

From Idaho...

Idaho is a mountainous state with an area larger than all of New England. It is also called "Potato State" owing this to its popular and widely distributed crop. Besides mountains and potatoes there are a lot of more things to see in the state, that bordered with Canada to the north. At the moment, for example, there was a woman with long blonde hair, who rode a black horse through the picture postcard landscape, somewhere between the city of Payette and up the Snake River. Her horse carried two saddlebags, a tent and a sleeping bag too, while the woman had a backpack on her back. They didn't have a special place to go, weren't in a hurry. She sat on the horse, her eyes half closed and listened to the sound of nature. Birds, the wind, the sound of benches moving. There wasn't much more. The next road was far away, there would be a couple of farms around, but she had no idea where exactly and she never bothered to check where to find the next sign of civilization. It was this being in the middle of nowhere, that brought her to Idaho. The last time she talked to somebody was two days ago, when she said goodbye to a friend. The owner of the horse. He borrowed her the horse for her trip through the state. It was late May, the sun shone and there was no reason for her to be somewhere else. Actually, there were a couple of reasons why she should be home and one good reason why she shouldn't. Sometimes one reason was more important than a dozen others.

Her friend had offered her the horse, he also offered company, but she declined the last offer. This was her time, her time-out. She didn't want any human company, it was perfect to be alone with the horse. In the evening she stopped somewhere close to fresh water, a creek, a spring, built up her tent, made a little fire and used a long rope to secure her horse and give it the freedom to walk around and eat the grass. When she woke up in the morning she had breakfast and continued her ride. In her backpack was a map of the state, she always knew where to get fresh water and food when she needed it.

It was unusual for a woman to travel alone on a horse through the state, most people considered it as a dangerous thing to do, this woman was sure, she was safe. She had a gun with her and she knew how to use it, had used it more than once. Shooting was nothing new.

She reminded herself a little bit of the lonely ranger. Or Lucky Luke, the picture at the end of the cartoon, when he rode alone into the sunset. Only the dog was missing. For how long she would do this, was something, she didn't know at this time. Maybe a week, a month or two. She had no limit, although she knew, when the fall came, it would get cold up here. Up north, far up north from her home. She was a southern girl, a desert girl. Nevada, to be more precisely, Las Vegas. Sin City was her hometown, the place she lived, worked and the place, that brought her here. More or less. She was done with pointing the finger at somebody or something, done with blaming the world. There was nobody else than herself to blame. She was the one, who was responsible for her life, her actions. When something didn't work out the way she wanted it, the way it was good for her, she had to change it. Nobody else.

Her destiny could have been Hawaii. A lot of flights left the colorful city of lights every day to go straight to the islands in the Pacific, the complete opposite to her hometown. Beaches, green fields, green mountains, rain forest, surfing, the sound of the ocean. A dream destiny for many people, one of her favorite places to be. The first intentions had been to go there, rewind on the beach, then she thought about it and decided to go somewhere else, to a place, where she had never been and do something, she hadn't done in a while. Horseback riding had been one of her favorite past times when she was a teenager, later, when she started to work, there was no time for fun and pleasure in her life. So this was a new place, with an old hobby and a friend from her past, she hadn't talk to in a years, but who offered her help when she called him.

He owned a farm, had a lot of horses, to him it was no problem when she took one for a while. It was him, who gave her the map, marked some places where she could go, some she

should stay away from and the GPS, so she always knew where she was; and he knew it as well, in case something happened to her. Twice a day, in the morning and in the evening, she let him know everything was fine. No matter how confident she felt, it could always something happen to her and being all alone meant, nobody would know when she fell off the horse and had a broken leg or anything else happened. This way he'd call for help and had her position. It wasn't a control, it was security.

"The next tree is ours, Tashunke." Not very imaginative to call your horse Horse. In which native American language Tashunke meant horse she didn't know, but in her eyes, it was not a very creative name. Most times, when she talked to her horse, she called him Tas, he was a six years old gelding and hadn't given her any problems. In his own speed he walked up and down the hills, through fields and to or away from the sun, depending on the time of the day and their direction.

"Gosh, I think I'll walk next to you for a while, my ass hurts. I'm not used anymore to be on a horse for hours. A smart woman had thought about this and got used to riding for hours before she started her trip. Looks like I'm not a smart woman. Well, a smart woman wouldn't be in my shoes, so yes, we do have enough proof I'm not smart. Strange, a few months ago I considered myself as a very smart woman." She jumped off the horse and took off the saddlebags, the tent and the sleeping bag before she loosened cinch a little bit and let Tas walk to a little creek. A break for her horse and herself. Time to have a cup of tea and give her sore muscles a break.

"You need a strong man by your side, ma'am, it's dangerous for a woman to be out here all by herself."

The man pushed up his cowboy hat and showed more of his weathered face. He looked like he was in his late sixties, an old cowboy, on his horse, a raffle and a lasso on the saddle, a cigarette in the corner of his mouth. The Marlboro Man! Right now she wished for a smoke too. The problem was, when she started again, it would be hell to be without it and she didn't plan to ride around places, where you could buy cigarettes every day and the space in her backpack and saddlebags was reserved for important things. Things she really needed.

"I can look after myself."

"That's what all the little ladies say and before they can put on their makeup, something bad happens and they need a man."

"Have you ever been to Las Vegas?"

"Hell no, that's a crazy place. Too many people, most of them crazy like a shithouse rat, pardon my French."

"I survived there for almost forties years, arrested enough of these crazy guys. Believe me, I know how to handle a man out of control, it's what I do for a living."

"You're a cop?"

"Deputy Sheriff."

He whistled. "Gotta say, if I wanted to be arrested, it would be by a Sheriff like you."

"You haven't been arrested by me, otherwise you wouldn't say this." She smiled. People underestimated her once, after that they knew it was better not to upset her.

"Where do you plan to go?"

"I've got no real plan, where my horse carries me."

"All alone."

"After being in Las Vegas for all these years it's a nice change. I enjoy the silence, the loneliness. Nobody bothers me, nobody wants anything from me. I don't hear cars, no pokies, no languages from all over the world, at night it's dark and not bright like in the middle of the day from a million lights. This is exactly what I want, the complete opposite of home."

"Running away from a man, aren't you?"

"No, usually they run away from me."

"Hard to believe." He laughed.

"All you need is a badge and say: I'd like to ask you a couple of questions. These words and the badge make them run like the devil is after them."

"Honey, if the devil looks like you I surely rethink about my plan to go to heaven. You look more like an angel."

"Revenge angel." She chuckled. "I've to go on, we want to make some more miles today."

"Up north?"

"North to north-west."

"When you turn right in two miles, at a very old oak, you go straight to a lovely place for a camping. There are meadows, perfect for your horse and a bigger creek."

"Don't tell me it's a campground."

"Only for sheep and wildlife. I hope you handle four legged perpetrators as good as you handle the human ones."

"We'll see about this. Thanks for the tip. Have a good one."

"Take care, lady."

She would. This was her trip, the biggest thing she ever made in her life. The most unusual one. So much not like her life had been before, so much not like she anybody, who knew her, expected her to react. All her life she had worked for one goal, now she did everything to destroy this goal, her life she had worked for. And it felt good. More than good.

At the old oak she turned right until she came to a little lift, from where she could overlook the meadow to her feet. Green grass, the river, the national park in the far west and...a lot of white dots. Sheep.

"A bunch of fluffies, do you like sheep?" Her horse shook his head.

"Not? Well, I'm afraid when you want some fresh water, you have to put up with them." She gave her horse a sign to walk down the hill. The shepherd should be okay with her horse walking through the flock of sheep. It wasn't like Tas and she would chase a sheep or scare them.

From a distance she saw the shepherd and let Tas walk in his direction. It was nicer to ask first if it was okay that her horse was around the sheep, she didn't want any trouble with anybody. This trip was supposed to be a way to relax and find her inner peace and not to start a third world war.

Two black and white dogs greeted her with loud barks, she could see another two black dogs following them. Hopefully they didn't think she was an intruder and needed to be chased away. A loud whistle stopped them, another one let them turn and get their attention back to the sheep. The shepherd wasn't far away from her anymore. He wore a long brownish coat, dirty black boots and jeans.

"I'm sorry, is it okay when my horse and I get through the flock and to the water? He's thirsty and I'm sure he won't kick a sheep."

"You must be kidding me."

"No, I'm not, I'm...oh my god!" She knew the shepherd. Very good. They had worked together. He, no SHE, was an old colleague.

"What are you doing here, Sofia?"

"I could ask you the same, Sara." Sara Sidle. The shepherd was nobody else than her old colleague from Las Vegas, the sometimes quite moody and grumpy CSI Sara Sidle, who left the city a while ago. Apparently with the same destination Sofia had. Life had a strange sense of humor.

"Try: I'm the shepherd."

Gosh, this was so Sara Sidle. Down to the point, cool and dry, like she read the stock report of a strange country, that didn't bother her at all.

"I realized that. Why?" Why here? Why was she exactly where Sofia was?

"Somebody has to look after the sheep."

Sofia knew this too. The question was, why was it Sara? Sara was...she wasn't a CSI anymore, at least not in Las Vegas, she left a while ago, four years and six months to be more precisely. Back then people said she left to South America, for a job in the rain forest. Somebody got that very wrong - or she changed her mind. Why would anybody change from a rainforest in South America to the wilderness of Idaho? These two places had nothing in common.

"What are you doing here, Sofia? It's not usual for a Las Vegas cop to come along on a horse in the middle of nowhere."

"I'm on vacation."

"Here?"

"You can see me, so I must be here. I'm not a parameterization."

"Looks like." Sara gave Sofia a good look over. "Why don't you get off your horse? You're sore."

"How do you know?"

"The way you sit on your horse. Get off him, let him go to the water, he won't run away. If he tries, I know a dog or two, who will get him back."

"Will they bite me?" It was not exactly a welcome bark she heard from the dogs, more a: piss off, you don't belong here and when we have the chance, we rip off your throat and eat the rest of your bony body, bitch.

"Only if I tell them to."

"Will you?" It was Sara Sidle after all. You never knew what she had in mind and when you pissed her off.

"Maybe. You have a gun, you can defend yourself." Sara wasn't a CSI anymore, she still had a very good eye.

With a smile Sofia got off her horse. "Got a place where I can leave the saddle for a while? Tas could use a little break."

"See the lonely small tree over there?"

"Yes."

"Let's go there. I've my stuff there, the creek isn't too far away. Your horse can drink, you can have a cup of coffee."

"Sounds perfect." Sofia followed Sara to the little tree. This was so weird. She went to Idaho to be away, to be alone and what happened on the third day? She ran into an old colleague, who probably had the same on her mind like herself. Being away from people fitted to Sara Sidle like Rudolph the reindeer to Santa Clause.

To Sofia's surprise she found another horse next to the tree. It lay on its side in the grass and looked like it slept.

"I thought horses sleep standing."

"They do, he relaxes. One of the few horses, which lay down for a few minutes to relax." The brown horses lifted its head, nickered once before it got up to greet the new fellow. "His name is Droppy."

"Hello all you happy people...you know what? I'm the hero." The blonde laughed. Oh, how had she loved that series when she was younger. So much fun.

"I had no idea you're this old, Sofia."

"If I am so are you because you know what I'm talking about." She took off the saddle and placed it next to the other one on a rock. "All right Tas, go and get some water and then relax. Maybe Droppy can show you where some delicious grass is." Tas didn't pay any more attention to the other horse, he went straight for the water.

"Since when are you and Tas on the road? So to speak."

"Three days. What about you?"

"A few days more." Sara got some water with a pot from the creek and put the pot on a little gas cooker.

"I bet. Sara Sidle is a shepherd. That's crazy. If anybody told me this, I had laughed at their face."

"So had I if anybody had told me Sofia Curtis does a horseback riding trip through Idaho. How long do you plan to do this trip? A week? Two?"

"When I like it, and right now I enjoy it a lot, three or four months, until it gets too cold for camping outside."

"Three or four months? Since when is LVPD this generous when it comes to vacation days?"

"Had you ever tried to take a few days off?"

"Once or twice."

"I'm talking about more than a weekend."

"There was no time to stay away for a while, the city never sleeps and criminals never rested."

Sara sighed. Memories of her past didn't make her look happy.

"Those things haven't changed." The blonde sat down. It looked like she was having a coffee with Sara, here in Idaho, in the middle of a flock of sheep. All because this old man sent her here. If he knew she'd ran into the female shepherd? Two lonely women outside without a man by their side. Not the material old cowboy stories were made of.

"This is nice." Sofia took off her boots and leant back on the tree. A cup of coffee, company. Not so long ago she was glad to be away from people, didn't want company, now she had met Sara and wanted to talk to her old colleague. How could you become a shepherd when you were for years a CSI and your life seemed to have only one destiny: to right the wrong.

"Are you traveling without coffee?"

"Yes, all I have is tea. No coffee was part of the plan. A part, I regretted the first day without caffeine. Where did you get the coffee from? I suppose you can't leave your flock in front of the supermarket and go shopping."

"I get everything I need every two weeks. Coffee is one thing, that's always on my list."

"The next time I get close to a supermarket I need to buy some too. You can give up a lot of things, coffee shouldn't be one of them."

"What else did you give up?"

"Ignoring my body, putting everything above my health and myself."

"Healthy changes."

"Yes. What made you come here? Become a shepherd."

