara pulled off the sleep shirt of her wife. The stress of the contraction did not make her realize, her wife sat half naked in front of her,

something, that always got her mind off whatever was on it. Not today. Today she was too nervous and busy to think about a naked Sofia.

"Where is my prosthesis?"

"Forget about it, you don't need it now. Take the crutches, I get you your prosthesis later. Pants." Sweat pants were perfect for a woman in labor. Why bother with anything special? As soon as Sofia was in hospital she would be redressed.

"Sock." Sara put on a sock on her lover's right foot. "Okay, here are your crutches, time to leave." The brunette took the bag and threw it over her shoulder. In the kitchen they met Don and Tanya, who looked more excited than sleepy.

"Are you okay?" He asked.

"Yes, I'm fine, only about to burst."

"Did your water break already?"

"Not yet. We better take some cover for the seat."

"What is going on here?" Sleepy Steve and Jenny came out of his bedroom.

"Contractions. Your brothers might come tonight."

"What? Why didn't you wake me up?"

"We were about to do so."

"Let me put on some clothes, I'm coming too."

"It can take a few more hours..."

"I know that, so what? My brothers are on their way, I want to be there. Jen?"

"Give me two minutes."

"You can follow us, we leave now. Can you also call your grandparents?" Sara asked.

"Sure. Send me a text so we find you."

"We will."

"I stay here with Susan." Tanya said.

"Thanks. Off we go or the twins will be born here."

"Not the worst place to be born, better than the backseat of a car." Carefully and as fast as possible Sofia managed one step after another. The stairs were a challenge anyway when you were pregnant and on crutches, with contractions it was worse. Don walked close in front of her to make sure, she didn't fall, Sara was behind her.

"Oh, oh, oh shit!" The blonde felt something warm and wet between her legs and sat on the stairs. "I guess my water broke. Now we know it's serious."



"Don't worry about that, I clean up." Tanya said. "Just get into hospital."

"Thanks." It was hard to use her crutches with the contractions, she needed support from Don and Sara to get down the stairs. With only one leg going into labor was even more complicated and dangerous than for a woman with both legs. Maybe the prosthesis would have been the better decision. Now it was too late, she was almost down the stairs and didn't want to waste any time to put the prosthesis on. All she wanted was getting into Hollywood Palms as fast as possible and give birth to her twin boys.

### Wednesday, September 3rd

She didn't need a doctor to confirm she had contractions and was in labor. This pain was all too familiar to her. Since Susan's birth she forgot about it sometimes, the joy and happiness about her daughter had been bigger, had pushed away most bad memories. Now joy and happiness stepped back and gave way to pain and frustration. Why was it necessary to be in labor for hours? Couldn't it be a fast and painless event, like a party, you looked forward to and enjoyed being at. No, labor had to be pain, cramps, blood, sweat.

A nurse helped her to get dressed for labor, sent her into a bed and there she was left with Sara and Don by her side, both holding her hands and telling her, everything would be fine soon. Soon. If they were in pain like she was now, they knew there was nothing like soon. A second felt like eternity when your body seemed to turn inside out.

"Never again! This time is really the last time! I'm done with being pregnant!"

"You're doing fine."

"Am I? Do I look fine to you, Sara?"

"You look distressed and in pain."

"Then don't tell me I'm fine. I'm not. Why are you not here? Having this pain? Why has it to be me?"

"Because you're the braver and stronger one."

"Screw that."

"Mrs. Curtis, the doctor is with you in a moment." A nurse said.

"Great, can he or she get the twins out ASAP? Like now. I don't want to wait forever. And what about some more pain killer?"

"I let him know."

"The morphine I got after I lost my leg was good stuff, I want that."

"Sorry, that's not possible."

"Then find something equal good and don't come back with Aspirin."

Sara looked at Don, who decided to stay as much out of this as possible. An aggravated woman was nobody, you wanted to be upset with anything. Like a wrong look, breathing too heavy or one wrong movement.

"Sofia?"

"Yes!"

"I can see you're pain and I understand you want medication and are not in a happy mood..."

"Good."

"Am I allowed to kiss you or would you prefer when I step back and hold your hand?"

The blonde looked at her wife, saw the love in her eyes and at the same time some fear. This fear irritated her. Why was Sara afraid? There was nothing to be afraid of.

"What's wrong?"

"I...I know I have no reason to complain because you're one, who has the pain and does all the work, but...when you're this aggressive it scares me a little bit. Makes me wonder, if I did something wrong. If you're still in love with me or hate me at the moment."

"I could never hate you." Sofia took pulled Sara in her arms and kissed her. "Sorry, I know I'm not myself at the moment, it's the pain."

"Totally understandable. Tell me what to do, how to help you best and I'll do it."

"Be with me and don't take my angry words too seriously. You know, when I was in labor with Susan, I wasn't a sunshine either. We all have to get through this and I hope, we'll be through it fast. I love you."

"Love you more. My brave wife. You deserve a huge chocolate cake tomorrow."

"Tomorrow? It's already tomorrow, you can get it today."

"When you want one today, you get one today and tomorrow. One for each boy."

"Now you're talking. Ouch. Fuck."

"Mrs. Curtis? I'm doctor Colby, we met the last time you were here." A doctor in his forties appeared.

"Yes, I remember." He hadn't been there when Susan was born, she met him later, when he checked on her and her daughter.

"I come back from ultrasound. One of your boys hasn't turned."

"That's not good." She didn't want to hear bad news, she wanted good news and not more pain.

"It's nothing to worry about, but yes, it's not perfect. Your first son turned, you can give a vaginal birth to him, for the second I recommend a c-section. We could try to get him out with his feet first, but the c-section would be easier for you and the boy."

"What do you think?" Sofia looked at Sara.

"If it's better for you and the boy, you should do it."

"And there's no problem when I give birth to the first one normally and then change to a c-section?"

"No, we'll plan for it and everything will be ready for it. You'll get your anesthesia after the first boy is out and in the arms of your wife, then you'll have no pain, we do the c-section and when we checked on him, you can hold them both in your arms."

"I suppose another scar doesn't matter anymore, I have quite a collection."

"Nothing can change the fact you're the most beautiful woman in the world." Sara took Sofia's hand. "Will they be okay after the c-section?"

"I can't see a reason why they shouldn't. Like I said, we could try it the other way, could try to turn him, but that's more pain and stress for mother and child and if we don't succeed we have to do a c-section anyway. This way you and we are fully prepared for it because it's planned."

"Sounds safer than trying it the other way first." The blonde said. "Okay, cut me open after the first baby." Or maybe for both babies? "Isn't it easier when I have a c-section for both babies?"

"Less painful, faster, yes. But Mother Nature always does it the best way and when there's no medical reason for a c-section, I'm not comfortable to do one."

"Okay, sounds sensible." She always wanted a doctor, whose first intentions wasn't to cup whatever he could get in front of his scalp. Now she had one and he was right, the natural way was always better than an operation.

"The anesthetist will see you shortly and talk everything through with you."

"Thanks. Do you have an idea how long it will take? Until I have the boys in my arms."

The doctor checked his watch. "It's four in the morning, judging by your contractions, your first baby should be here in two hours top. By eight you should have both boys in your arms and get a little breakfast. Or might be even asleep."

"Sleep sounds like a wonderful promise." She was tired, knew it although the pain and adrenalin pushed her. What wouldn't she give for having her boys healthy and asleep in their room and eight to ten hours of sleep ahead of her and Sara. But that

was a fantasy, she could only dream of for the next weeks. Or even months.

"Sara, do you have any news on Sofia?" Marie asked.

"Yes." The brunette took a deep breath. She stepped out so the doctors could prepare Sofia for the next step of labor and the c-section and she got a few moments to prepare herself. "She needs a c-section."

"What? Why?"

"Because one of the boys didn't turn and they don't know, if they can turn him after the first one was born. To be on the safe side, they decided to do the c-section."

"Can I see her?"

"I don't think so. You know her, only Don and I are supposed with her. Sorry."

"Not your fault my daughter doesn't want to see me. Can you keep me in the loop?"