"I wanted a change. Las Vegas was...it was a very good time, eight great years, with amazing people. The problem was, it began to eat me alive. I changed a lot, became a person, I barely recognized and I wasn't happy anymore. I thought when I go away for a few weeks or months and work in the rain forest, I'll be fine and can come back."

Sounded a little bit like Sofia's current situation. "You weren't?"

"Oh, I was fine, but I didn't want to go back to death and torture. I realized there is more in life than law enforcement and I began to look for something completely different. Two years ago I met a shepherd and he showed me everything about his job and I liked it instantly. You're outside, nobody bothers you and you work with sheep, who are more fun than most people are."

"No return to Las Vegas?"

"No!" Sara rubbed the belly of the Border Collie, that didn't leave her side and lay next to the brunette, eyes closed and fully relaxed.

"How comes this one is here while the others are with the sheep?"

"Because Jenny is my dog. There are Salt and Pepper, the other two Border Collies and Abraham and Lincoln, the two black Belgium Shepherds are her to keep the flock together,

Bud and Terence, the Rottweiler, are here to protect us. They don't only scare wolves away, also humans. Jenny is my personal guardian angel, she doesn't leave my side."

"Did they ever have to fight?"

"Against animals, yes. Humans are pretty scared when the seven of them threaten to attack and my guns are also a point in most arguments. Las Vegas was more dangerous than living here in the wilderness. Do you feel safe?"

"Yes. I enjoy the silence a lot, although it's also nice to sit here with you. I'm still surprised to meet you here."

"I can't say it feels normal to me to have you around. I didn't expect anybody from Las Vegas here."

"Ditto."

"What are your next plans?"

"I don't have any. Tas and I go where we please, in a speed we like. Nobody is waiting for us, we are free of all forces and expectations." Was that Sara's way to tell her to leave soon because after a cup of coffee, Sofia wasn't welcome anymore?

"It's a great feeling, isn't it?"

"Absolutely. Do you have to go somewhere special?"

"I can go to all places, that offer enough grass and water for the sheep. With the GPS my employee finds me, it also shows a colleague where I am to get me my food."

"Same here, I've got a GPS and let a friend know I'm okay so he doesn't send the cavalry after me."

"Want to join me a few days? Learn the difference between being in charge for criminals and being in charge for sheep?"

"Seriously? Of course, it sounds like an interesting lesson." Sofia never expected Sara to offer her to spend a few days together. They hadn't been exactly friends, there had been many times, when there were more than a few tensions between them. The offer of the brunette didn't sound like her. At least not like the old Sara. Then again, between this Sara and the old Sara lay four and a half years, a lot of time for changes and this time period could change people. Plus Sofia didn't have to stay, when she felt uncomfortable, she could jump on her horse and rode away. She was free.

"But I warn you, you might not want to end your vacation and go back to Las Vegas once you've learnt how wonderful life can be."

"It's a risk I'm willing to take." Giving up your old life for a better one was nothing Sofia feared. And when she ended up as a shepherd too...well, they could cruise the hood together, couldn't they?

"Can I give you a hand with anything? Do you have special things to do?" Sofia asked after they had their coffee and relaxed for a while.

"Like counting sheep?"

"Do you really do that?"

"Yes. Not easy, but I try. Otherwise I've got two sheep, which are a little bit sick, I need to give them medicine. The lambs need some attention, some of them get lost sometimes. Plus they're the first choice victims of predators."

"Did you learn all those things when you worked with the other shepherd?"

"Most of it I learnt by doing, yes. Some things I had to go to school and I also needed to learn how to make the dogs do, what I want them to do."

"Wow, you were serious about it."

"Of course, I'm here alone, the sheep have only me when something happens and I need the dogs." Sara got up, her black and white shadow by her side. "Have you ever milked a sheep?"

"I've never milked any animal, I'm a city girl."

"Right. I teach you how to do that, you can get us some milk for our tea and coffee and for breakfast tomorrow."

"You don't eat your sheep, do you?"

"People don't eat sheep, they're too old. I'm still a vegetarian and no, I don't eat the lambs. Most of them will end up dead by the end of the summer, meat production is one way to make money with sheep. Better money than with wool."

"Death always surrounds us."

"Yes. I'd like it more when my boss would only use the sheep for wool production, but...life is not always peaches and cream."

"Nope."

"You can also feed the dogs, their food is in the green bag. They all get one bag of dried food."

"Will they like me more when I do that? When I came here I thought for a moment your black war machines want me to be their dinner."

"Bud and Terence don't like strangers, they also don't take any food from then unless I tell them it's okay. It's their job to look dangerous and attack everybody, who doesn't belong to the flock. Or herd. Otherwise they would be useless."

"I'm lucky I survived."

"Yes." Sara pulled a little bottle out of her pocket and opened it. With two pills in her hand she moved through the sheep until she stopped next to one, stepped over the back to keep the sheep between her legs, grabbed the head, opened the mouth and pushed the pills inside. Then she pressed the mouth together for a few seconds. When she let go of the sheep, the baa sounded very angry.

"Somebody is upset."

"Yes."

"Did she swallow it?"

"She had no other choice. The pills will help her, she has an infection."

"I have no idea how you can tell the difference between them. To me, most of them look the same."

"Because you're an outsider. I've spent two years with most of them, I know them. After a while you spot the difference between them. They're all unique. Just like snowflakes."

"Oh, you are so cute." The blonde laughed. "A flock of snowflakes, Sara Sidle is a little poet."

"Do you want to be the dinner of Bud and Terence?" Sara asked sweetly.

"I've got a gun, I can handle them. Tell me, where is the other snowflake, that needs some medication? How many are they anyway?"

"Around five hundred with the lambs. Sheep are like human, they have friends, they like to hang out with more than with others. You know to which group your sheep belongs it's easier to spot them."

"Do they love or hate their shepherd?"

"When I have pills in my hand they hate me. Or do you like a doctor or a nurse, who wants you to swallow pills?"

"Depends. When I'm in pain and the pills make the pain disappear I want them. It's different with injections, they're not my favorite."

"Probably only doctors and nurses enjoy them. A nice way of payback when patients annoyed them too much. Jenny, get me the sheep." Without further instruction which sheep her owner was talking about, the dog jumped into a group of sheep and drove out one sheep, which Sara grabbed and put between her legs. The same movements like with the sheep before, pills into the mouth and she let go of the sheep after it swallowed the pills.

"Thanks Darling." Sara hugged her dog and cuddled it.

"How did she know which sheep you meant?"

"She knows the drill of medication, she knows which two sheep I need. Border Collies are very intelligent, I'm positive Jenny is smarter than some humans I worked with. You are a very good dog, aren't you?" Her dog responded with one bark.

"I see this is a close friendship. Are you out with the flock year around?"

"No, in winter they live in a stable and on a meadow next to it. It's too cold and there isn't enough food to keep them outside, they need extra hay. In late October we go back to the farm until April."

"But you stay with them?"

"Yes. It's a year-round job. Like the job as a detective."

"I'm not a detective anymore."

"Not?" Now it was Sara's turn to be surprised. "How comes? You always wanted to be one, stopped working with us and leave the city to be one."

"I'm the deputy chief now."

"Wow! The deputy chief of Las Vegas on a horse in Idaho. Back when I worked in Vegas the deputy chief was in the city and not chasing outlaws on a horse in other states."

"I go the distance."

"You do. Want to build up your tent, deputy chief? Jenny and I get some timber for the fire. Come on, Beauty, lets get some timber for a nice fire."

"Where is your tent?"

"I build it up when I'm back. The area next to the tree is nice."

"Will you stay longer here? Or leave tomorrow?"

"There should be enough grass for another day. It gives the dogs and the sheep some rest to stay for two or three days at the same spot."

"The shepherd too."

"I've got a horse." Sara smiled and went with Jenny towards the wood. What a strange day, in the morning she had almost decided not to stay for another day at this place, then she was too lazy to go on and wanted to give the two sick sheep one more day here to rest. In the afternoon a lonely rider came to her flock and it was an old colleague from Las Vegas. Sofia, who was now the deputy chief. A fast career, the brunette wondered why the blonde was here. Was she on vacation? An unusual kind of vacation to ride alone through the national park. Then again, when you lived in Vegas and were every day surrounded by many people, you wanted to get away and have some quiet days.

A bonfire was something, she enjoyed as a teenager a lot. Sitting around the fire all night, doing things, her parents better never found out she did, not caring what was going on around her and not thinking about the next day.

"Do you have a bonfire every night?" Sofia asked.

"No, only when I have a barbecue. Most times I eat a sandwich or fruits. I'm still a vegetarian."

"Your dogs, do they hunt deer?"

"No, then they wouldn't be good sheep dogs."

"Sorry for all those questions, I'm still amazed about the change in your life. Did you leave everything from Vegas behind?" What Sofia really wanted to ask was, did Sara leave Grissom behind? The brunette hadn't mentioned her boyfriend or ex-boyfriend or fiancé. It had been a surprise to all of them when they found out Sara and Grissom were a couple, but they were in shock from Sara's abduction and when the brunette returned to work, changed shifts and life seemed to go back to normal, she left the city. And Grissom. Or did she only leave the city? Maybe Grissom was somewhere in the national park, collecting bugs or whatever he would do in a place like this.

"Not everything."

"Have you been back to Vegas since...you left?"

"How can I be back to a place after I left it?" Sara cocked her head and her voice was full of tease.

"All right, silly question. You know what I mean."

"No, I haven't been back since I quit my job there. Why exactly came you here? There are a lot of places in this country, why Idaho? Why in the middle of nowhere? You're a beach person, why not Florida? California? Hawaii."

"I wanted nature and I've got an old friend not too far away from here, who owns a farm and he borrowed me Tas for my ride. Horseback riding has been a hobby of mine for years."

"That's why you're sore now."

"Yes."

"You get used to it again. When do they want you back in Vegas?"

"Are you sick and tired of me already?"

"If I were I'd move on with the sheep and leave you behind."

"Tas and I could follow you."

"Bud and Terence would make your life miserable if I wanted it to."

"All right, can we agree on living together in peace and when one is sick and tired of the other, she leaves without causing a scene?"

"The politics of a deputy chief. Impressive."

"Bite me."

"I leave that to my dogs. Yes, we can agree on peace and it's okay when you don't want to tell me why you left for a while. It's not an ordinary vacation, I'm aware of that. I also respect your privacy, Sofia."

"Thanks." Yes, she didn't want to talk about her reasons to be here and why she could stay away for a while. The brunette was an old colleague, but she had never been a close friend. Sofia wasn't comfortable telling her what exactly brought her here. Not yet. She had no idea how long she and Sara would stay together, maybe tomorrow their ways would separate. If their journey was a shared one for a while, Sofia could imagine to open up to Sara. More open up.

"Time for me to go to bed." Sara rose. "The day of a shepherd ends early and begins early the next morning. You can stay here at the fire when you want, don't wander too far away or you might get lost. If you do, call for Jenny, she'll hear you and wake me up."

"What about Tas? Shouldn't I tie him to the tree?"

"Only when you want to insult my dogs."

"They see him as a part of the flock?"

"They are trained to keep all animals together, he's an animal."

"Okay. Sleep tight, shepherd Sidle."

"Thanks, deputy chief Curtis. No sweet talking good night love declarations to your BF over the phone; not that the phone is working anyway."

"Very funny." Who was the one, who is engaged? Was engaged. Not Sofia. Sara was the one, who had somebody somewhere. Or not. The blonde wasn't sure about it. Sara mentioned she left everything behind, this seemed to include Grissom because she didn't mention him once. Neither did Sofia, it wasn't her part to bring this topic up. Like Sara respected her private life and didn't ask why exactly Sofia was here and had a long vacation, she respected Sara's relationship life. With whoever she had or had not a relationship.

When it came to her own relationship life, there wasn't much to tell about. The last years she had lived for her job, had climbed up the ladder step by step, faster than anybody else in Las Vegas did before her. When tried it the legal way and not with bribery or with a little help of special friends. Sofia was proud to say, she did it all with hard work not nothing else. Of course there were voices saying, she slept her way up, used the influence of her mother, but those people were liars. She didn't. It was hard work and some luck, that the new Sheriff

wanted more female law enforcement members in charge when they had what it takes to do a good job. Sofia proved, she had everything you needed for a high position. At least she thought she did. Since a few weeks she wasn't sure about it anymore.

Being this devoted to her work meant, she had no time for a love life. Her own first rule had been, stay away from people you work with. They knew the job, they understood the hours, the problem was, when it didn't work out, you had not only trouble at home but also at work. No relationship ends without trouble, no matter how much you agree on the separation, there was always a bitterness, that didn't stop at the relationship but influenced all your life. So there had been a few affairs, mostly strangers, she didn't see before and never met afterwards. When you took away her job, Sofia's life was quite empty and lonely. Something she realized while she sat at the fire and stared into the flames, that slowly died.

Was it right to be here? Wouldn't it be better to be in Vegas, go out, meet people and start a life outside of work. Something to come home to. Even when it was late when she came home. A cat was good company, but it didn't give you what a human gave you. Sofia felt a couple of times today, how much she enjoyed the company of the other woman. Somebody to talk to. Not about work, about all other things. Somebody, who listened to her words, she told her about her life. When she wasn't careful, didn't start to live her life outside work, there would come a time, when she was alone. For the rest of her life. Beside the fact, she hated thinking about dying, she especially hated thinking about dying alone, not being missed by anybody, who mattered to her.

Maybe it was time to go to bed, or her tent, the thoughts began to depress her.

"Oh look, Sleepy Beauty woke up. Are the one hundred years over?" Sara teased when Sofia came out of her tent. It was almost ten o'clock, the blonde slept for twelve hours.

"Good morning to you too. I'm on vacation, you sleep in on vacations." Actually she didn't sleep long the days before, it was never later than six in the morning. She had no idea why she fell in a kind of coma today. Not that it felt bad, quite contrary, she felt good, refreshed.

"If you hadn't snored that loud I'd have thought you're dead."

"I don't snore."

"Says who?"

"Say I." Did Sara want to start a fight? This wasn't the way a day was supposed to start when you were on vacation.

"Doesn't count. Do you want breakfast?"

"Are you serving?" That would be more like a typical vacation day. Breakfast served, not to bed, but served, some coffee, the morning paper...okay, no paper in this case.

"No, you have to get it yourself. Milk a sheep."

"I don't want to hurt them."

"When you do it right, you won't hurt them. How about a coffee first?"

"Coffee is always a good way to start anything." Sofia stretched. "Since when are you up?"

"Since sunrise."

"Oh, wow."

"When I leave a place, I do it early so I've got a full day to find another place for the flock to stay. Most times we walk for hours to find a good place."

"I didn't stop you from moving on, did I?"

"No, if I wanted to move on, we had left you. It might shock you, but we can live without you."

"Everybody can." Sofia mumbled. The world didn't stop spinning just because she wasn't around. She had learnt that the last months.

"What?"

"Nothing." Not something she wanted to talk about now. "Didn't you say coffee?"

"I did. You get yourself a coffee, I go and look for some fresh food, when we have our lunch together you learn how to milk a sheep. Jenny, stay here and bring Sofia to me later. Okay? Stay with her and then find me when she's finished her coffee." Disappointed to be told to stay back, the Border Collie sat down and whined quietly.

"Why does she have to stay with me?"

"Because you can make yourself useful after your coffee and help me with lunch. For that I need you to come to me and not wander around for hours like you're the wanderer. Jenny will find me within minutes, you only have to tell her to find me and follow her. Bye darling." Sara kissed the head of her dog. "I see you soon."

Sofia watched her former colleague walk away into the forest. Did she leave her favorite dog with her because she didn't want the blonde to get lost in the wilderness or because she didn't trust her? It wasn't like Sofia would run away with the sheep and Sara knew better than believe she'd steal from her...then again, they had never been close friends and weren't in touch for years.

"I'm sorry you have to stay here with me." Sofia said to the dog, who cocked its head and watched Sofia like she was a rare insect. Great, that made her think of Grissom and for some reasons, this thought didn't make her happy. Why? They had been friends, he helped her and was a great boss and colleague. Then he left and...did she feel abandoned? By Grissom and by Sara? What a crazy thought, she had to think about it. Or forget it as fast as possible.

"This wilderness makes me crazy. I'm a city girl, all these trees, birds and endless meadows and woods are not my cup of tea...coffee." Sofia took the boiling water and added coffee powder to it. "I wish you could tell me more about Sara, Jenny. Unfortunately I don't speak dog...not that you'd tell me the secrets of the person you love most." Damn, she talked to the dog like it could understand her and the worst part about it was, she believed it understood every single word. Border Collies were smart, but not that. Right?

When she had finished her coffee and an oat bar she rinsed the cup in the creek and looked at Jenny. "All right, take me to Sara."

Like she had waited for this for an eternity the Border Collie jumped up and ran towards the wood, making it clear to Sofia, the blonde had to hurry to keep up with her. A late morning run in boots. Great.

Five minutes later she stood next to Sara, out of breath and witnessing how Jenny greeted her owner like they had been apart for a year and not fifteen minutes.

"This little run got you out of breath? You're not very fit, deputy chief. Do you spend too much in the office?"

"Very funny, I wear boots and not running shoes." And she spent too much time in the office, yes. It was part of her job and she missed working the streets a lot. Unfortunately you had to choose between having a career or working the streets. Both wasn't possible.

"Of course."

"I thought you get food delivered, why are you looking for berries?"

"Because fresh food is better than packed ones. It's early, there are not many berries around you can eat. But we have some plants here, which will make a kind of salad."

"You spend too much time with sheep, you start to eat like them." Sofia didn't expect a steak, but plants? That was just...baa

"You're a meat lover, but when you shoot a rabbit or any other animal I don't want you around anymore. This is a violence free area."

"When you want to me gone just say so."

Sara stopped and looked at Sofia. "Sofia, when you want to leave, you are free to go. You don't have to make an excuse to continue your ride."

The blonde swallowed. Her words had been harsher than she wanted them to be. Actually, she didn't want them to sound harsh at all, they blurred out before she could stop them. "I'm sorry, those words sounded not the way they were supposed to."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. I'm really sorry. I'm glad you offered me to stay and I...I enjoy it. Being here. Learning something new. Being...being with you. It's good to see you again, Sara. I should have said that earlier."

"No reason to get all sentimental on me, deputy chief." Sara smiled. "I don't send you away, all I want you to know is, when you feel like moving on, you are free to go. I've been doing this for a while, I'm fine on my own. Actually, I'm not on my own, I've got my dogs."

"I'd love to stay a few more days with you, when you don't mind." She really meant what she said, she'd love to be with Sara a little bit longer. Maybe it sounded strange to the other woman, somehow it sounded strange to Sofia too, but yesterday had been good and she was sure, they could have some fun together. They were in an area, they hadn't been together before, Sofia was curious, how she and Sara got along now. After all these years without contact, without the brunette thinking, the blonde was after her boyfriend. Could they become real friends?

Sara was quiet for a few seconds, like she had to consider her next words. Not the best sign for an approval, right?

"Not when you make yourself useful." The brunette grinned.

"I do my best to be a good shepherd assistant." Sofia felt strangely relieved. With her request she felt like she had made herself vulnerable. Sara could have brushed her off like an annoying fly, instead she was fine with the idea of them being together for a few days.

"Good, then we only have to find a solution for your food problem. Unless you want to have insects and plants every day, we have a little problem with our daily menu offer. I got food for only one person delivered."

"In which direction to you want to go next?"

"Up north. The next town is a few days away. There is a ranger station a few miles away. How much food do you have left?"

"For two or three days."

"Okay. We'll travel towards the station tomorrow, around ten miles, then the flock and I have to stop. The last ten miles are for you and Tas. When you leave early the day after tomorrow, you can be back in the evening. How does that sound?"

"Like a perfect plan. Do you need something from the ranger station too?"

"I'm fine, thanks. Come on, time to prepare lunch and teach you how to milk a sheep. I hope for the sheep's sake you have got warm hands."

Sofia had to admit she had many talents - milking sheep wasn't one of them. Either there was no milk at all coming or the milk ended anywhere but in the cup, she tried to fill. It looked so easy when Sara did it and yet felt so impossible when she tried it herself.

"You have to find another job for me, when I do the milking we'll never get something to drink and the sheep will run away, no matter what the dogs do." Frustrated Sofia sat down.

"How about you take care of the fire, the tents and the coffee and tea?"

"I can do that."

"Perfect." Sara sat down and handed the blonde a cup of milk. "Try it. It's warm, won't taste like the milk you add into your coffee or drank as a child."

"When it's cold and raining I still drink hot chocolate milk. It fits better to winter weather than coffee or tea."

"Las Vegas doesn't have cold winter. Not in the city."

"Hey, it does snow there. Sometimes. Rarely." When it does, it was an event, everybody stared at. Sofia remembered the first time she had seen snow, when she was a child. She woke up in the morning, looked out of her window and asked her father, who had painted the world in white and why. He told her snow was not a color, it was something, that fell off the sky, like rain, only softer. Then she ran out barefoot, expecting to feel soft and warm cotton under

her feet and squeaked when her naked feet came in contact with the cold, wet snow. So much for soft clouds from the sky, the stuff was cold, wet and didn't feel good at all. From that day on, Sofia Curtis was a warm weather person.

"Yes." Sara laughed. "Tell me, what happened in Vegas after I left? Anything exciting I want to know of?"

"Sara Sidle wants gossip?" Sofia laughed amused. Since when did Sara care about gossip?

"Not gossip, facts. Remember the time when you were a CSI and had to work with facts and not assumptions?"

"Funny. What do you know? Where am I supposed to start so I don't bore you with stories, you already know."

"The last time I heard something from Vegas was, when I left it. Since that day I haven't heard anything."

"The woman, who replaced you, Riley, left after a year. The graveyard shift isn't everybody's favorite. They got a new CSI from Los Angeles, Morgan, very talented, very interesting for your old buddy Greg. He has a major crush on her. Wendy is gone, which broke Hodges' heart." Sofia made a little pause. "You know Grissom left?"

"No."

"He did. A year after you left." So they weren't together anymore. Sara left not only the city, she also left her fiancé. That explained some of Grissom's behavior. The blonde wondered why, what happened but she knew, it wasn't her business and therefore not a good thing to ask.

"His replacement, Ray, brought a serial killer with him, in the end Ray killed him, the death was suspicious, but nobody really looked deeper into the case. The new guy, Russell, is good. Calm and he keeps the shift together like a family."

"Sounds good."

"There're ups and downs, just like you know the city. One thing stood out of all, in a bad way: McKeen killed Warrick."

"What?" Sara dropped the cup of coffee and starred at Sofia.

"You didn't know?" Sofia assumed this news had somehow reached Sara. Okay, she and Grissom separated, but did she also cut loose from Greg? They were friends, close friends.

"No. How? Why? McKeen?"

"He was involved in some gambling and prostitution, your old team investigated him, Warrick got too close, McKeen shot him in an alley. Does the name Gedda ring a bell?"

"Vague."

"He was involved in this too. I thought somebody told you, we were all devastated. Especially Nick." To be honest, Sofia wondered back then why Sara didn't come back to Vegas, why she didn't attempt to the funeral. "Gosh, I really thought somebody told you, Sara. You really have no contact to anybody from Vegas?"

"Not until you showed up here." Sara's brown eyes had turned dark and sad. The brunette blamed herself for being out of touch, for not coming to Warrick's funeral.

"I think it was part of the reason why Grissom left. He...lost Warrick, who was like a son to him and after you left...I barely saw him laughing or happy. I've no idea where he is now, like you, he left without further information what his plans were."

"Leaving is part of the graveyard shift. Remember the blonde CSI, who left to be a detective in Boulder?"

"She came back as a detective as soon as she had the chance."

"Yes, she did."

"I think as much as we feel as a family at work, as much as we trust each other and place our life in the hands of our colleagues, it doesn't mean, this feeling travels home. Sure, there were social calls, going out for a beer, a conversation after work, shared breakfasts, all those things didn't qualify for the real thing. Real friendship is a twenty-four/seven relationship and doesn't

end with the shift. It's hard to maintain a real friendship when your life is full of death, violence and the proof how cruel and mean people are. As a CSI you see families killing each other, friends since kindergarten turning on each other, you're surrounded by a bad world, it's hard to keep believing in something good.

"Warrick." Sara shook her head. "We had a rough start, Grissom brought me to Vegas to investigate Warrick because of the death of Holly and he also had his gambling problem. One reason why my start with the graveyard team wasn't the best." Apart from her being not the perfect person when it came to socializing.

"You did become a member of the team and Warrick trusted you."

"It took some time..." And a lot of work. It hadn't been entirely her fault, the team was suspicious, which was normal when a stranger arrived to investigate one of them. But there was one thing, that was entirely her own fault. "I'm sorry I was such a bitch to you, Sofia. That wasn't fair and very unprofessional." This apology had been overdue for a long time.

"Was it because of Grissom?"

"Yes. I was jealous."

"For no reason."

"I know now. When it comes to my private life I'm not exactly a professional."

"Well, we did work together and most times we worked pretty good together."

"You found me in the desert."

"Nick saw the reflection of the mirror, I only drove the car and pulled over when he told me to."

"You were there. You saved my life."

"Like I said, most of the work was done by Nick. But you're welcome, I'd do it again."

"Thanks." Sara smiled a little bit. "We had a lot of tough times in Vegas, didn't we?"

"Like we had good times too."

"Warrick was killed, Nick abducted and almost died, Brass was shot, Greg almost beaten to death...too much violence."

Sara was abducted and almost died, Sofia added to the list. For eight years of work a lot of shit, no wonder the brunette decided to leave and have an end to all of those things. Sofia was sure, since Sara left Las Vegas her life was not free of violence, but it wasn't the main topic of every day life.

"How often do you meet people?"

"On busy days every day, it depends on what time of the year we have and where I'm with the flock. Most times I see them from a distance, they watch the sheep for a few moments and continue with whatever they were doing before. It's not very exciting to watch sheep graze and walk around."

"Nah, the sheep are not very exciting, the shepherd is the interesting part of the group." Sofia grinned.

Sara rose an eyebrow and chuckled. "Really?"

"Sure. You can tell stories, that would fill dozen of books, all bestsellers."

"Suck it up, Sofia."

"I mean it."

"So can you."

"Want to become a famous crime writer with me?"

"Sure, just after I want to have dinner with you in front of a log fire in a hut somewhere in the snowy mountains on Christmas Eve."

"Is that an invitation?"

"When you're back to Vegas you'll have forgotten about this, you'll be busy with crime fighting, climbing the job ladder. The deputy chief of Las Vegas has no time for a Christmas vacation, Christmas is a busy time of the year."

"I could take a few days off. Can you take days off?"