"Of course. Is Susan is still asleep?"

"Probably."

"You didn't call Tanya?"

"No, why should I?"

"Because nobody can take care of your goddaughter as good as you do."

"That's for sure. No, I'm sure Tanya takes good care of her and Susan should be still asleep."

"Where is Steve?"

"He went to get coffee and called Jenny. I gave him the day off from school, it's not like he could concentrate on anything before he hasn't seen his brothers."

"That's okay with us, he was here when Susan was born too. Where is Marc?"

"In the bathroom. Is Don still with Sofia?"

"No, he's on the phone, telling his parents their grandsons are on their way. I think they'll get into the first plane to L.A. this morning and will be here in the afternoon."

"By then Sandy and Saloso are with us."

"Hopefully. I go back and see what I can do for Sofia. You don't happen to have..."

"A chocolate bar? I do, but when she has a c-section, she shouldn't eat. Or only what the nurses give her. And food should be the last thing on her mind."

"You know your daughter, chocolate is always on her mind."

"Not now."

"I promised her a chocolate cake for later."

"She'll hold you on that." Marie smiled. "Go, be with her, she needs you. Make sure my grandsons are fine and my daughter smiles in a few hours with her sons in her arms. Your sons."

"Thanks. See you later." Time to see her wife and be with her until the twins are born.

Two hours later Sara held one hand of her wife, Don the other. The blonde was in full labor, pushing, swearing and sweating.

"Maybe I want a c-section for both babies. Mother Nature always picks the long and hard ways. Birth is much faster with a c-section and less painful. Why don't you give me more painkillers?"

"On the way. Don't stop pushing, the skull of your baby is visible."

"Great, the hardest part just starts. I bet they've got two big heads. Susan had a huge head and gave me a lot of pain. Your DNA, Honey." The blonde looked at her wife.

"This time my DNA isn't involved."

"Who said his DNA is better."

Sara looked at Don, who stayed quiet. Don't argue, don't start a fight. Stay quiet and do, what you were told to do. The best advice Marc could give him.

"Do you want to touch his head?"

"No, thanks, I want him out and not take a break." She continued pushing. The more you push, the sooner it's over. Right? "Gosh, are you sure everything is fine?"

"Yes."

"I feel like his head tears my perineum apart."

"No, everything is fine, but push a little more gently. The head of your baby stretches your vaginal gradually."

"So there are..."

"No, there are not, it's a precaution. Sara, can you coach her? Give her the rhythm?"

"Sure." Great, now she was in the spotlight. Only a hair's breadth away from becoming her wife's most hated person and the center of the blonde's hate and frustration.

"Slow down, don't push too hard."

"Don't tell me what to do! You're not the one, who's in pain."

"No, I'm not, it's what the doctor told you."

"He's a man, he has no idea."

"He knows what's best for the baby and you, even when it doesn't feel like it."

"No, it certainly doesn't."

"Could you do it for me? Please. We went to all the pregnancy courses, please show me I'm not a complete loser, did learn something and am useful for something."

"You're not a loser." Sofia slowed her breaths.

"The head of your baby 'crows', you're over the worst part."

The doctor said. "Keep going."

"Like I had another choice."

"There's the forehead."

"Can you pull him out?"

"No, you have to push a little more, when his face is out completely, we'll clean the mouth and nose. Who'll cut the umbilical cord?"

"The proud dad."

"Okay."

"You better make sure they'll have perfect bellybuttons, Don."

"I'll do my best, Sofia."

"He did a great job with Susan. You made her perfect by being the perfect mom and he gave her the perfect bellybutton."

"Okay, hold on, Sofia, his head is out, we have to clean his mouth and nose."

"How does he look?"

"Not very happy."

"He feels the same pain I do, I can understand him."

"You're both very strong."

She didn't feel strong, she felt pain and exhaustion. How much longer was this going on?

"Keep going, time for the shoulders. Once they're out we pull him out and you can take a short break."

"Like a minute or so, still in pain and you will prepare me for the c-section."

"We will. One shoulder is here."

"Great, final pushes. Come on, baby boy, it's time to get out, you've got a lot of more space out here."

"And here he is. The umbilical cord, please."

"Yes." With trembling fingers Don cut the umbilical cord and the newborn boy was lifted, so his mother could see him for a moment.

"Why can't I hold him?"

"He needs to be checked, his is preterm and we have to go on with baby number two. Your wife can hold your son when he's checked and you can see him."

"How is baby number two?"

"The heart rate is fine, you get the narcotics now so we can continue right away. It takes only a few minutes to get to him. Once he's out, he'll be checked and we'll stitch you. That will take up to forty minutes, so don't worry."

"Easy to say. Honey, how is our baby?"

"As you can hear, he doesn't like his new surroundings, I bed your uterus is much nicer. Nurse?"

"I can't see anything, that should make you worry. He's small, which is normal as he's a twin and was born four weeks too soon."

"When can we take him home?"

"Your wife has to stay at least three to four days and so will your babies. When they're all fine by Sunday, they can all go home together. We can tell you more tomorrow, after we examined all three of them."

"What are you doing with my belly?" Sofia asked. She couldn't see what the doctors were doing, as they placed a sheet between her face and belly.

"Can you feel something?"

"A little bit, like if you touch me slightly."

"Okay, we increase the narcotic a little more and then start cutting. Get ready for baby number two."

"A few more minutes - and at least four days." Yes, it was good the pain was over and that in a few minutes her sons were born and taken care of, it didn't matter that she'd not feel her legs for a few hours or couldn't walk until the late afternoon or evening, but what did matter was the fact, she had to stay here for four days. Or more. Four days meant four nights away from Sara. Four nights alone. Four nights, her sons were somehow close, but not with her. She would be all alone in hospital, with nobody she loved close to her. No matter how painful contractions and giving birth was, the time afterwards, when she was alone, was worse. It was the worst part of being a mother.

A little bit over an hour later Sofia was in her room, Saloso and Sandy were with her, as was Sara. They had asked their family



to give them a few moments alone before they would come in and see Sofia and the boys for the first time.

To Sara it was like witnessing a wonder when she saw her wife and their two boys together. The blonde had fed them both and held them now in her arms. As long as she was in hospital Sofia wanted to give them her breast and in addition the bottle. When she was home, they'd only get the bottle.

"You smile like you're caught in a nice dream." Sofia said quietly.

"I am. A dream of my wife with our two boys. Please don't wake me up."

"The best part of it is, you're awake, it's not a dream. Sandy and Saloso are here, we're here in the room with you."

"It's a miracle." Sara sat on the edge of the bed. She had no idea how many photos she had taken of her wife and their twin babies. Many. Now she took one of the boys in her arms. "He looks like his dad. I can see a little Don in him."

"They both look like Don. Blue eyes, dark hair."

"Their mother has blue eyes and dark hair too. The one, you have in your arms looks a little bit more like you."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. We'll ask your parents."

"Before we let them in, we should decide who's who. Any ideas?"

"Actually, I do. The one in your arms looks like he's Saloso."

"How comes?"

"Because he looks like you, made some trouble - which reminds me of his mother too - and he's very hungry."

"Funny."

"He looks like his daddy, so he'll be a sunny boy and a sunny boy has to be called Sandy."

"What if he dyes his hair later? A Sandy is a blonde, did you forget?"

"Then it's the influence of his mother. Are you okay with the names or would you prefer to change names?"

"No, it's perfect. I hope you boys are happy with your names too." Sofia kissed the head of the baby boy. "Saloso. Would you like to meet your sister and big brother? And your grandparents. Your daddy told me before, your other grandparents will arrive today and when the doctors allow, see you tonight." Saloso yawned not very impressed by the news.

"Here." Sara placed Sandy carefully in Sofia's free arm. "I let them in. They surely want photos of the wonderful mother with the babies. I did send a few to Greg and Jules, they say all three of you look gorgeous and will see you tomorrow."

"Good. Can you also let Lou know his godson is here?"

"I did. He and Tanya got photos of Saloso and Sandy as well did Lynn and Kyle. They'll all come here tomorrow."