"Slavery ended after the civil war, you should know about this, your father took you to war places all over the country."

Surprised the blonde looked at the other woman. She never told Sara about her childhood travels with her parents, how interested her father was in history and the civil war. "How do you know? Oh, Grissom." Right, she talked about it with Grissom during a case. Which one was it again? The one with the beheaded man on the train tracks.

"Yes."

"You talked about me?"

"We talked about the case, he mentioned you recognized Gettysburg, things like this impressed him. As you can imagine."

"Yes." Sofia chuckled. "He said I was a lucky child to tour the country in a RV and see all these war places. I didn't feel like a lucky child back then, still believe a theme park had made me happier."

"It's all about the education."

"Not when you're a child and to be honest, nowadays you wouldn't make me overly happy when you send me on a RV trip to war places all over the country."

"So what are your perfect vacations now?"

"This." Sofia opened her arms and pointed to the whole area. "A quiet and peaceful place, nature, no obligations. I wake up every morning and can decide what I want to do; unless you tell me what to do."

"Milk a sheep."

"Not my strength."

"Give it another try, you'll learn it."

"I'm not sure."

"You can learn everything when you really want it." Sara sat down and pulled Jenny in her arms. "Every day is a good day to learn something new, right Jenny? You learn every day too and you love learning new things. One day you will manage everything alone and I only have to walk for myself. My smart baby, I love you." She kissed her dog, who covered the brunette's face with sappy kisses. True love was only possible between a human and a dog, wasn't it?

For a long time Sara had been alone with her dogs and the sheep without missing having somebody around. Quite contrary, she enjoyed being alone, having everything to herself, nobody bothered her, nobody asked questions or demanded answers. All she had to care about was to make sure, the sheep were fine, had food and water and same for the dogs. and her horse Perfect. Then Sofia showed up out of the blue and it was over with her being alone time.

She should be happy about the blonde leaving, about having the place for herself and going back to her normal life. Get up early, pack her stuff and leave to another meadow and creek. The life of a shepherd, surrounded by animals and not human beings. The life she chose for a reason.

Nevertheless she felt a kind of sadness when she watched Sofia rode away. The blonde needed new food and left to ride to the next ranger station, where she could get everything she needed. A ten mile ride, which wouldn't get her back today. If she came back at all. She said she wanted to be back with Sara tomorrow evening, the brunette had showed her where she planned to go to, but the question was, would Sofia really want to return? It was a boring life Sara lived, walking the whole day, watch sheep, no entertainment, no comfort. Why would Sofia want to spend her vacation like this?

"I can't believe I'm really sad because she left." Sara mumbled and tousled Jenny's hair around the ears. "My life goes back to normal, I should be happy about her gone." Her dog made a

sound, that didn't sound like she agreed with Sara. More like she told her, not to kid her or herself.

"I mean, what if she stayed longer, I get used to have people around and when she goes back to Las Vegas I can't cope with being alone because I'm so used to have human company. It's a risk and it's better when Sofia doesn't come back. For all of us."

Who was she fooling? Not her favorite dog, Jenny shook her head and gave her a look like she was crazy. Like Sara told her old colleague, her dog was very smart and it seemed like the Border Collie was smarter than her owner.

"All right, she said she'll be back tomorrow evening...and yes, I hope she keeps her promise. Which is so wrong." Sara grumbled, whistled once as a sign for the other dogs to make the flock move. Time to move on. Not only with the flock, also with her life. Time to move on and don't expect the blonde to be back in thirty-six hours. Go back to normal, back to the life, she had built within the last years. The life, that she was used to and liked. A life as the lone ranger. Or lone shepherd. She didn't need people around. Especially not people from Las Vegas. It was her past and the past was supposed to stay in the past. Point. No further discussion. Sofia Curtis, the new deputy chief of Las Vegas, would never come back and go back to her life in Sin City.

"I'm such a bad liar." Sara kicked a stone away. "Why the hell do I miss her? She left like two minutes ago. I have to get myself together. Even when she comes back tomorrow evening, she'll leave at one point, it's not like she's a shepherd, her life is in Las Vegas, mine is here. You call yourself a smart woman, Sara Sidle, spot the key line of your statement. Sofia Las Vegas, you Idaho."

It wasn't difficult to understand what she was saying. She knew it, she knew it was the best thing to go back to normal and keep doing what she did before. Live her life the way she wanted it.

"I make a fool out of myself while Sofia is glad to be away. She can sleep in a real bed tonight, have a shower, eat real food, have a beer and doesn't have to put up with me, my moods and the life in the wilderness. I don't even have a toilet around. No sane person goes back to this." Which made her an insane person. Right now she felt crazy. More than crazy. After all these years as a shepherd she was used to the fact she talked to her dogs, the sheep, the horse and herself, but she never came up with such a crazy conversation with herself than she did today.

"When I change my plans, to somewhere else, it doesn't matter if Sofia comes to the place tomorrow night or not, I won't be there, we'll never meet again and my life will be the same like it was last week." Who was she fooling? When she wasn't where she told Sofia she'd be, the blonde would look for her because she'd worry about her and she wouldn't stop until she found Sara. It was no option to change plans and expect things to go back to how she knew it. When she wanted Sofia away, she had to tell her tomorrow night, she didn't want her around. Straight to her face.

Beside the fact she couldn't do this, Sofia was too smart to believe this lie.

Rain came hard and furious, like a punishment from heaven. Sara had seen the dark clouds all day long and decided early to stop for the night. She found a place with enough grass for the sheep and a little creek to stay a day or two. When the rain continued like this, she didn't want to move on tomorrow and neither would her dogs or the sheep. The flock stood close together, shielding each other while she sat in her little tent and sipped tea. She pitied the dogs outside, taking care of the flock, which was her job too. Only Jenny was by her side, like she always was. Of course Sara could send her out, her dog would obey, but she liked the company and knew, all the Border Collie would do, was sit in front of the tent to watch her owner.

There had been no sign of Sofia. When the blonde left in the morning she should have been here by now. Fifteen miles, which was the distance the blonde had to ride today, didn't take all

day although the area was rocky sometimes and Tas couldn't canter, had to walk slowly and carefully. Did the blonde lose her way? Or did she change her mind and rode somewhere else? Did she saw the black clouds and decided to stay another night at the ranger's station? In a hut, in a real bed, with a hot shower, warm and dry. Who could blame her for that?

Sara had been busy all day. Beside the dark sky and the upcoming rain, a lamb fell down a rock and hurt its leg. She wasn't sure if it was broken, she splinted it, carried the lamb first before she put it in a harness and let it hung down the horse. Droppy had been the horse of the last shepherd of the flock and was used to carry lambs. He was around eight or nine years old, a quiet and relaxed horse. Not the best pick in case she had to go somewhere in a short period of time, but perfect for the flock. The sheep weren't afraid of him, he never left the flock when they stopped somewhere and was reliable when he was needed.

Suddenly Jenny lifted her head. Sara first thought was an animal was close to the flock and she had to leave the tent, make sure it wasn't a predator, then the Border Collie's tail wiggled a little bit. No enemy. Seconds later Sara heard Sofia's voice.

"Sara? Can I come in?"

"Sure." She came back. A strange relief ran through Sara's body, like heavy weight fell of her. Why was she so relived to see or hear the blonde?

"The rain is horrible." Sofia opened the zip and came into the tent, her rear end first.

Sara pulled everything away from the entrance so it didn't get wet because the raincoat Sofia wore was soaking wet and it left a little pool in the tent.

"It feels like doomsday." Pulling a plastic bag out of her coat, Sofia placed her boots in it and left it outside. They shouldn't get wet now, she didn't want them in the tent.

"I hope the creek won't turn into a river." The tent was fifty yards away from the creek, enough for a shower, but when it rained the whole night like it did for the last hours, she had to move her tent further away or she'd wake up in a river.

"You have a lot of space between the water and tent. For now." Sofia took off her coat and placed it next to the entrance. For the first time she looked at Sara. "Nice to see you again. You did a good job hiding, I expected you further north."

"Sorry, with the rain I had to stop earlier and prepare for the night. Plus I've got an injured lamb." She told her about the incident.

"Where is it?"

"Outside. The best place for it is with the flock. When I keep it here, it will try to get back all the time. How was your ride?"

"Nice. I got a lot of yummy things and also a treat for Jenny." Sofia pulled a bone out of the backpack and gave it to the Border Collie, who dropped the treat instead of eating it.

"She doesn't take anything from strangers."

"I'm still a stranger?"

"Everybody except me is a stranger." Sara took the bone. "You can eat it, Honey, it's all yours." Happily Jenny started chewing.

"I won't take that personally." The blonde smiled. "This dog challenges my ego, I might try to convince her I'm a friend and not a threat. Let's see for how long she distrusts me."

Sara laughed. "Good luck with that."

"Thanks. I like challenges. Like I've decided I'll build up my tent in record time today."

"You want to build up your tent in this weather? Aren't you wet enough?"

"I'm soaked although I wore my raincoat all the time. At one point it didn't matter anymore. Nevertheless I need my tent because sleeping outside without it is no option."

"You can stay here." Sara offered. An offer, that surprised her herself. She wanted to share her not this big tent with Sofia? That would be a cozy night, with Jenny in the tent too.

"Really?" Apparently Sara wasn't the only one, who was surprised by the offer. The tent was maybe four by seven feet, big enough for two people, who were comfortable being close. For them and the dog, it was very cozy.

"I can't send you out in the rain, you catch a cold and I've to put up with you. Or worse, you infect me and then I'm sick too."

"Ah, that sounds more like you." Sofia laughed.

"It does, doesn't it? Get out of your wet clothes, it's dry in here but not warm."

"You want to see me strip?"

"Where's the fun of that when we don't have music and the tent isn't big enough for you to dance while you take off your clothes, irresistible deputy chief?"

"The close encounter of bodies in the tiny tent?"

"Still arrogant." Sara rolled her eyes.

"No, still sexy." Sofia smirked and pulled off her shirt. "Enjoy the view."

"I hide voluntarily." The brunette let herself fall backwards and pulled a blanket over her face. Sofia came back and everything seemed to be better than before. Even the rain.

Even in dry clothes Sofia felt cold. After the whole day on Tas, being in the rain, it seemed like the coldness of the weather had gotten into her body and wasn't willing to leave it. Not without a hot bath, a luxury she didn't have here.

"Are you okay?" Sara asked.

"A little bit cold. I could use a hot spa after the day in the rain."

"All we have is a cool pool outside."

"Not what I have in mind." The blonde slipped under the blanket. It felt damp, all her things did.

"Jenny." Sara petted with her right hand on the place next to her and the Border Collie, who had laid between them got on the other side of the brunette and lay down there. Something Sofia didn't like, secretly she planned to use the dog as a heater. Before she could complain she found herself in Sara's arms.

"What..."

"You need warmth or you catch a cold for real. We don't have a fire nor do we have thick blankets and we can't make hot coffee or tea inside the tent. Body heat is the only thing we have, it would be stupid not to use it. Don't worry, nobody in Vegas will ever know you needed help, deputy chief."

"I couldn't care less." Like it was important to her what people thought about her being in Sara's arms. How would they knew about it anyway?

"Good." Sara pulled Sofia closer in her arms. "Better?"

"Much warmer, yes. Thanks."

"You're welcome. I'm sure you'd do the same for me if I was the one, who rode the whole day through the rain."

"Yes."

"See." Sara paused. "I wasn't sure you'd come back, to be honest."

"I said I'll be back tonight."

"You did."

"Why would I break a promise?"

"People do it all the time. Suddenly the promise isn't convenient anymore. A bed in a warm hut is better than this, continuing your trip to a lake, have there a lovely time with swims and barbecues is better than walking around with a flock of sheep."

"I'd never break a promise I made to you if I can't help it." Sofia turned to look into Sara's eyes. It was dark, they didn't have light in the tent so all she could see were shades of the brunette's head.

"Sorry I didn't believe you."

"Apology accepted." The blonde rested her head on Sara's arm, her face half hidden in the hair of the other woman. "Do you want to know why I have...why I can stay here this long?"

"Do you want to tell me?"

Did she? Sofia hadn't told anybody what was going on in her life, why she left and why she was here. Was it a good idea to tell Sara? Could it hurt? The brunette didn't live in Vegas anymore, she couldn't tell anybody. Besides, sooner or later everybody would know it anyway, why not practice talking about it with Sara?

"I suffer from a tinnitus and a burn out syndrome." Saying it out loud made her feel weak and sick. After all this time she knew about her diseases, she still wished for something more "real", like a broken leg or arm. Something people saw, understood and not questioned. With what she had, she appeared weak. Nobody wanted a weak Deputy Chief.

"Becoming a deputy chief this fast had its cost."

"Yes. It cost my health. The sheriff wasn't happy about it, but my doctor insisted I take a few weeks off or I would find myself on heavy medication and in hospital, which would take longer than this...longer vacation." And was something, she'd never agree to. Not a mental hospital, her career would be over afterwards and what was left of her, when she didn't have a career? Nothing.

"You haven't told them?"

"No. Weakness doesn't keep you in the job."

"When you had broken your leg in the line of duty, nobody would think you're weak because you stay away for a few weeks and get back to full strength."

"Physical and emotional damage is not the same, when you can't see what's wrong, it's not wrong, not worth fix it. Strong people don't have emotional damage."

"Bullshit."

"Truth."

Sara shook her head. She knew how society thought about mental disorders. People pretended to be open-minded and more understanding than years ago, in reality they weren't. "How do you feel? Do you still have the tinnitus?"

"Not often, it gets better every day. Like my sleep gets better too."

"Any idea how to get this back to Vegas? What to change so you feel better there?" Give up the position you worked for?

"Work less. You know how good that works in reality." It was one thing to plan what to do after your vacation, it was a different thing to make these plans come true.

"Not at all." Sara sighed. Yes, she knew about this, had been a victim of being overworked herself for years. Another reason why she left. It seemed to be impossible to work law enforcement and not overwork yourself.

"Exactly. I believe unless you have somebody to come home to, it's hard to get home on time. Even when you know somebody waits for you, it's a fight to be back on time. Or at least for dinner. Who wants to put up with a partner, who works long hours, might have to leave in the middle of the night and can't promise to be back home for a date."

"People, who work the same hours. Who are also never home."

"What kind of relationship is that? When you're apart the whole time because of work." Then you didn't have to be together at all.

"One, that won't make you happy."

"The only chance is to reduce the hours, for that...you need somebody at home, who is more important to you than work is. To find this person you need time, time you don't have because you work all the time." Her life had been like this for years and she doubted it would change any time soon.

"Welcome to the wonderful world of catch-22."

"Yes." Sofia sighed. It was something she hated to think about. She might get away with a trip like this once, when her burn out syndrome came back after a few weeks, she wouldn't get another leap of absence. Not one, that allowed her to come back to her work. The next time she left, she'd leave for good. Leave the world and work, she lived for, worked hard for all those years. "Do you think I'm weak?"

"I think you worked hard, too hard. It has nothing to do with weakness, Sofia, don't let anybody tell you you're weak. You're not!"

"Thanks."

"You are many things, Sofia, weak isn't one of them." Sara kissed the hair of the blonde. "Get some rest, when the rain continues, what it looks like it will, we'll stay here tomorrow. No point in marching through the rain and wind."

"Does that mean we can sleep in?"

"You can, I've to check on the sheep."

"Then I get up with you and help you as much as I can."

"All right."

"Don't try to sneak out of the tent, I'll hear you anyway."

"As if...you snore so loud, a passing train wouldn't get through that noise."

"You're such a lying bitch, Sara Sidle, you haven't changed a bit!"

"I take that as a compliment." The brunette chuckled. All right, Sofia didn't snore this loud, but she did snore. In a very cute way.

"That must be the most complicated love letter ever written."

"Huh?" Irritated Sofia looked up from her notepad. What was Sara talking about? Who wrote a love letter?

"The letter you're writing."

"Oh."

"I've been watching you for a while, you're very busy writing something down, a few seconds later you scratch words out, like they're not good enough. Or absolutely wrong. Like a teenager, who tries to come up with the perfect love letter to her big love."

"I can't remember the last time I wrote a love letter...and this is everything but a love letter. It's a...I try to come up with things to change my life. Or things, I should change in order to change my life in a good way. When I don't change anything I'll never get better and back to work. Or only for a few weeks and then I'll be sick again." It was part of the therapy the doctor told her to do. Make serious changes or you will end up in hospital. Share the room with other nutcases.

"Let me guess: whenever you come up with an idea, it's not realistic and when it is, it doesn't change a bit."

"Yes." She felt stupid and incapable.

"What have you got so far?"

"Point one: Reduce overtime. Realization: no idea. Point two: Take more breaks during work. Realization: unknown. Point three: Eat and drink regularly and healthier. Realization: Always have a glass of water on the desk, set alarm to remember to eat, take two apples with you a day. That's it." Three points, two she had no idea how to make get from idea into reality, one she might be able to build into her life.

"Your goals are not exactly enough. Reduce overtime is a big point, make it more precise: don't go into the office before seven in the morning, leave by six in the evening. Break times are at ten and at two, at least half an hour. Not at the desk, outside. This way you get some exercise as well. Get somebody to share your breaks, it's easier when you have an appointment, otherwise you come up with an excuse why you have to eat at your desk while you work. You need a break buddy."

"I like that." Sofia smiled. Here she was, sat for an eternity on the trunk and came up with barely anything and Sara, who had been busy with taking care of the injured lamb, needed a minute to have ideas, she had been waiting for the whole time. "Thank you."

"You're welcome. When you're done with your list, move your lazy ass and get us timber for the fire, I want my dinner on time."

"Hey, I've to reduce stress in order to get well soon."

"I know, get the timber, let me have a burning fire soon and you won't have any stress. If I'm hungry in an hour and there's no fire, you'll have a lot of stress. Reduce stress by doing what I tell you to do."

"As far as I remember I never did what you told me to do."

"There's no reason not to learn from your mistakes." The brunette cocked her head. "You have five more minutes for your therapy, then you do what you've been told."

"Bite me!"

"I told you before, I've got dogs to do so."

"How about a treat instead of a threat?"

"You're not one of my dogs." Sara petted Jenny's head. "Come on, we check the flock and then it's time for dinner. Our blonde assistant better moves her ass or you make her move it."

"I should have stayed with the rangers!"

"You would have missed me too much."

"Hah! You mean you'd miss me if I wasn't here."

"Your time is almost up, servant." Sara turned and hid her smile. Yes, if Sofia had stayed away, she would have miss her. No point in telling her, she was sure, the blonde knew about this fact. Which didn't change the fact, Sara was hungry wanted her dinner soon. Very soon.

"Do you have no chance to stay in contact with the world while you're here with the sheep?" Sofia had had a cell phone signal every once in a while, she had seen other people, but nothing like civilization. Nothing to communicate regularly.

"When I get my supplies, I also got my mail. Hand written mail. Why?"

"I was wondering, when I have to leave, how I can reach you."

"Who says I want to be reached?"

"I do and I'm the law enforcement person, my word is the law."

"We're not in your jurisdiction and even there, your word wouldn't be my law. It never has, detective Curtis."

"I can have you arrested. When the deputy chief of Las Vegas tells the small town officer in the middle of nowhere to arrest a shepherd, who do you think the small town officer will listen to?"

"Me, he hates arrogant big city cops." Sara grinned. "A letter will always get through me, Sofia. It will take some time, but it will arrive sooner or later."

"Good." The blonde sat next to the brunette, close enough their bodies got in contact. "Will I get an answer or will you use my letter to start the fire?"

"I might read it first and then start the fire with it."

"Fair enough." There was no reason to keep a letter, Sara had to keep her luggage small and light. In her life was no space for letters and...other personal things. "I suppose there's no chance in making you change your mind, come back to Vegas, is there?" They always needed good people and there weren't many better crime scene investigators than Sara.

"Go back to violence? Murder? The dark side of life?"

"A nice bed, a bathtub, restaurants, shared dinner."

"Are you trying to convince me to come back?"

"Yes." Why deny something obvious, something she didn't have to feel ashamed for? They had been together for almost two weeks, Sofia knew, she had to leave and go back to Las Vegas soon. First she planned to stay the whole summer, but she realized, the longer she stayed away, the harder it would be to go back, get back into her old life. A life she couldn't leave behind. It had made her sick, but it was all she always wanted to do. Being a cop was not only a job, it was her destiny. She wanted to go back to work, wanted to fight crime and also look after herself. She had learnt a few things the past weeks, now it was time to use the new knowledge.

"Las Vegas isn't my home anymore."

"It can be your home again. There are people, who miss you and would be happy to have you back." She was one of them and she knew, Sara's old colleagues would also be happy to have her back.

"I've got a job here."

"An important one with a lot of responsibilities, I know. When you were a CSI, it was an important job too."

"It wasn't good for me."

"You can change what was bad for you, I'll do the same. We can change our lives together."

"We're not a married couple."

"No, but we're friends."

Sara wanted to disagree, say something, that made Sofia's comment sound ridiculous. They weren't friends, they spent some time together because it suited them. A lame excuse for being together. But she knew, it would be a lie. She knew Sofia was right, they were friends now. And she knew, when the blonde left to go back to Las Vegas, Sara would miss her. Hell, she missed her when she was gone for two days. Maybe it was better when the blonde left as soon as possible. Every additional day would mean it got harder to say goodbye. Why was it called goodbye anyway, there was nothing good about it.

"Your life is in Vegas, mine is here. I look forward to see you the next time you take a few days off."

"Can you take days off?"

"Yes."

"Then why don't you come down to Vegas? As a vacation. You can bring the jealous dog of yours." Sofia chuckled and petted Jenny's head. The Border Collie still eyed her with suspicious and seemed not to trust her. The blonde decided, the dog was jealous because it didn't get Sara's full attention anymore.

"I won't go anywhere without Jenny, not even for a day." But she would let Sofia go away and out of her life. Even when it was hard and a thought, she didn't like. Some things you couldn't change.

As much as Sofia hated it, she had to leave Sara. Three weeks were over, she had to go back to Las Vegas. Yes, she had been told to take her time and yes, she promised not to come back before she felt better, but she did feel better now. And she really had to go, the longer she stayed away, the more work was waiting for her when she came back. Plus the trouble she'd have to make people believe, they could trust her, in her strength.

"Time to go back to Sin City." Sara said when Sofia finished saddling Tas.

"Yes. Your chance to come with me."

"I'm not sure your horse can carry all the sheep."

"The dogs can take care of them."

"They need me too."

"When can you leave?"

"Not before October, the flock stays out as long as possible. They cost more money when they're in a stable and on a meadow."

"It's all about the money." No matter where you were, it were always the same things, that were important to people.

"Money means power. People want power."

Sofia couldn't argue about this. She worked hard for the power, to be the deputy chief, become the sheriff one day. For that she risked a lot. Like her health.

"How about a Christmas trip to Las Vegas?"

"If I go somewhere on Christmas, it has to be warm, with a beach and waves."

"Hawaii?"

"My first choice."

"I might surprise you there." A dream. She wouldn't get a week off over the holidays. She wasn't married, had no family, it was her job to be at the department and let the colleagues with family take the days off. "What about your shadow?"

"I take her with me, like I said, I don't go anywhere without her."

"True love only exists between a woman and her dog." Sofia took a deep breath. Tas was ready, she was ready and yet, she wasn't ready. Not ready to leave, she wanted to stay, another day, week, month.

"I won't say goodbye as it's not a good thing to say." Sara said.

"How about: I see you."

"Yes, I see you."

Sofia waited for a second, not sure what to do now. She wanted to hug Sara, but she was afraid, it was a bad idea. When she hugged the brunette, she might not be able to keep her face straight. This wasn't the right time to be a wimp, she had to get herself together and leave like an adult and not like a child. With her last power she got on Tas. "Take care, Sara."

"You too. On your trip back to Vegas and in Vegas. Good luck with the job, deputy chief."

"Thanks, you too, shepherd."

Sara stood next to Jenny, her hand stroking the head of the Border Collie, watching Sofia ride away. It didn't take long before the blonde and her horse vanished between trees. First they saw them again, then they were gone and didn't come back to sight.

"She won't come back." Sara said to her dog, kned down and pulled Jenny into her arms.

"Sofia never turned around to look back. People, who don't turn and look back, won't come back. This was the last time we've seen Sofia here." Swallowing hard, the brunette couldn't hold back her tears anymore and buried her face in the hair of her dog.

So take a look at me now
Well there's just an empty space
And there's nothing left here to remind me
Just the memory of your face
Ooh, Take a look at me now
Well there's just an empty space
And you coming back to me is against the odds
And that's what I've got to face,
I wish I could just make you turn around
Turn around and see me cry
There's so much I need to say to you
So many reasons why
You're the only one who really knew me at all

But yes, Sofia coming back to her was against the odds and it was what Sara had to face. She had no right to ask the blonde to stay, had no right to ask her to give up her life, like she didn't want to give up her new life.

...to Las Vegas

I.

"Deputy chief Curtis, you've got a visitor."

"Thanks Martha, I'll be there in a minute." Sofia put the receiver down. She had been back at work for four months now and all the points, she had written down, the points she wanted to change, were forgotten. There was no time to have breaks, go home on time and take days off. Las Vegas was a big city, every day there were thousands of tourists in the city, they all came here to have the time of their life, gamble, party, have fun. For that they brought a lot of money to the city. Money was always something, that drew bad people's attention closer, made them steal, kill or lie for it.

Her boss, Ecklie...wasn't it weird? He had been her boss when she was a CSI and a detective, now he was the new Sheriff and her boss again. Luckily he had changed and working for him was easier nowadays. Sometimes he was even nice. Or kind of nice. He let her go away to get better, let her go back to her old job, but he also expected her to work full time and giving at least one hundred and twenty percent.

Her doctor told her to step back otherwise she'd be back at the same point, where she had been five months ago. Or worse. The medication she took did help a little bit, but the only thing, that really helped her, was changing her lifestyle. As soon as her doctor made the criminals become nice citizen of the city, she could do what he suggested. Back in Idaho she was able to sleep for hours, was rested in the morning, here she went to bed around midnight to get up at five again. Short nights, but she barely slept the full five hours, woke up often, had bad dreams or too much on her mind to fall asleep at all. How could you rest when you were too tired to sleep?

Checking her watch she sighed. She didn't have time for a visitor. Probably it was a reporter, who wanted an interview about the casino robbery yesterday. It had been all over the news, a million dollar in cash and another two million worth in chips were stolen. Not a lot of money compared to the amount of money casinos had in their safe, but enough to interest the press. Couldn't they give the law enforcement team a little bit more time. They worked as hard as they could but results needed time. This wasn't a TV show, a solution wasn't delivered within forty-five minutes.