"A full room for tomorrow."

"You'll share a room with somebody tomorrow, it will be a full room anyway."

"True. Let them in."

"Okay." Sara kissed her lover. With one look at her little family she went to the door. Time to let the rest of their family in, share the joy and happiness about the boys. Two healthy boys, born too early, but in good condition.

"Oh, look at them, they're so beautiful." Marie squeaked when she came into the room. "You look great too, Honey." She kissed her daughter.

"Thanks mom, I feel like shit."

"Language, please, my brothers hear you." Steve hugged his mother. "Two more coneheads. Wait, actually, he is not such a conehead."

"He is Saloso."

"Okay."

"Then this must be Sandy." Marc said after he kissed his daughter. "He looks like Don while his brother looks like you. Short dark hair, your nose and your mother's chin."

"Told you so." Sara grinned. And she didn't ask if one of the boys looked like Sofia, Marc said it because he saw it too.

"Of course Sandy looks like me, I'm responsible for his bellybutton." Don took his son in his arms and kissed him carefully. His son. His first son.

"Not for Saloso's?" Marie wondered and picked up her grandson.

"No, Sara did it." He smiled. When he offered Sara to cut the umbilical cord, the brunette hesitated for a second. Doubts if she would do something wrong paired with the fear of hurting somebody were visible in her eyes. "She had to be involved too."

"I was involved, I let Sofia break my hand and offend me."

"You know I didn't mean what I said."

"I know." Sara sat next to her lover. "Can you feel your legs again?"

"Not really. First it scared me, reminded me of the moment when I realized I lost my left lower leg. I can see them, so my eyes tell my head, they're both there and I've no reason to worry."

"You're fine, as are the twins."

"Yes. Did you talk to your boss about staying at home? Now that the birth was sooner than we expected."

"I'll have Sunday, Monday and Tuesday off, so I can take you home, then I've to work, but Don stays at home from Monday on."

"Rock gave me the two weeks off because of the boys and because my parents arrive. So Sara and I switched shifts. I do the first two weeks, she the third week."

"Okay. You hear that boys, your parents will be around all the time."

"And your mommy stays with you until next year. You'll have her for three months."

"I hope I can stay this long away. Now that I give birth sooner..."

"Sofia, you had a c-section, an operation, it's not like you scratched your knee and make a month of extra vacation out of it." Marie interrupted her daughter. "You'll need to recover from that."

"I know, I feel more tired today than after Susan's birth...when can I see my girl?"

"Tomorrow. For today she stays in daycare. Tanya took her there this morning."

"She must miss her mothers."

"I'm sure she does and will be happy to see Sara later."

"You have to explain to her, that I didn't run away and still love her, will you?"

"Of course." Sara smiled. "We'll show her photos of you and her brothers. Steve, why don't you sit down and take them into your arm? We need a photo of the three of you for the album."

"You're photo junkies."

"Don't complain, you can impress girls with these kind of photos."

"My girlfriend is impressed by me."

"Shut up, sit down and let us take photos. I'm sure everybody wants photos with the twins."

"Absolutely. Does your brother know about his nephews?"

"Not unless you have told him, mom."

"Typical." Marie rolled her eyes. "I'll send him the photos Sara sent me."

"Other things were more important."

"I wonder what we did wrong in your relationship to him."

"Nothing, we can live with our relationship."

"It's better than the relationship I have with Sam." Sara mumbled. It never occurred to her to let Sam know about Saloso and Sandy. She didn't tell him about Susan, why bother now? He wasn't a part of her life, he didn't have to be a part of her children's life.

It was strange, felt so wrong, when Sara left Sofia in hospital and drove home with Stephen. How could their family be complete when the blonde and the twins were missing? Three out of six in hospital, the rest at home.

"Mom, stop worrying, she'll be fine." Steve read her mind.

"I miss her."

"You'll see her again later. Give her some time to rest, give yourself some time to rest. You were awake most of the night, so was mom. You both need some sleep. We all do."

"How can I sleep when she's not there?"

"You close your eyes and dream of her."

It sounded so easy and she knew, she sounded very ridiculous, whining about being apart from her wife for a few hours. They were apart every day when they worked, this wasn't longer than a work day, in fact, the separation was shorter and yet Sara suffered more. Because she was supposed to sleep and without Sofia in her arms, there might be nightmares and insomnia.

Scooby and Rantanplan greeted them like long lost family members. Jon sent Sara earlier a text message, he'd take them out before he left to work.

"Hey boys, Sofia gave birth to the twins, she has to stay in hospital for a few days before we can take her home. I'm sorry, you know you're not allowed in there." Scooby licked over her face like he wanted to tell her, it was okay.

"When do we go back?"

"Around five or six, when Don's parents are here. Get some sleep, Steve."

"I will. Do you go back to work tomorrow?"

"Yes. I can't be the whole time with Sofia, there's no point in staying at home, we prepared everything. All we need are some diapers, we can get them later. The ones we bought are too big for the boys."

"They're tiny."

"Twins and born four weeks too soon."

"Luckily nowadays it's not dangerous anymore when babies are born four weeks too soon."

"No, they're fine. Sleep tight."

"You too. Take mom's shirt, it smell like her and makes you feel better."

"I will. Thanks." She smiled. Sofia's sleep shirt, her pillow, all those things smelled like her wife, all those things helped to cope being alone in bed. First the brunette stepped under the shower to get the hospital smell off her. With a towel wrapped around her head to dry her hair she walked straight into bed.

As soon as she lay down, her head touched the pillows, she realized how tired she was. All the adrenalin was gone, all the excitement over. Her body had time to focus on itself and its demand was easy: rest and sleep.

If Sofia was asleep too? Very likely, not only was the blonde awake longer than she was, she also had to give birth to twins. Had been through a lot of pain and stress, an operation. Sara couldn't bear to watch the doctors cut the belly of her wife open and pull out the baby. She had watched videos of c-sections before, knew what happened and she had witnessed worse scenarios when she was a CSI or worked with the ME in San Francisco. But it was Sofia, her wife, she couldn't watch how somebody cut her open. Even when it was for the blonde's own good.

Later she had to get Susan from daycare and take her to see her mother and her new brothers. Why wait until tomorrow? Susan would want to see her mother. Would the little girl be happy about her new siblings? Or jealous because she wasn't the center of attention anymore. Didn't they always say, it was hard being the sandwich child? Susan was it now. They had to make sure she didn't feel left out. Same for Steve, but their son was old enough to understand, a baby needed a lot of attention. He had been through the same when Susan was born. It was never easy to give your love to everybody equally. A challenge they had to take.

I'm a mother of four children now. It sounded so unreal. Sara Sidle, a mother of four children, happily married. Never had she thought she'd find herself in this position. Five years ago her life looked so different, like she'd spent it alone or in a more or less stable relationship if she was lucky. Her life changed and everything came different. And better than she could have ever wished for.

"Mama! Mama!" Susan ran to Sofia's bed and tried to climb it.

"Hey little girl, how are you? How was daycare?"

"Miss you."

"I missed you too." Sofia pulled Susan up.

"Mama ill?"

"No, your mama isn't ill, I'm fine. I gave birth to your baby brothers."

"Baby?"

"Yes, we have two babies now. Daddy gets them, you can have a look at them. They're very tiny."

"Baby."

"Another baby, we have three babies in the house: baby Susan, baby Saloso and baby Sandy." Steve set on the edge of the bed.

"A whole kindergarten."

"I promised you a cake, here it is." Sara presented a huge slice of chocolate cake to her wife.

"Wow, topped with chocolate sauce and chocolate sprinkles. You really did get the chocolate part." The eyes of the blonde lighted up. "Thanks for that. You won't believe it, the food is still a disaster. Oh and doctor Bendler was here. She looked after our boys."

"Not a surprise."

"No. Did you sleep?"

"A little bit, missed you a lot. What about you?"

"A few hours, the doctors and nurses woke me up a few times for tests and examinations." Sofia offered a little bit of cake to her daughter, who was just as amazed about the cake, as Sofia was.