She'd give this reporter five minutes and then she had to move on. Ecklie waited for her, they had a meeting with the mayor and other important people and she couldn't be late for this one.

"I've not more than two minutes." She said before she reached the reception and had a chance to look around. Make it shorter so it was clear, she wasn't up for a long small talk. Where was the reporter? She stopped, looked at the visitor chairs and forgot to breathe.

"I drove three days and you have only two minutes for me?"

"Sara." Was it really Sara? Or did she see somebody, who wasn't there. Was she this overworked? The doctor warned her there could be serious reactions, he never mentioned, she could become delusional.

"At least you remember my name." The brunette got up from her chair. Next to her was Jenny, wagging her tail when she saw Sofia.

"What are you doing here?" A stupid question, she hated herself for it the second she said it. It made it sound like she didn't want Sara around, like she wasn't happy to see the brunette.

"Well, I thought I come and visit you, but you seem to be very busy."

"I...I have a meeting..."

"Sofia, are you ready for...Sara?" Ecklie looked equally surprised as Sofia did when he saw Sara. "What are you doing here?" Apparently Sofia wasn't the only one, who was surprised by Sara's spontaneous visit.

"Well, I thought I come along for a visit, but this city is not very friendly. No casino gives me a room because of my dog and Sofia doesn't have time to catch up and it rained. If we had known this, we had taken a trip to Los Angeles."

"I...you can stay at my place." She really had to get herself together.

"We don't want to be in your way."

"Will you stay for longer?" Ecklie asked.

"I'm not sure. Why?"

"We need another CSI, you can have your job back."

This was the first time Sofia felt like hugging Ecklie. He wanted Sara back, it was the best idea he ever had and when he wanted her back, there was nobody, who would disagree. He was the Sheriff, he could recruit people. He could give Sara her job back, get her back to Las Vegas.

"This is supposed to be a vacation trip."

"Come to my office tomorrow at noon, we'll talk and I'm sure, you'll be interested in the offer. Sofia? We have to go."

"Yes...here." Sofia pulled her keys out of the pocket. "You can stay at my place. No need for a casino room. Just make sure Jenny doesn't eat my tiger." When her fingers touched Sara's she felt like she was hit by a lightning. This was real, it was really Sara, who stood in front of her. It wasn't an illusion, she was real. Sara Sidle came back to Las Vegas.

Sara was back. She was at Sofia's place. The blonde had big problems to concentrate for the rest of the day. Most of the meeting she didn't hear, didn't follow. Sara was in Las Vegas. She left Idaho to come here. To see Sofia. Ecklie offered her a job, they'd talk about it tomorrow. Sara didn't say no, if she wasn't interested in the job, she had told Ecklie right away. Right?

In her house. Sara was in her house, waited for her. Her mind wandered off to the brunette all the time. Sofia's car stopped twice very close to the car in front of her. Focus. When you get into an accident, you can't go home. Sara is at your place. She had been there for five hours. All by herself. What did she do? Did she stay in the condo the whole time? Did she go for a walk? Shopping? Visit her old colleagues? Or did she have a closer look at Sofia's place? Ohmygod, did she leave something in plain sight, nobody was supposed to see? Was there anything at all, she didn't want Sara to see? Yes! Absolutely. But it was too late to worry about that now, she had no chance to prepare her condo for the other woman. Maybe the brunette just lay down and slept, the drive from Idaho to Vegas was long.

Taking two steps at once she ran up the stairs to her condo and rang the doorbell. It was strange to rang your own doorbell, but she didn't have any keys. What if Sara wasn't here? She didn't have a cell phone number to reach her. But she knew Sofia would come home around this time.

The door was opened and Sofia looked into the brown eyes of...Jenny. The Border Collie wagged with her tail, pushed her nose into the blonde's leg, her way of greeting her.

"Hello Jenny, how are you? Did you meet Tiger? How is he?" An unhappy meow came from the kitchen. Her cat sat on the cabinet, watching Jenny with one eye and looking for Sofia with the other. "Oh, my poor hero, did she scare you? I'm sure Jenny doesn't hurt you. Come here, say hello to her." Her cat didn't move. Too big was his fear of the dog, the natural enemy of a cat.

"He was not happy about your invitation." Sara appeared at the door to the living room. her hair was damp, she wore casual clothes. "When he saw Jenny, he jumped on the cabinet and refused to come back. No matter what I offered him."

"Did she chase him?"

"She only chases animals when I tell her to do so."

"You're not very brave, she's a girl." Sofia teased her cat. "All right, she's bigger, but you have very sharp claws."

"Give him some time, he'll find out she's harmless."

"Yeah. How are you?"

"I'm good. What about you? Did you leave early or is the crime fought for today?"

"You know law enforcement work is never done in Las Vegas."

"Nothing has changed."

"No." Sofia was aware of the distance they kept. Sara stood at the doorframe, she herself behind the table, used it like a shield. "Ecklie's offer?"

"I'm going to listen what he has to say although I'm not interested in the job."

Not interested in the job meant, she didn't want to stay in Las Vegas. No matter what the offer was. "You won't stay?"

"I said I'm not interested in his job offer." Sara's eyes held Sofia's. The gaze was intense, she watched every move the blonde made, every breath she took.

"What did you do after you left the department?"

"I came here, took Jenny for a walk, took a shower, waited for you to come home."

"Did you catch some sleep? You said you drove for three days."

"I slept during the nights."

"Okay." Of course she did. What a stupid assumption to think Sara drove day and night.

Their eyes met again, both hadn't moved from where they stood when they started their conversation.

"I...I need my keys for the garage." Sofia gave Sara the key chain, only removed her car keys and used the second pair of her front door keys, she kept in a small safe in the office.

"Of course." Sara pulled them out of her pocket and made a step towards the blonde, who made a step towards the brunette. "Thanks for letting us stay."

"You're welcome, you let me stay too when I was in Idaho. Stay as long as you want." Sofia stopped before she reached Sara. There was something in the air that made her stop. Like a wall, she didn't want to break through. Something made her keep her distance to the brunette, who also stopped like she felt the same.

Slowly Sara extended her hand with the keys. Sofia reached out for them and when their fingers touched, the keys fell on the floor and within the same moment, Sara pulled Sofia into her arms. The tension needed to be released.

If this was some kind of dream, it was the weirdest dream Sara ever had. And if it was reality, she wasn't sure what to do or think about it. The last thing she remembered was Sofia came home and wanted the keys to the garage. After that, everything went...out of control and blurry. What happened?

Carefully she opened one eye and found darkness. Why was it dark in the room? What time was it? Where exactly was she? This surroundings were unfamiliar to her. A strange place, not her tent, not the hut she stayed in when it was winter and she didn't have to wander around with the sheep. A new place.

She felt warmth. Jenny. Of course her dog was by her side, she was everywhere Sara went. Wherever she was, they were together and when Jenny was there...Sara stopped. She tried to hug her dog when she realized, the warm body next to hers wasn't Jenny's. In fact, this warm body didn't belong to a dog. It didn't have short hair, it had soft skin. Warm and a little bit sticky from sweat. Somebody lay next to her. To be more precisely: somebody naked lay next to her and now that she thought about it, she felt pretty naked too.

"I think this is a dream."

The voice belonged to Sofia and she said exactly what Sara was thinking. Did she dream this? Was it a kind of weird dream? The weeks, months...since Sofia had left, she had been in Sara's dreams frequently. If had frequent dreamer points, the blonde would get a lot of reward points. More than anybody else. Yes, in some dreams this situation happened, it were dreams, that irritated Sara and at the same time, they were nice and satisfying. Did she have a crush on

the blonde? Deep inside herself she knew the answer to this question, but she didn't want to answer it openly. Not even to herself.

"We are awake, right?" When it was possible to have a conversation with the blonde, they had to be awake. Or was it a part of her dream? After all, a conversation wasn't such a weird dream, she had weirder ones.

"I'm not sure." Sofia turned so she faced Sara. "What happened?"

"I can't remember. You want the keys for the garage, I gave them to you and...our fingers touched." Gosh, this sounded so ridiculous. Our fingers touched. What were they? Thirteen? Sofia wasn't her first crush in school, she was an old colleague.

"It felt more like fireworks started...did you really rip off my clothes?"

No way! Did she? Sara wasn't sure what she did. "Uhm...I have no idea. Why would I do that?" Because she was so crazy for Sofia, missed her so much, needed her more than anything else and clothes were in the way.

"You are naked." What a strange matter-of-fact-voice for a so not matter-of-fact-situation. It was crazy.

"So are you." Sara had her hand on the naked back of the blonde, caressed her soft skin. Something she just realized.

"You fucked my brains out, Sara."

"Due to the fact I can't remember a damn thing, you must have done the same to me, Sofia."

Both were quiet for a few seconds, working with the words they just said, heard. They had sex together. That hadn't been a rational act, had it? The stress of the long drive, the long hours the blonde worked, there had to be an explanation for what happened. An excuse why they ended up in bed, having sex. It wasn't something they'd do normally. Right?

"I guess I really missed you. More than I knew I did." The brunette confessed.

"Ditto."

"You...you didn't turn when you left, I was sure, you'd never come back and the more I thought about it, the more I missed you. Every time I received a letter of you, I remembered the time we spent together, the night when I kept you warm because you were so cold from riding through the rain the whole day. When you were in my arms, it felt good, it felt right. Like...like I was home. Then you left and I felt like I lost something very important." Did she really say these words out loud? Did she confess her feelings? Before she didn't dare to think those things, didn't dare to acknowledge them to herself. Now she blurred them out. The sex must have turned her into a chatterbox.

"I buried myself in work so I didn't have to think about you. My unconscious must have thought, when I have another break down, I can go back to you."

"Don't hurt yourself." Sara let her fingers run over Sofia's cheek. The blonde caught them and kissed them softly.

"I missed you and wanted to be with you again. It seemed to be the only way as you refused to come back to Las Vegas."

"Why is it this important to you to have me here?"

"For the same reason why it's important to you to have me with you. I fell in love with you." It seemed to clear and obvious. Now that they were together, naked in Sofia's bed. Everything seemed to make sense and it wasn't awkward to say these words out loud.

"Back to Vegas for a few hours and life gets complicated. Again." Sara sighed. Before Sofia could react, the brunette had pulled her closer in her arms and kissed her softly. Apparently complicated wasn't that bad. At least not in this case.

"Only when we let it get complicated." How not to let this get complicated? Sara lived in Idaho, Sofia in Vegas. There were a few thousand miles between them, no chance to communicate every day, as Sara worked in the middle of nowhere. It couldn't get more complicated.

"What time is it?" Sara changed the topic.

"Almost seven. We didn't sleep too long."

"I've to feed Jenny and take her out for an evening walk."

"How about you feed Jenny and then we take her out for a walk and I take you out for dinner? Or shall I cook something for you here?" Not that Sofia had anything here she could use for a real dinner.

"Since when are you a domestic housewife?" The brunette laughed.

"Since you're in my bed...come to think about it, I might cuff you to my bed so you will never leave me again."

"Then you tell Ecklie tomorrow I couldn't meet him because I left already."

"Exactly."

"Cute." Sara kissed Sofia. "I promise I won't run away. Not today and not tomorrow. If I decide I have to go, I let you know. By let you know, I don't mean, I leave a note for you or send you a text, I talk to you. A few days before I intend to go or when I decide to go. No surprise."

Not like she had done a few years ago when she left Grissom. A note, a kiss and she was gone. Sofia knew about it and feared, the same could happen to her. Sara understood the blonde's feeling, the fear, this was too unreal to be true.

"Okay, I trust you."

"I trust you too. How about we feed Jenny and your tiger, then take her out for a walk and on our way back, we get us some dinner and a beer. I'd prefer to have dinner here and not in a restaurant. There are too many people."

"Beer is always in the fridge. Otherwise I like that idea. When I give Jenny her dinner, will she eat it?"

"Only when I tell her to eat it."

"She doesn't like me."

"No, she doesn't take anything from people. It's part of her training." Sara sat up and tried to find her clothes in the darkness.

"Light?" Sofia switched on the lights.

"Thanks...you tore my shirt apart." In disbelief she looked at her shirt, that was torn in the middle.

"Sorry, I must have been in a hurry...my blouse misses a few buttons."

"We both were in a hurry...or in lust."

"Both." Sofia took a second to watch Sara's naked back. Was this really true? Could reality be, that she had sex with Sara and they both were fine with that? And not ashamed.

"Poor little Tiger, he's too afraid to come down and have his dinner." Sofia watched her cat on the cabinet. Suspicious and afraid he didn't let Jenny out of his eyes.

"He'll get used to Jenny. She won't chase him, he'll find this out and will be fine."

"All you have to do is stay a little bit longer. With your new old job tomorrow, you're set for Vegas Reloaded."

"Vegas Reloaded? Who said I'll stay."

"Don't ruin my dreams." Sofia pulled Sara on the couch, in her arms. With her legs she caught the brunette, made it impossible for her to get up and leave.

"What are you doing?"

"I plan to have you in my arms and legs, feed you, kiss you and spend the rest of the evening on the couch with you. My doorbell is switched off, so are my phones. Nobody will disturb us."

"One could think you want to get laid."

"One should know, I did get laid already. Not that I can remember a lot of it." Or nothing. This never happened before. Then again, she couldn't remember she ever wanted somebody so badly like she wanted Sara.

"Short term memory loss?"

"In this case, yes." Sofia opened the container with the fried noodles and vegetables, took the chopsticks and started to feed Sara.

"You really are domestic."

"What can I say? I want to spoil you, after the long trip you deserve it." After you came here, came to be with me.

"I might come here more often."

"Hopefully you'll stay here for a long time." Forever would suit Sofia pretty good. "Did you quit your job?"

"Kind of."

"Any plans?"

"Beside having dinner with you and going to bed with you afterwards? No."

Sofia liked the going to bed with you part most. "How about breakfast with me tomorrow?"

"In bed?"

"When you want it there."

"You really want to spoil me." Sara chuckled, turned her head and kissed Sofia softly on the lips. "Can I have a lunch date with you? Or are you too busy with important people? If not, I'd come along after I met with Ecklie."

"For you I'd cancel an appointment with the president."

"Suck it up." Sara laughed. "How about we take dinner to bed? I might want you as my dessert. Or do you have something to prepare for tomorrow? I kind of burst in here...I bet you had other plans for tonight when you woke up this morning."

"I did, none of them are worth mentioning and none can hold up a candle to you."

"Oh please, give me a break."

"We had a break, that was long enough." Way too long in Sofia's eyes. She felt how lust rose and she had to fight with herself not to rip off the clothes of the brunette - again.

"True." Sara got out of the blonde's arms and pulled her up. "Come on, I want to snuggle into your arms and then I want to make love to you. Slowly, gentle, so we remember every single moment of it." As extraordinary as their sex had been before, this time Sara didn't want it to be about lust, she wanted it to be about feelings. Deeper feelings.

"You're right, dinner is overrated." Sofia agreed. They were hungry, yes, but they were hungrier for each other than for Thai food.

And I want you and that's so terrifying
And I want you to help put out the fire
Cause I am an island, you are the ocean
And all of my sadness taken by the sea

How much a song could fit to her, Sara thought while she listened to the song coming from out of Sofia's stereo. It was past midnight, the blonde lay asleep in her arms. They had made love, so soft and gentle, savoring every second, every touch before they snuggled up and fell asleep.

Twenty-four hours ago she was on her way to Vegas, on her way to see Sofia again because she couldn't forget their time together. Nothing happened between them when the blonde looked after the flock of sheep with her, but Sara never felt closer to somebody than she did these weeks with Sofia.

Why did she never feel anything like this before? For three years she worked with Sofia and all they could manage was a relationship of...not getting into each others faces all the time. All right, most times it was Sara, who got into Sofia's face. The blonde didn't do anything wrong, she never affronted her, never gave her a reason to act the way she did. Except for her flirtations with Grissom. Or, to Sara it looked like flirtations. She had been so jealous, like a

schoolgirl and no matter what Grissom or Sofia said, she didn't believe a single word and behaved like a wild animal defending its raw meat.

Now she was in Sofia's bed and couldn't imagine she ever wanted to be anywhere else. It was like in the refrain of the song, she wanted the blonde and it terrified her how much she wanted her. The lust she felt this afternoon, the face she couldn't remember what they did, there had been so many emotions, her brain had been unable to process them all. Maybe it was Sofia, who could put out the fire deep inside her. The fire, that made her run all the time, restless and haunted her whenever she thought, she could settle down. She had been running away her entire life, the cities and people around her changed, the ghosts stayed. When Sofia could take away the sadness Sara carried around in her heart, she might be able to have an ordinary life and relationship like other people had.

"Are you all right?"

Sara hadn't realize Sofia woke up, so lost had she been in her thoughts. "Yes, I'm fine. Only thinking."

"Good or bad thinking?"

Smart woman, there were two different kinds of thinking, most people assumed the other person thought about something nice, most time they didn't bother to asked what the thoughts were about. And when they asked, it was obvious, they wanted a positive answer.

"Wondering why it took us so many years to end up here. To be where we are now."

"We weren't ready for each other, I suppose." Sofia turned, kissed Sara's tip of the nose. "I don't know, I thought about why I miss you this much the whole summer. All the answers I came up with were so ridiculous crazy, they couldn't be true, no matter how obvious they were."

"Did you come up with an answer?"

"No and I have to say, the way it is right now, I'm happy with it and don't need an explanation anymore. When you're in the lucky position to experience happiness, savor it and don't question it. As soon as you start questioning something, the happiness vanishes."

"Some things you don't understand."

"Which doesn't have to be bad."

"No, not all." Sara kissed Sofia. "You should go back to sleep, there's a city waiting for you in the morning."

"I'm the deputy chief, not the mayor. The city doesn't wait for me, the people don't wait for me, in fact, some of them would be happy when I stay at home. Criminals don't want us to work, Sara."

"Us? You mean, they don't want you and the rest of the law enforcement team to work. They don't care about me, a shepherd."

"Who used to be a fabulous CIS. Will you see your old colleagues?"

"I thought about it. Not showing up would be rude, wouldn't it?" Sara planned to say hello, even before Ecklie invited her for a job interview, she didn't want to have, never asked for. Her old colleagues had been her only friends for years, now she was back in Vegas, she owned them a breakfast and an explanation. After all, she left them without words, without an explanation. If they didn't want to talk to her, didn't want to meet her, she couldn't be mad with them.

"Yes."

"Do you have dinner plans for tomorrow? Tonight."

"Not for the main course, only the dessert."

"Really?" Sara slipped on top of her lover. "Will you have dessert in bed?"

"Actually, the way I feel right now, I'll have my dessert anywhere. Not sure I can make it back to bed. Could be also on the backseat."

"You're so horny."

"Tell me about it, I'm a slave to my hormones since you kissed me this afternoon. But I'll do my best not to jump you while we have dinner with your old shift. I'm sure they'll jump at the chance to see you."

"Hopefully. They could be also mad because of the way I left."

"It will be forgotten when they see you. Happiness is a strong feeling. But when they want to take you with them, I'll kick their asses. You're mine and I won't let them take you away from me. Dinner is all they get."

"And I try not to rush them through dinner in order to get dessert sooner." Sara laughed and started kissing down the soft skin of the blonde's throat. Maybe she could have a little sample of their dinner dessert already.

II

She had almost forgotten how it felt to wake up in the morning and be in somebody's arms. The warmth, the feeling of another skin on your own, listen to the breathing from the other side of the bed. Or actually, they were both in the middle of the bed, clung to each other like they wanted to make sure, the other one had no chance to leave the bed secretly. No chance to vanish into the night and never come back.

Okay, it was Sofia's place, she couldn't just leave, it was Sara, who might have vanished into the night and never come back. Something, that wasn't on her mind at all. She didn't drive a few hundred miles only to run away after twelve hours.

Big brown eyes watched her when Sara opened her eyes. Jenny looked at her owner, like she wanted to find out what was going on.

"Hey." Softly she petted the head of her dog.

"She's been watching us for a while. I think she's jealous." Sofia said and kissed Sara's naked shoulder. "I'm next to you, the place she belongs."

"There are things I don't share with my dog." Sara turned her head to kiss her lover. "Good morning."

"Good morning, how did you sleep?"

"Very good. I like your bed."

"I'm glad to hear that, I want you here more often. Like every night." For the rest of our lives, even when that sounds ridiculous because they weren't a single day together.

"Possessive woman." Sara stretched. "Time for you to get up, work is calling. Why don't you catch a shower, I prepare breakfast and when you leave, I take my lovely Jenny out for a walk before we come to the department later."

"I wish I were Jenny and could spend the morning with you."

"You had the night with me. And the evening."

"True, that's better than a walk in the morning. Are you fine here? Do you need anything before I leave?"

"No, I'm a grown-up, I know the city, don't worry, I'll be fine."

"Okay." Sofia sighed and kicked the blanket away. "Time to get up. I take black coffee and scrambled eggs for breakfast."

"Now you want me to be the housewife?"

"Yes." The blonde grinned. "Make yourself useful, earn your accommodation."

"I thought I pay you with sex."

"Better than breakfast, no doubt about it. Don't forget the toast." Sofia kissed Sara and vanished into the bathroom. She couldn't remember she woke up in such a great mood and with an amazing person like Sara next to her.

Was it real? Or did she still dream? Maybe she never got up yesterday morning, never heard her alarm clock and kept on sleeping, dreaming the most amazing dream she ever had. It felt real too. If it was a dream, she didn't want to wake up. How dreadful would it be to realize, Sara wasn't here, it had been all unreal and she was alone, missing the brunette, who wandered around somewhere in Idaho.

Should she ask Sara to pinch her? Or would that be too...childish? Gosh, Sara made her nervous, Sofia didn't want to do or say the wrong thing. Years ago it was because she didn't want the brunette to get into her face, now it was because she was in love with her. In love with Sara Sidle. Life was full of surprises.

Like a school girl waiting for her crush to come along, Sofia walked down the hallway more than usually, waiting for Sara to show up. When it wasn't a dream, the brunette had to be here any time soon. By now Sofia was almost certain it was reality because the crap she found on

her desk this morning couldn't be a dream. Sometimes she dreamed of work, but she came never up with such brainless tasks like her boss did.

There was her dream girl, with Jenny by her side. What a smile, what had been wrong with her that she didn't fall for her sooner? How could she have been blind to this beauty?

"Hey." Hey? She really was a school girl. Did she also blush?

"Hi, don't you have work to do, deputy chief?"

"I do. Do you want me to look after Jenny while you talk to Ecklie?"

"No, she comes with me. We see you in thirty minutes, make sure you can leave, we're hungry."

So was Sofia, not necessarily for food, but...she could eat...food. "I'll be ready."

"Have you picked a nice place for us?"

"Actually I have, yes."

"One, Jenny can join us?" It wasn't easy to find a restaurant, that let the dog inside.

"Yes, of course."

"Good." Sara smiled softly. "I see you later."

Did she blow her a kiss? It certainly looked like the brunette blew her a kiss. Keep yourself together, Sofia, you are not fourteen anymore and Sara isn't the high school quarterback, who was the dream of all girls. Sara was much better!

"Did he offer you a job?" Sofia asked as soon as she left the department.

"He offered me my old job."

"Did you take it?"

"I told him I need to think about it."

Sofia knew it, Ecklie couldn't make Sara sign a contract. The brunette wasn't going to give up her freedom for a life, she left four years ago because it made her sad.

"What do your old colleagues say about it?"

"So far nothing, I sent them a text, told them, when they want to see me, they've to come to our old dinner, where we had breakfast all the time. When they wake up, there'll be a respond."

"It will be the first thing Greg does when he reads your text." She couldn't blame him for that, she'd do the same. Respond, wait for a respond of Sara, get ready for dinner, change her clothes half a dozen times because nothing was perfect enough and then...be late.

"Where are we going to?"

"Let me surprise you." Back home, so I can have you for my lunch, who needed food when you're around?, Sofia thought.

"You didn't pack a picnic and we'll have picnic in a park, did you?"

"No." Sofia laughed. Interesting idea. A picnic with Sara, she liked that idea. But no in Las Vegas, when she took Sara to a picnic, it had to be somewhere away from the city, where they were alone.

"What will we have for lunch?"

"I have no idea."

"You don't know the menu?"

"Actually no."

"Okay." Suspicious the brunette looked at the blonde.

"We go in there." Sofia pointed towards a casino.

"A new one. Premium Gambling. Jenny isn't allowed in casinos."

"She is in this one." The blonde opened the door and let Sara and the dog walk inside. Immediately a security guard rushed towards them.

"Sorry ma'am, the dog isn't allowed in the casino unless it's a guide dog."

"We have a lunch appointment with Patrick." Sofia said calmly. "Sofia."

"One moment, please." He talked into his phone. "Let me get the elevator for you, deputy chief Curtis."

"Thank you." They followed him into the elevator. With a key he got them access to level forty-four. There he stepped aside. "Have a wonderful lunch time."

"Thank you."

"I'm impressed, we get special treatment." Sara said when the elevator door closed.

"You're a special person, you deserve special treatment." Sofia knocked on a door and a few seconds later it was opened.

"Deputy chief Curtis, you look more and more beautiful ever time I see you." A man in his late thirties, around six foot three tall, with longish black hair, dark eyes and more than good developed muscles greeted them. He bent down and kissed Sofia right on the lips, pulling her into him with one arm.

Sara couldn't deny a hot flash inside her stomach when she saw this. Jealousy. Who was this man and why did he kiss Sofia? And why did the blonde not protest but leaned into him? What was going on?

"Ditto. I like what you did to the hallway, very nice."

"Thank you."

"Patrick, this is Sara. Sara, that's Patrick."

"I heard a few things about you, you are a shepherd in Idaho. Impressive. You don't find many women doing this kind of work. Sofia told me a lot about you."

"She never mentioned you." Sara said dryly and when she didn't get a good explanation for the greeting between the blonde and the man, Sara wasn't sure any one of them would be around for dinner.

"Why would she waste time talking about me?" Patrick laughed.

Yes, why? Because you kissed her on her lips? And you seem to be very close to her, too close to comfort in Sara's eyes.

"He manages this casino." Sofia explained. "We met in the gym a few years ago."

Sara was sure, this guy stared at her lover's ass. Didn't they all? Still not an explanation why he kissed her and she didn't protest.

"And you must be Jenny, the smart Border Collie, who guides her owner."

To Sara's surprise Patrick got down on his knees and offered Jenny his hand. Her dog lay her right paw into his hand. "Beautiful brown eyes. You can see in the eyes of a dog how smart and kind they are." He smiled at Jenny and stroke softly over her head. "When you're allowed, I have a bone for you." Patrick looked at Sara.