"Look who is here?" Don opened the door and his parents came with the boys on their arms into the room.

"Daddy!"

"Hey little girl. Oh, you get yummy chocolate."

"Ya. Nana. Gada."

"Nobody ever called me 'gada' before." Don's father laughed. "Hello Susan, you look beautiful. A lot like your mother. Actually, right now you look more like Sofia than Sara with the chocolate all over your face."

"Choc!"

"I can see that."

"How was your flight?" Sofia asked.

"Good, we're glad we got a flight this fast. You had a c-section?"

"Yes, Saloso didn't turn and it was safer for him and me to get him out this way."

"He looks like you; when your face is clean." He looked at his grandson, who was asleep in his arms.

"Finally a baby who has my DNA."

"They both have your DNA, but Sandy is a little Don." Don's mother sat down. "This little one is about to wake up, he might be hungry. Don was very hungry when he was little."

"He still is." Sara grinned and took Sofia's empty plate. Without words she handed her wet tissue to clean her face.

"Thanks. Now that my chocolate level is normal, I can share some of my energy with the babies. Susan, what do you think of them? Look, that's Sandy. Your brother."

"Eve." Susan looked at her brother.

"Yes, he's your brother too, your big brother. Sandy and Saloso are your baby brothers."

"We're four now. You and I are the big ones, we have to look after the babies." Steve took Susan on his arms so she could see both babies better. When Sandy started to cry she looked irritated at her mothers.

"A hungry one, come here, get some milk." Sofia took Sandy in her arms.

"I get a bottle with milk, Saloso will be awake soon and wants his milk too." Sara kissed her lover and left the room.

"Mama." Obviously Susan didn't like the fact her little brother was in the arms of her mother. She tried to get out of Steve's arms and back to Sofia. When she didn't succeed, she started crying in protest, which woke up Saloso.

"Great, that's exactly what I feared would happen. The stinkers start to cry and we lose our hearing." Steve sighed.

"Mama!"

"I can't take you in my arms, Susan, I have to feed Sandy first."

"Mama!"

"Why don't we go and play on the playground outside?" Don's mother said to her granddaughter. "You haven't played with me for a long time. Show me all the new games you have learnt."

"Thanks Alice." Sofia said. It was good to have Don's parents here, they could give them a hand with the twins and with Susan.

"Two little babies, a jealous toddler, life will be peaches and cream the next weeks. Do you want to give us some trouble too, Stephen?"

"I could start skipping school and forgetting homework."

"You do that, I let the captain know, she'll have a serious conversation with you."

"Why bother your mother? Take away his car keys and let him walk. That will annoy him even more." Don suggested.

"It's mine, I bought it."

"You're under eighteen, she tells you what you can do or don't do."

"Why don't you stay the perfect son you are and keep the car?" The blonde offered.

"Deal."

"Milk is here." Sara came into the room with two bottles in her hand. "Where is Susan?"

"Our daughter became very jealous because Sandy is in my arms and not she, started crying and Alice took her out. We'll have a lot of fun with them the next weeks."

"Probably. Big brother, do you want to give your baby brother his bottle?"

"Before you did?"

"If you want."

"Sure. Come here, little mom." Saloso didn't protest when he was placed in his big brother's arms and started sucking right away. "Hungry. Straight to the food, yes, you are like mom. She likes bottles too, but hers have beer inside."

"Hey!"

"He is right." Sara chuckled, sat next to her wife. "Don't complain about the truth."

"Take your son and give him the bottle. Milk bar mom is closed."

"Okay. Hello Sandy. No, you don't have to cry, you get more milk, look here it comes." It was more than joy Sara felt when she had her son in her arms and fed him. This little boy made her feel like her life was perfect. Just the way Susan did, when



she fed her for the first time. It was true, children gave your life a new direction, made it better.

"They need to eat a lot, premies need a lot of food, especially when they want to be good cops later." Don's father observed.

"And they have to grow a lot to become good cops. Or at least half decent ones like their father."

"You mean like their grandfather, their father is a great cop." Don shot back dryly.

"Our sons might not want to be cops and if they decide to become models, actors or banker, you will all accept it and let them be, what they want to be." Sara told them. "Like Steve can become whatever he wants to be."

"A rich lawyer or a therapist. They make good money too. A lot of money buys you nice villas in Tahoe."

"People don't become therapists to get rich. At least that's not what Jules told me."

"She's idealistic. Would you prefer a lawyer or a therapist son?"

"A clerk."

"You don't make money being a clerk, I need a well paid job. One of my baby brothers will be the godson of Lou Lee, he'll get all the cool gifts while I have to buy it myself. No horse for me, no Playstation, no vacation in Disney Land."

"You poor thing."

"Did you decide who will be the godfather and godmother of whom?" Donald Senior asked.

"With Sandy looking like Don, we thought Tanya can be his godmother and Lou the godfather. Lynn and Kyle will cover Saloso."

"When will Tanya and you have a son together, Don?"

"Never, she doesn't want get pregnant."

"How about a wedding?"

"At one point. Dad, we moved in this month, don't rush things."

"You've been together for a while. Your mother and I married within a year."

"Because mom was pregnant."

"It's so refreshing to hear other people have the same arguments with their parents than I had for years." Sofia grinned. "Don, I can tell you, when you are married, they shut up and leave you alone. It worked perfectly with my parents. Since they have their daughter-in-law and their grandchildren, they don't complain...that much anymore." They still

complained about things Sofia did or didn't do, but that was something, that would never change. No matter how much parents loved their children, there was always something, they could change or do better.

## Thursday, September 4th

Hospital wasn't her favorite place, in fact, it was on her favorite place list very far down. But there was a good thing about it: sleep. Sofia was aware the time in hospital was the last and only time for her to have some sleep before the twins and her go home. From then she'd have a lot of nights without sleep or only a few hours of sleep. Getting up, taking care of her babies and making sure her wife could get some sleep.

"Good morning Mrs. Curtis, how are you?" A nurse came into the room.

"Better than yesterday. How are my boys?"

"They had their milk, were cleaned and should be on their way to you in a few moments after the doctor checked on them."

"Is there a reason to worry?"

"No, it's normal procedure. They're premies, they get special treatment to make sure they're fine. They organs are developed, but they missed four more weeks in your womb, so they like warm places and a lot of attention. And food. You have two very hungry boys, who get crossed when you let them wait."

"Sounds like their parents, I'll have a lot of fun with them when we're back home."

"Yes, they'll wake you up a few times."

"Which is okay, I can stay at home, I feel sorry for my wife, who has to work and our other two kids, who are likely to hear their brothers too. Maybe I'll sleep for a while in their room so Sara can get some sleep without me and them waking her up all the time." A good idea to get her lover the sleep she needed, a bad idea for Sofia's sleep. More nights without her wife wasn't something she really wanted. And she was quite sure, the brunette would rather been waken up a few times a night than not be in Sofia's arms at all.

"It's a way to give her some rest, yes."

"Why are babies so cute and adorable and at the same time, they mess up your life completely?"

"Because everything comes with a dark and bright side. As long as the bright side shines over the dark side, everything is fine."

The door was opened and Sofia's bright sides were carried into the room.

"Good morning young mommy, look who is here to see you? Sandy and Saloso, fresh, fed and ready for some cuddle time."

"Oh, there is my bright side of life." Within the second she saw her sons, all thoughts off sleepless nights, stinky diapers and vomit all over her shirt was gone. A small price to pay for these wonderful boys.

"Hello Sandy, how are you?" She took her son in her arms. His eyes were closed, he was asleep. "And you, Saloso, how are you?" Her second son was awake and seemed to look with his blue eyes straight at her. "You have the eyes of your daddy. Or mine. I'm not sure, but they're wonderful blue."

"They are, you got yourself two little eye catcher." The nurse, who brought the boys to her, said. "By the way, there's a handsome man looking for you. Are you ready for guests?"

"I'm always ready for a handsome man...without make-up and messy hair. Your daddy has seen me like this a few times, no need to worry."

"He's the father of your babies?"

"Donald Flack." His name sounded strange without the 'Detective' in front.

"No, I'm talking about Lou Lee. All the nurses are excited and try to get an autograph and a photo with him. The hallway looks like Hollywood Boulevard on a Premiere's night."

"Oh, your godfather is here, Sandy. Get used to the fact he attracts people wherever he appears; especially girls. You don't want him going out with you, he'll steal all the girls from you." Her son didn't seem to be impressed, he didn't open his eyes, continued to sleep.

It took Lou five more minutes before he entered the room, a huge bouquet of roses in his arms.

"Good morning, beautiful woman."

"Hello star, did you charm the entire hospital?"

"Only the women and gay men - and the men, who want to impress their spouses with a photo of me. So yes, the entire hospital." He took a look around. "Where do I get a vase for your flowers?"

"I'm sure one of the nurses will come in any second, only to have the chance to see you again."

"You might be right." He grinned, put the roses aside and stepped to her bed. "Well, well, well, you have two very beautiful boys. Nice blue eyes." He looked at Saloso.

"They had no other choice, their parents have stunning blue eyes."

"And with this beautiful woman being their mother, they'll be beautiful boys."

"All my children are beautiful. Here, take the one in my left arm, he's your godson. Sandy."

"Who loves to sleep in your arms. You got that right, little boy." Lou picked Sandy carefully up. "The place to be is in the arms of a woman."

"Talking about women, where is your girlfriend?"

"At work, she says she can let me go here alone because if I try to get into your bed, you'll laugh at me and your wife will kill me later. She trusts the two of you more than she trusts me." He tried to look hurt.

"I'm not surprised."

"Me neither. Where is Sara?"

"At work."

"Oh wow, we're all alone." Sandy started crying.

"No, we're not. Your godson and his brother are here."

"Right." Lou rocked Sandy a little bit. "No reason to cry, I don't get my hands on your mother, I'm nor suicidal. No, she isn't the reason why I'm here, you are. I wanted to see you and your brother. You look like your daddy, do you know that?"

"He does and Saloso looks like me. At least that's what everybody keeps telling me. We decided Tanya has to be the godmother of the baby, who looks like Don and because she likes you so much, we thought, the two of you are a nice pair. Kyle and Lynn are the godparents of Saloso, he's a true cop child."

"Your brother will be a cop later, you'll become an actor, don't you? With these eyes you'll have millions of fans. You can play with my sons and my goddaughter. In fact, I might produce a TV series just for you. Get a good writer and you can be the star of a children's show."

"You have a lot of plans for your sons and godchildren."

"Only when they want them to come reality. In case you're wondering where your present is, Sandy, I didn't take it with me, it's a little bit too big for hospital."

"You didn't buy him a pony, did you?" Sofia had no idea what Sara would do when he did. Her wife didn't want Lou to make huge presents to their son.

"No, he gets one to his first birthday."

"Don't. Sara will kill you and I'm also not happy about this idea."

"Why?"

"Because I don't want him treated in a different way than his brother. When Sandy gets a pony and Saloso a teddy bear, it looks like one son is worth more than the other."

"Okay, they both get one."

"Lou!"

"No pony, all right. I bought a baby gym of Winnie the Pooh. They can both lay in it, play and be together. For twins it's important to stay close, I saw that with my boys. When they played on separate gyms, they started crying sooner. Together they were quiet and happy for a while. And a swing with toys, so they can hang out together and play."

"That's much better than a pony, thanks."

"I figured you get the stroller from Jules and Greg, also a lot of other things. Plus the stuff you have from Susan. Oh and you get your present when you're back home and you parents watch their grandchildren."

"Are you going on a date with me?"

"No, I want to survive the year."

"Good choice. You give us the villa in Tahoe for Christmas, that's more than enough."

"No, it's not. Don't you need some new clothes? After the pregnancy a woman likes shopping new clothes, doesn't she? I have a lovely gift voucher for various shops on Rodeo Drive. You are a pretty woman, now you can act like her."

"Rodeo Drive? You know how much a blouse costs there?"

"I have a pretty idea of it, yes."

"Why do you always have to make expensive presents?" She paused irritated. "Am I really complaining about a shopping voucher on Rodeo Drive? I must be crazy."

"Sofia, I do have a lot of money, let me use it for people I care for. You're the mother of my godchild and a friend, I enjoy spending money for you."

"All right, but keep it please to an sensible level."

"Deal." Lou grinned. "Now, tell me, what can I do? Do they need a bottle? The diaper seems to be clean."

"They were fed before the nurse brought them here, they're fine. All you can do is hold him and make him feel warm and safe."

"I'm an action hero, this is one of my easiest tasks."

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Sara's first way didn't bring her to her wife, it brought her to the baby ward to see her sons. A nurse greeted her at the front door of the ward, checked her ID with the list of people, who were allowed to come here and take a baby. After the baby kidnapping two and a half years ago, security increased and if Sofia hadn't written Sara's name down, the brunette wouldn't be allowed to see her own sons. Same for Don and Marie's parents. They were allowed to come here, see Saloso and Sandy and take them out of their bed. Or more let two nurses take the boys out of their room and then Sara could carry them to her wife.

Susan and Steve were already in the room, the little girl sitting on the bed, snuggling in the arms of her mother.

"Baby express. We come with a warning: the boys are most likely to be hungry soon."

"Didn't I tell you to get some fed and changed babies? Not crying and stinking ones." Steve reprinted his mother. He made his demands clear, why didn't Sara listen?

"I took the cutest babies. Take your brother."

"Come here, conehead." He took Sandy. "If you start crying I'll bring you straight back."

"Don't be nasty to your brother. Look Susan, your little brother is awake." Sara sat with Saloso on the bed and showed her daughter the baby boy.

"Mama." The baby ignoring the girl crawled into the arms of her mother.

"Don't you want to see your brothers?" Sofia asked.

"Eve."

"No, not Steve. The babies. Don't you want to see the babies?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Silly."

"Your brothers are not silly, they're your baby brothers."

"No!"

"Looks like Susan doesn't like the new addition to our family. My little sister is jealous." Steve grinned. "Hey Susi, come here." He sat on the bed and his sister crawled to him, eyeing Sandy like he was a threat or something else, that didn't belong with them.

"This is Sandy, our brother."

"Eve."

"Yes, I'm your brother too, your big brother. This is your little brother. You are my little sister and this is our little brother. We both have to look after him and Saloso."

"No."

"Our mommies love us, you don't have to worry about that."

"Mama." Susan got back to Sofia.

"I think she needs some more time." Sara sighed. "She doesn't like that somebody else is in our arms and that you're not home irritates her a lot."

"I'll be home soon, Honey." Sofia kissed her daughter. "Sunday I'll be back."

"Play."

"Yes, then we can play."

"No baby."

"The babies come with me, they're our babies. Your mommy and I want the babies with us, like we want you and Steve with us. You're all important to us, we love all four of you."

"In one or two years you can play with them." Sara added.

"Mama play."

"Of course we'll also play with you, but it's more fun to play with your brothers."

"No."

The brunette shook her head. All right, they couldn't make their daughter believe her brothers weren't enemies. Sandy started crying.

"What did I tell you about crying?" Steve asked his brother.

"A hungry boy. Here." Sara gave Saloso to Sofia. "I get the bottles. Maybe Susan wants to help you feeding Saloso."

"Mama!" The girl tried to push the boy out of the arms of her mother.

"No! Susan! Don't! You hurt the baby! Don't push him." Sofia said firmly.

"Mama!" The girl started crying and woke Saloso up, who started crying too.

"Great, I think I move out." Steve sighed and got up. "Come on, baby bro, no reason to cry. Your sister is cross, she'll get used to you. I got used to her too and believe me, she can be such a witch."

"Am I not a lucky to have children, who all love each other?" Sofia sighed.

"Maybe in a few days, right now, I can sense difficulties between your daughter and your youngest sons."



"Funny. You called her a witch."

"Isn't she sometimes?"

Sofia looked at her daughter, who still cried to protest. "Yes, I love her anyway."

"I never said I don't love her."

"Jorja and Eric were happier about Louise."

"Yes, but they always had to share the attention. Your little princess didn't."

"She had to share our attention with you. Okay, not the same."

"Exactly, I never try to get her out of the center of attention, quite contrary, I'm somebody else, who gives her attention."

"Milk's here." Sara came with the bottles back. She gave one bottle to Steve and went to Sofia. "Let me take Saloso and look after our crying daughter."

"She's cross because I told her off, she tried to push Saloso out of my arms."

"That's not nice Susan. You can hurt him when you try that."

Sara gave her son the bottle and like his brother, he went quiet right away. The magic of food.

"Come here." Sofia pulled Susan in her arms and kissed her daughter. "We all love you, but you can't hurt your baby brothers. We'd be very, very sad when they're hurt. They were in my belly, do you remember? Mommy's big belly?"

Susan nodded.

"Now they're here, they came out here." Sofia pulled her shirt up and showed her daughter the wound of the c-section.

"Mama ouch?"

"Yes. The doctor had to cut my belly to get Saloso out. He couldn't get out himself."

"Why?"

"Because a baby has to turn to get out. You turned and came out with your head first, so did Sandy. Saloso didn't turn and because it's dangerous for him and me, the doctor cut my belly open and got him out."

"Mama ouch."

"It will go away."

"Ouch too?" She pointed to a scar.

"Yes, that was painful too."

"Baby?"

"No, that was an accident. The day when I lost my lower left leg I got this too. I was hurt a lot and had to stay in hospital for a long time, with a lot of doctors looking after me."

"Sue too?"

"No, you weren't born then and I'm very happy that I was able to get pregnant with you after the accident." Sofia kissed her daughter. With all the injuries she got that day, it would have been no surprise, when she weren't able to get pregnant anymore.

"So, what are we going to do with our daughter?" Sara asked after she and Steve had taken the twins back to the baby ward. Steve left from there to see Jenny, Susan was cuddled into Sofia's arms and asleep.

"The little witch? I hope she'll get used to her brothers soon and stops jealous. All we can do is show her, we love her and the boys haven't changed that."

"We can involve her in caring for her twin brothers when she wants. Tell her, Eric and Jorja also played with her when she was a baby. It will be a lot of work, she's a stubborn little girl."

"I wonder where she got that from." The blonde grinned.

"Funny." Sara sat next to her wife, pulled her into her arms and kissed her. "You look better than yesterday."

"I slept last night, knowing it's a privilege I don't have back home. You should enjoy your last quiet nights too."

"How can I enjoy a night when you're not there? I miss you, felt lost and lonely in our bed."

"Ditto. You know, I thought about sleeping in the twins' room when we're home so you can sleep without being woken up all the time."

"No! I don't want to sleep without you."

"I figured you'd say so and I wasn't happy about the idea of being away from you. Even when it's only one room. Can you remember how much we hated the idea Jules had back then, when she wanted you to sleep in your room again?"

"A stupid idea for such a smart woman." Sara grumbled. Oh yes, she remembered this suggestion and still hated it.

"At that time we weren't together and it was a reasonable suggestion, a part for you to get better."

"How can I get well when I'm away from you?"

"We weren't together, you weren't interested in me." The blonde repeated with a smile. Wasn't it cute that Sara had forgotten there was a time, when she wasn't interested in Sofia, didn't want to be with her. To herself it sounded like a bad

story, a nightmare and yet, it had been real. For the longest time they knew each other.

"I wasted a lot of time to be without you, I don't want to waste another second. When you're home, I want you in our bed, in my bed. If you get up a couple of times, so will it be. As long as you come back and I can have you in my arms again."

"Okay." Sofia kissed her wife. "Maybe the boys surprise us and sleep a few hours."

"I doubt they will, they need a lot of food, they missed out four weeks in your womb, four weeks of uninterrupted feeding."

"Yeah, now I can eat for myself, maybe breastfeed every now and then before my milk leaks."

"Less chocolate because you're one person now."

"You didn't have to mention that."

"Not?" The brunette grinned. "Why?"

"Because...Lou gave me a hopping voucher for the Rodeo Drive. When I want to fit in anything they sell, I have to lose a few pounds. A lot of pounds. I'm far away from size zero."

"Hopefully you'll never be a size zero, I wouldn't like that. It's not healthy."

"Then I continue with chocolate and buy a handbag or anything else I can wear when I'm fat."

"You have never been fat."

"Two days ago I was very fat."

"Pregnant."

"The same. Let's change the topic. How was work?"

"My thoughts were the whole time with you, I showed Shane and George more photos of you and the boys and they want to see you in the forest next week. I told them, it's more likely you come over in two weeks, next week you'll be busy organizing our life with two more babies - and a jealous little witch." Sara smiled at her daughter, who seemed to wake up slowly.

"We could pick you up at your last day at work."

"I ask Shane if he picks me up in the morning, then I can drive back home with you."

"Perfect. We can have a picnic in the forest. Hey Susan, do you want to have a picnic in the forest? Watch your mommy work?"

"Yeah."

"Maybe we can see Bambi."

"Mommy home?" Susan looked at Sofia.

"I can't come home today, I have to stay here so the doctors can look after my wound. You remember, the big ouch I showed you on my belly?"

The girl nodded. "Mama ouch."

"Yes and the doctors have to look after that ouch before I can come back home. But you can come and visit me every day. I miss you my little baby girl."

"Miss mama too." Susan crawled between her mothers and snuggled into their arms. This was perfect, no baby boys, only she and her mothers.

## Sunday, September 7th

Finally she could go home. Four days in hospital were more than enough. When Sara appeared in Sofia's room, the blonde sat already on packed suitcases and was more than ready to leave. Sandy and Saloso were placed in their seats and without a lot of fuss they left Hollywood Palms and drove home.

"I feel like the happiest person in the world." The blonde bent over and kissed her wife. "We are on our way home, far away from hospital. With our boys. I'm so glad they can come with us. First I was afraid, they had to stay longer, had to put on some more weight."

"They have to, we have to feed them every two hours. The diapers are stocked, your and Don's parents bought new clothes so we have enough to change and don't have to wash every day. All the other clothes are still too big."

"Give them two or three weeks and they'll fit into Eric's and Jorja's first clothes."

"Yes."

"I look forward to the time when you're home with us. Our first week as a family."

"We're a family, no matter if I work or not."

"Of course, I mean, like together all day long. You'll look forward to go back to work by the end of the week."

"Not likely." Sara smiled.

"We talk again then, after all day crying."

"Two hours. We leave them with your parents during that time and go out."

"A nice idea. My parents or Don's parents. They have to spend a lot of time with them before they go back to New York."

"Right."

Sofia turned and looked at their sons, who were asleep. A car was the perfect place to make babies fall asleep. Maybe they had to put a car in their house when the babies didn't want to sleep.

"The next weeks will be stressful, won't they?" The blonde took the hand of her wife.

"Yes, they will. We won't get a lot of sleep. Let me apologize for being grumpy or impatient."

"Ditto. When I'm moody again, it doesn't mean, I don't love you. Especially when I'm blue for days or weeks."

"When you get postpartum depression Jules will help you out, it's her field of work. Sometimes it's very handy to have a shrink as an acquaintance."

"Best friend."

"Or that." Sara checked the rearview mirror to see the twins. "You know, before they were born, I was afraid I couldn't tell them apart, that they look the same and I confuse them all the time. Which is stupid because they're not identical twins. As most times, I found out I drove myself crazy for nothing. Sandy doesn't look like Saloso, they both have dark hair, blue eyes and a cute smile, but you can see the difference because each of them takes after another parents."

"We're a two mothers, one father family and each of our children look like one parent. Except for our oldest one, he looks...well, we don't know his parents, so we don't know like whom he looks. Except that he's very cute too."

"And that without our DNA."

"There is no DNA connection and yet, he shares your temper. Both of you get very angry when you feel misunderstood, but when you surrounded by people, who love you, you're tame like a kitten."

"Our kittens can be very wild."

"They're little tigers, who need love; just like you and Steve. You don't need DNA to be family. We share no DNA and yet we're a family and in love."

"You're right. Stephen is our child like the other three and he knows it."

"It's Susan, we have to worry about. She's absolutely not happy about her brothers." Their daughter had made that clear the last days. The baby boys weren't welcome in her life.

"They took her mother away, they took away a lot of attention, so far there is no good reason for her to like them. We have to include her more, have to make her feel important, a grown-up girl, who has to look after her baby brothers and sees them as new play friends. Like Louise is. She has no problems with her, so she knows how to socialize."

"Our smart daughter needs to learn she's not the only one and still very important. I'm sure she'll understand that soon." Sofia smiled. A few more streets and she'd be home. At the place where she belonged.

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An hour later their twins were in their beds. To Sara, the room looked complete now. Two little beds, occupied by two boys and both asleep after they had another bottle of milk. The arms, that got around Sara, while she stood in the doorframe and watched her sons, weren't Sofia, but she leant into them. They were familiar, comfortable and felt almost as good as her wife's arms.

"How do you feel?"

"Happy. My family is home and complete."

"You look happy." Jules kissed Sara's cheek. "Are you ready for all the challenges? Double crying, double diapers, double vomit, double teething."

"Double laughter, double first crawling, double first steps, double first words. I can listen to two boys call me 'mama' for the first time."

"I love it when you're positive." The therapist chuckled. Her test worked out.

"You made me think positive."

"Yes, I'm the best. Come on, have a seat, you know from Susan being this little, the times you can sit down and have a cup of coffee, are seldom. With twins, they're like little miracles. Take this miracle."

"I take the miracle and use it for my daughter. She's jealous and we have to show her, we still love her a lot, that it didn't change since the twins are born."

"Gosh, you are a perfect mother."

"Thanks."

"All my work."

"Of course." Sara laughed. "It took the perfect therapist to make me the perfect mother."

"Don't forget your perfect children, your perfect godchild and your perfect wife."

"My wife is more than perfect."

"You know what I want to hear." Sofia looked up. She sat in their living room upstairs, next to Susan and played with her.

"Are you hitting on my wife again, Jules?"

"A little bit. I love her."

"Your husband can hear every word you say."

"And I love Sara too." Greg grinned. "Want to come into my arms, Darling?"

"Who do you mean?" Jules cocked her head.

"The faster one." Sara sat on Greg's lap and kissed his cheek.

"What are you playing, Susan?"

"Farm." Their daughter put Lego Duplo blocks on each other.

"We're building rooms for Eric, Jorja and Louise, so they can move in. Their help is needed."

"Ah okay. You left them with your parents?"

"With my father, yes. We thought when the twins are awake and Susan wants our attention three more kids are not the perfect idea."

"Your kids are always a good idea."

"Susan suggested I can take the boys with me. She doesn't want them here."

"You don't like Sandy and Saloso, Susan?"

"No." The tone of her daughter made it obvious, she didn't have to think about it. It was a matter of fact.

"Why?"

"My mama."

"They don't take your mamas away, we will always love you."

"Baby go."

"No, they won't go, they live here."

"No."

Sara looked at her wife. There was a lot of work waiting for them.

"You know, Susan." Jules said. "You're a big sister now. Like Jorja is for Louise. First Greg and I had Eric and Jorja, then we got Louise. You like Louise, don't you?"

"Yeah."

"See and Eric and Jorja like Louise too although she was born after they were with us. They look after her, like you can look after your brothers."

"Eve."

"Yes, Steve is your brother too and he loves you just as much as he loves Sandy and Saloso. He's your big brother, looks after you and the babies. You can help him with that and look after them too. You're a big sister."

"No."

"I think we have to give her more time." Sara sighed. She was sure Susan would understand the boys were no threat to her and love them. It only took some time for their daughter to realize these things.

"Hey big sis, how are you?"



"Good, little bro." Lea sat next to Steve, who was in the living room downstairs and watched a movie. "Why aren't you with your siblings?"

"Because my moms, Greg and Jules are upstairs, enough people to fuss around them."

"With their kids?"

"No, they left them with Jules's father. Where is Lauren?"

"At home. Jenny?"

"Looking after her siblings."

"Little children are everywhere."

"Yes."

"How do you feel with the twins at home?"

"I assume my nights won't be as quiet as they used to be."

"No."

"And Susan tries to get me on her side, she doesn't want the boys here. They take too much attention away from her."

"Jealousy between siblings, not uncommon. She took the attention away from you."

"I knew they want a baby before they adopted me. Frankly, it hurt when Sara told me for the first time, I liked her and Sofia and there was this secret wish or dream they'd adopt me. It felt so good to be with her, felt like finally I met the person, who fits to me."

"They adopted you although they wanted a baby. And I can't say they act like you're air and ignore you."

"No." He smiled. "I couldn't ask for somebody better."

"Plus you also got the best big sis."

"I did. How far are you on telling your parents, you want to be in Tahoe over Christmas?"

"The answer was no. Negotiation is ongoing. I might be allowed to come up on Boxing Day."

"Better than nothing."

"Yeah." The doorbell rang.

"Your better half?"

"Not that I know of."

"My better half?" He rose and walked to the door. When he opened it, he didn't see Lauren or Jenny there, it was a man, who looked at him.

"Hello Steve."

"Dave?" Was that really his uncle? He had only seen him on photos so far. Uncle Dave, Sofia's older brother, who didn't come to Los Angeles for the wedding and not to see Susan.

What was he doing here? Did the captain force him to show up? Now that he had two nephews?

"Surprise."

"Absolutely. Does mom know you're here?"

"What kind of surprise would that be?"

"Okay. Uhm...have you ever been here?"

"Once. Five years ago."

"Oh, okay, the house changed since then. Mom is upstairs, the former attic is the place, where we have our bedrooms. Shall I take you there?"

"I think I'll find my way if you don't want to go upstairs anyway."

"No, my friend and I watch a movie downstairs."

"Then I'll surprise my little sister. See you later." He smiled and went up the stairs.

"The same blue eyes Sofia has." Lea said. She had watched Dave from a distance, curious who Steve's uncle was.

"Yes."

"Your mom has the same hair color?"

"If she wouldn't dye it? Yes. Brunette with gray...for gray she'd slap me."

"It's the truth."

"Yes."

"Don't you want to go upstairs and see your uncle? You have never met him before."

"I'm not sure why he is here, let us wait for a few minutes in case mom isn't happy about him appearing out of the blue." He knew there was no bad blood between his mother and her brother and they did talk to each other, every once in a while, so it wasn't like he let Sara's brother in. Nevertheless, it was better to wait until he was sure, his mother liked her surprise.

"It's not the same like with Sara's brother, is it?"

"Not that I'm aware of it." Steve hoped it was okay he let his mother's brother in. Nobody told him, Dave wasn't welcome here.

"Surprise!"

Sofia's jaw dropped down. Her eyes must play her a practical joke, this couldn't be real.

"Dave?" Sara found her voice first. Was that really her brother-in-law? The one, she had never met before? Who didn't want to come to Los Angeles because only arrogant people and idiots

lived here. The man, who ignored their wedding invitation and got in huge trouble for that with his parents.

"Hey Sara, nice to meet you."

"What are you doing here?" The blonde asked puzzled.

"I thought I ignore the fact Los Angeles is a huge dumpster and come and see my sister and her family."

"For the first time ever."

"Yes. Haste makes waste."

"Haste? I live here for over six years."

"So? You haven't been around neither."

"You never invited me."

"Ditto."

"We invited you to the wedding."

"It was a busy time."

"Mom told you enough about being busy and your sister getting married. Even when she only married a woman."

"Hey, I married a woman too."

"Talking about Rachel, where is she?"

"At home. She has to work."

"And you don't?"

"I've got a few days off and decided it's time to see you, meet Sara and your children. Mom sent me photos of the boys, one looks like you. The one with the strange name."

"Saloso. It's not a strange name."

"It is, but hey, people call their kids nowadays like fruits or cardinal directions."

Sofia shook her head. It was really her big brother. What a surprise. "Uhm....sorry, let me introduce you: Greg, Jules, this is Dave, my brother. Dave, these are Greg and Jules, our neighbors and friends. They're the godparents of Susan. Susi, that's your uncle Dave."

Susan looked at Dave and decided her toys were more important.

"Hello little lady, don't you want to say hello?"

"Apparently not."

"Your son let me in, so I met him. He knew who I am."

"Yes, he saw photos. Do mom and dad know you're here?"

"No."

"You better let them know before they come here and find you." Otherwise it could a nasty scene and Sofia didn't want her daughter to watch that - nor did she want to watch it herself.

"And do what? Mom will shoot me?"

"Could happen."

"She's retired."

Sara bit on her lips. If Marie had heard that, Dave would find himself on the floor. If he was lucky only with her knee on his back.

"Call her, she and dad come over later."

"Then they'll see me, we don't want to spoil the surprise, do we? Where are your babies?"

"Asleep. We get them soon, they need to drink."

"Cool. Who will be my godson?"

"None, you're not qualified enough. We want people, who are around, who come and see them more than once every six years."

"Oh come on, I'm their uncle, who could be better?"

"Lou Lee."

"Yeah sure, the actor becomes the godfather of any baby."

"Not any, our son Sandy."

"You know Lou Lee."

"I do. We all do."

"He asked Sofia out on a date and she turned him down because the only one she wants is Sara." Jules smiled.

"Doesn't sound like you, Sofia."

"I've changed."

"Yeah, married to a woman, with children...where is the father of your kids?"

"Asleep. He'll take care of them at night. In case you stay longer than ten minutes you'll meet him later."

"Am I welcome for longer than ten minutes?"

"Yes you are. You're my brother. A lousy one, but I have no reasons to send you away."

"Thanks."

Sara got her arm around Sofia's shoulders. Her brother-in-law was here. Arrived unexpected. He really surprised them. Well, they were kind of used to brothers showing up uninvited. Sam did it all the time. Dave was much better than Sam, although he was a disappointment. But he and Sofia had never been close. And like he said, the blonde also never visited him.

"How can you not come over for such a long time?" Greg asked. "You have a great sister, a wonderful sister-in-law and amazing nephews and a cute niece. What can hold you back?"

"I'm not much of a family person. When we were younger, Sofia was the one, who went to family parties while I stayed at home."

"Sorry, I don't get it."

"We're two single children, who ended up in one family."

"You're only two years apart."

"Doesn't matter."

"He spent his time in his room, I was out, we were different."

"You were after every guy in the neighborhood, who played football, rode a motorbike or would make mom angry."

"Yes." The blonde laughed.

"You got drunk, smoked - not only legal stuff and got into clubs before you were even eighteen."

"Guilty again."

"Wow, my wife had slapped me by now if somebody had said these things about me." Dave wondered. "Or will you get in trouble later?"

"What for? It was way before we met and Marie told me all of Sofia's sin." Sara chuckled. "I love her anyway. She doesn't do these things anymore - except for the clubs."

"With the babies there won't be any time for clubs. Unless Daddy Don looks after all of them."

"When he takes them all to New York you can go to a club." Jules said.

"I don't want think about him taking our babies away! His parents are here, they have seen them now."

"You know it won't stop him from taking them with him." Sara kissed her lover. "We have to be strong."

"The last time we failed."

"I know."

"Next time will be better." The brunette rose. "I get the milk for the boys ready."

"Let me give you a hand." Jules offered. "You can't carry both boys at the same time."

"And you stay with me, don't you?" Sofia pulled Susan in her arms and kissed her. "We continue with the farm. Let uncle Dave help us, maybe he is useful for something."

"Hey, I've got a lot of talents."

"Your biggest talent is, that you hide your talents very good."

"You're so much like our mother!"

Sara clapped her hand in front of her mouth and hurried out of the room before she burst out laughing. Dave was right, Sofia

was a lot like Marie, but her wife didn't want to hear these words. The truth was sometimes hard.

"Hey mom."

The sound of the slap of the hand on Dave's face let everybody be quiet and stare at him and Marie. A happy mother looked different.

"How dare you coming here without telling us first?"

"Who said I didn't tell Sofia? Maybe we wanted a surprise for you."

"Sofia doesn't lie to me, she had no idea you show up. Where have you been all these years before?"

"Marie, he's here, can't you be happy about it?" Marc asked carefully.

"No! Not after what he did before. Or didn't do."

"Mom, it's okay, I didn't visit him neither."

"He didn't get married, didn't give birth to a baby girl. You have some nerves, son."

"I'm here and I'm sorry it took me so long to show up."

"Where is your wife?"

"At home, she has to work. I have four days off and thought, I can use them to see my sister and my parents."

"Are you having trouble at home?"

"No, I don't."

"I don't believe you."

"Okay." Sofia interrupted her mother and brother. "If you want to fight, please do it somewhere else. I don't want my children to experience fighting family members. You can either be nice to each other or go. Choose."

"I'm not fighting." Dave held up his hands.

"I said what I had to say."

"Good, then we can focus on something nice." The blonde pulled Susan between her and Sara. "We don't want fights here, do we Susan?"

"No."

"Exactly. Mom, if you want to see your grandsons, you can get them out of their beds, they need their milk soon."

"How much do they sleep?"

"A lot, which is good because when they're awake, they cry a lot."

"The doctor checked them and you today?"

"Of course. Anna, our neighbor, offered to come over, in case we have a medical question. We are all set, Susan did cry a lot too and now she's a lovely girl. Beside the fact, she doesn't like her brothers."

"Sibling rivalry is normal."

"In a few days you're used to the fact Saloso and Sandy live here too." Sofia kissed her daughter. "You know, I can stay at home for the next months, that means whenever you come home, I'm here. Or you can stay at home with me when you don't want to go to daycare or to your grandparents."

"I think the next weeks it's easier when we come over and pick the twins up. You'll be very busy and exhausted. You look a little bit pale, Honey." Marc worried. "I'm still tired, labor was hard and the c-section is worse than I expected. I thought I'd recover fast, after all, it was over quite fast and seemed to be nothing big. Apparently my body thinks different."

"It's an operation, you're not twenty anymore and need recovery time. Alice and Donald are here, we all will help you, but you have to look after yourself too."

"I know I'm in a very good position to have five people around, who all help me and give me the chance to rest."

"Yes you are. Use the help, in three weeks, when Don and Sara are back at work, Alice and Donald are back home, you have to be there. Yes, Marc and I are here too, we help you, but the next three weeks will be the most relaxing for you. As strange as it sounds."

"Good evening." Donald and Alice came with Sandy and Saloso into the living room. "Oh, a huge family meeting."

"Yes, it's getting cozy here." Sofia slipped closer to Sara to make some space for her brother to sit down.

"Dinner for the boys." Don came with the bottles in the room. "And some berries for my cute little daughter. Raspberries, your favorite. Come to your daddy." He lifted Susan up and placed her on his lap. "You can have dinner on your daddy's lap." He kissed her hair.

"Maybe we should call Steve to come up here." Sofia whispered into Sara's ears.

"To have the whole family in one room?"

"Yes."

"Okay." The brunette pulled her cell phone out of her pocket and sent her son a text, that he should come upstairs to them. A minute later Steve and Lea were with them.

"What's up?"

"Nothing special, we only want the whole family together." Sara answered.

"In this already crowded room?"

"Yes. Stay with us for a few minutes, please."

"Okay." He and Lea sat down on the floor and got almost hit by the door when Tanya came into the room.

"Oh, sorry. Wow. Maybe I should wait outside."

"No, come in, squeeze in and find a place. It's a family meeting, you are part of the family."

"Okay, why not downstairs, in the big living room?"

"Because...we started here and now it's too late to change. Cuddle time." Sara kissed Sofia. Now their whole family was together. Even her brother-in-law was here. She wasn't sure what to think about Dave, but she was glad, he came here today. He and Sofia could use some time to talk. And in two weeks, when she had her week off, she could spend a lot of time with her family. With the twins at home, a new chapter of their life just began.