"She can have lunch, yes."

"All right. Sofia, I've got your favorite Columbian coffee, whole beans."

"Oh, you know what I want."

"I do. What can I offer you, Sara?"

"Water is fine."

"Okay. You can have a seat next door, the table is prepared. Lunch will be here soon. Excuse me for a second, I get the beverages."

Sofia went to the door to the left and opened it for Sara. When the blonde closed it, she was pushed into the wall by the brunette.

"You better have a very good explanation why this guy kisses you."

"I do." Sofia smirked. "A very good one. You're so cute when you're jealous. And hot." She kissed the brunette and was pushed away.

"Don't play with me. Who is this Mister Sexy?"

"You think he's sexy? Wait until you see his husband, he's more than handsome."

"His husband?"

"Yes." Sofia grinned widely. "Patrick is married to the sexiest man I've ever seen."

"He is gay?"

"Yes. So your question if he and I ever had an affair or sex will be answered with no. Satisfied?"

"You knew I'd be jealous, you played me."

"I wanted to know if you're jealous, yes. If you weren't, it means you don't care when a sexy man kisses me. You are jealous, this means, you want me for yourself. Just what I wanted." She pulled Sara in her arms, this time she wasn't pushed away.

"You'll get payback for this." The brunette hissed.

"You can pay me back tonight, when we're having dessert." Sofia kissed Sara softly. "I'm jealous too."

"Why?"

"Jenny is nicer to him than to me."

"Think about it." Sara got out of Sofia's arms and walked to the window. From here she had a view over The Strip. They were at the far north end, between the Stratosphere and Freemont Street. A shady area when you wanted to walk around at night, but Sara was sure, the casino didn't want their guests to leave the building anyway. Come in your fancy car, stay the whole night and when you're out of money, you get your car back and can go home. Or not.

"Water and coffee, have a seat." Patrick came back with a tray. "Lunch will be here any second. Sara, Sofia told me you're a vegetarian, I ordered salad, vegetables and sweet potatoes. For you, Sofia, there'll be a steak. Argentinean."

"We should have more often lunch together." The blonde sighed happily.

"Make sure you take your lunch breaks regularly and we can have lunch together. It's not me, who forgets to eat all the time."

"Hah!" Sara cheered. Finally somebody, who told the blonde the truth. Maybe this guy wasn't all that bad.

"I hope I have a reason to reduce my long hours now." Sofia said and sat down, her eyes on Sara. "For special people I stop working."

"You should stop for your own good after a few hours." Patrick pulled the chair for Sara away before he sat down himself. "Jenny, your bone will be delivered with our lunch...there it is." The door was opened and a man carried a big tray with various bowls into the room.

"Good day." He greeted them and placed the bowls on the table. The plate with the bone he set on the floor before he excused himself and left the room.

"You need permission to eat? Very good trained." Patrick said when Jenny didn't touch the bone.

"Enjoy your meal, Jenny." Sara invited her dog. "When they eat everything it can be dangerous. There was poison in the woods, I needed to know, I don't have to worry about her when she was walking around."

"Unfortunately this threat is always in cities, beside the city council, that leaves rat poison behind, there are a lot of bad people, who want pets to suffer and leave poison behind."

"True."

"Sofia told me, you had a job interview this morning. You will stay in Vegas?"

"My old boss asked me to come back, he offered me my old job. I haven't decided what to do, I left Vegas for a reason."

"You came back to Vegas for a very good reason. I can't see you leaving again."

"Why not?" Sara cocked her head.

"Because if you do, you break your and Sofia's heart."

"Really?" What did he know about them? What else did the blonde tell him?

"Don't act like it's a surprise. The way the two of you look at each other tells everything. I don't know how you felt after Sofia left and came back to Vegas, I know she missed you a lot. The way she smiles now, how her eyes glow, tells me, the two of you are very happy together. Why give up happiness? It's a rare gift, you should hold on to it and not let it slip away."

"Did she pay you to say these things?"

"There's nothing Sofia could bribe me with." Patrick laughed.

"A very good looking woman, in a high position has always something to offer." Sara shot back dryly.

"She is very good looking, indeed. It's hard to beat these deep blue eyes and the smile, but no, I'm not interested in her body."

"You don't get my body, it's taken." Sofia placed her hand on Sara's arm for a second. "No matter what the offer is. Besides the fact I'm very happy with my beautiful girlfriend, you have a husband, who is not too bad looking either. This young God. Where is he?"

"At work. When you're not busy tonight, you can see him at the gym."

"Sorry, I've got a dinner date tonight."

"The second day in a row no workout? Or let me rephrase this: another kind of workout. I want you back at the gym tomorrow evening. Bring Sara, we can have a drink afterwards."

"My workout is Jenny, I don't like gyms. Too many people in a too small room."

"You have a point. So you haven't decided if you want to go back to be a CSI, how about another job?"

"Do you have one, you want to offer me? Is that the reason why Sofia took me here?"

"Smart woman. Yes, I have a job offer for you. One, that gives you the opportunity to be with Jenny the whole day."

"You own a few hundred sheep and need us to look after them?"

"No, I have a few hundred people to look after, as Sofia mentioned, I'm responsible for this casino. We want to open in the middle of December, it will be a place for the high end roller. Cheapest tables downstairs on the ground floor are one hundred dollar, there's a special area for delicate player, whose wager start at one hundred thousand dollar. Naturally these people are very aware of themselves and their surrounding. With the recent terror threats against America and Las Vegas in particular, we want our guests to feel safe. Therefore we'll offer an around the clock dog service. I'm aware Jenny isn't trained to find explosive, but she's a smart dog, she will learn quickly. If you agree to my job offer, you and her will patrol eight hours a day the casino and the surroundings, making sure nobody left anything behind, that might be a threat to the guests or the building. This includes special searching of suits before people check in."

"Jenny can't be in a building for eight hours, she is a smart dog, but she doesn't use the bathroom."

"We have a garden in the back, a lot of our guests travel with their pets, we'll have a special dog area. Of course we expect people to clean up after their pets; or their dog sitters, they usually don't do these things themselves. We'll also have pet food on our menu so Mister and Mrs. Rich can have breakfast together with Poochy or Kitty Rich. You can take Jenny out to the garden during the shift, it's part of the casino area and needs to be taken care of too."

"Interesting offer."

"You'd be fully insured and I'm not talking about the basic healthcare system, I'm talking about real healthcare and you have two days off per week, four weeks of paid vacation."

"Wow, not bad."

"We want the best, we have to offer them good conditions. You're a trained CSI, in case we have an emergency here, you can make sure, no evidence will be destroyed. It's our understanding to fully cooperate with LVPD to solve potential crimes."

"And how much would I earn?"

"One hundred thousand per year. Plus you'll have the freedom to use the facilities after work, as other casinos, associated with us. Of course, Jenny, as an employee, will have her own paycheck."

"She doesn't do tax refunds."

"I'm not sure the IRS is interested in paychecks of dog food and vet service. How would that look? You send two spoons of every can to them?" Patrick laughed.

"You make me a very good offer. Is it because I'm involved with Sofia?"

"It's one reason, yes. Without her I had no idea you are in town, looking for work. But I want to hire you for your skills - and your dog. The sexy blonde accessory is only a bonus."

"Accessory? Thank you! You won't work for this macho!" Sofia pouted. She wasn't an accessory.

"As an accessory you're not allowed to decide what I do or don't do." Sara smiled and blinked at her lover. "I will think about your offer, Patrick."

"Of course. I can give you two days, like a mentioned before, we want to open in the middle of December, so we are under a kind of time pressure."

"You'll have an answer by tomorrow. I talk about it with Jenny...and with my accessory."

"You like that, don't you?" Sofia grumbled. For the rest of the day, the brunette would call her accessory. Sara and Patrick seemed to understand each other too good. She should not have mentioned he was gay and let the brunette believe, he hit on her. Then again, in this case Sara would never agree to work for him.

"Do you have an idea when you're back? Or will we meet at the dinner?" Sara asked when they were on their way back to the department.

"I finish at five and come home. You told them six-thirty, right?"

"Yes. We can walk there from your place. After you fed Jenny."

"She doesn't touch the food when I give it to her."

"We teach her it's okay when you prepare her food. If anything happens to me, like when I have to go to hospital for a few days, she needs to eat."

"How about we make sure you don't have to go to hospital because Jenny and I would miss you so much, we'd both stop eating and sit with sad eyes around, waiting for you to come back."

"You're so cute." Sara smiled. "Be careful or I kiss you on the open road, ruin your reputation."

"When my reputation is I'm your girlfriend, I want this reputation. There's nothing to be ashamed of when you're with the sexiest woman in town."

"Suck it up, Sofia."

"I'd rather suck something else."

"What a shame Patrick is married; to a man. I still can't believe it. He doesn't look gay."

"You had sex with me, do we look gay?"

Sara stopped and looked at Sofia. "There might be a hint...ouch."

"Don't start with stupid prejudice. Patrick and Christian don't fit into this stupid stereotype picture the media build. Neither do we."

"Let's see if our former colleagues see the change in our relationship."

"Did they answer yet?"

"No. I send you a text when I get answers." The brunette stopped in front of the police department. "We see you later, stay safe, deputy chief."

"You too, my dear, Jenny, take care of Sara!" Sofia kissed the brunette on her cheek. It was a shame she had to go back to work, there were many things she'd rather do - with Sara.

At five p.m. on the dot Sofia had left her office and drove home, the speed limit more as a suggestion. When she was stopped, she would say she was working a case...a case of missing her lover. Besides, no officer would give her a ticket when he saw, who he stopped.

"Did you fly back home?" Sara wondered when Sofia came into her condo.

"Kind of." She pulled the brunette in her arms and kissed her gently. "I missed you."

"I missed you too." Sara kissed the throat of her lover. "To be honest, I don't feel like going out for dinner, I feel like staying home with you. Skip the dinner and go straight to dessert."

"Sounds like a great idea." Sofia let her hands slip under Sara's shirt. Her back felt so good, her skin was like velvet.

"Unfortunately they wait for us and when we don't show up, they'll come here, ring the bell and ruin all the romance. But I did decide something this afternoon." Sara's hands got under Sofia's shirt, playing with the bra. Temptations, temptations. So easily to give in, so hard to resist.

"What?" The blonde knew, when they would go on like this, they would be seriously late for dinner. Or don't go at all.

"I'll stay in Vegas. For a longer period of time."

"Really?"

"Yes. I came here to be with you and with that I don't mean for a week or a month." Sara paused, smiled a little bit. "Are you ready for a commitment?"

"After less than two days?" A time you barely thought of being a couple usually, leave alone think about commitments. "Yes." She was ready for anything, that kept Sara in town, close to her. Right now, she'd marry her right away if that kept the brunette with her, kept her in her bed every night.

"Okay, then I stay."

"Here with me?" Why not go for everything?

"You want the real deal? The full commitment?" Sara cocked her head.

"All or nothing, we're not teenagers and you know, when it works out, we can look for a bigger place, when it doesn't work out, we don't have to worry who gets the condo, who moves out."

"All right, you're all in for the real deal." Sara kissed her lover. Why waste time? They wasted enough time and, like Sofia said, they weren't teenagers anymore. Nobody could tell them to live in separate apartments, when they wanted to be together, their wish was the command.

"In this case I can take back the two pairs of handcuffs I got from the department today. The plan was to cuff you to me bed to make sure, you stay with me."

"You're so kinky, all you want is bondage sex."

"Actually, I like it when your hands are all over my body." Like they were now.

"I like them all over your body too. Unfortunately, we can't get deeper into this topic, you need to feed Jenny and then we have to go. Keep all your ideas, where your and my hands can be in mind, we'll work with these ideas later. When it's time for dessert."

"Why did we decide to ask them to meet us for dinner?"

"Because when I ran into one of them and tell them, I stay with you, have been here for a while, they'd be pissed; for a good reason. I wasn't fair when I left, at least I can be fair now that I'm back. And stay. With you."

"I like the sound of that. You stay with me. My baby stays with me."

"Dirty Dancing?"

"Yes. I want a movie night with you, watch all the sappy girly movies."

"You want to scare me away?"

"No, I want you in my arms." Sofia got Jenny's food can. "How much does she get?"

"Four spoons of the can food and two hands full of the dried food."

"All right." The blonde prepared the food while the Border Collie watched her interested. When Sofia put the bowl down and stepped aside, Jenny continued to watch her. "You can eat dinner now, Jenny." Nothing happened.

"Jenny." Sara got the attention of her dog. "When Sofia gives you food, you can eat it. Go, have dinner." The dog didn't need another invitation.

"I'm not sure she understands every word." Sofia doubted.

"She doesn't. We'll have to repeat this, then she'll understand it's okay. My baby is a smart girl, but she's not a human, she doesn't understand every word I say. What about Tiger?"

"Mister Mountain?" Sofia chuckled. Her brave cat, who behaved like he was the king of the condo, had vanished in her bedroom and lived most times on the wardrobe or under the bed. He did eat, his bowl was empty, but Sofia was sure, he did it when Jenny was out of the condo. "He'll be fine. We have to give him some time." At one point her little macho would be a man again and face the danger.

"What will we tell them when they asked why you stay with me?" A good question, Sara and Sofia had never been close or friends, when they told their old colleagues, the brunette lived the blonde now, it would sound strange. It was more likely Sara would be with Greg, he was her friend, like a brother.

"The truth?" The brunette offered. "If you're okay with that."

"I am." In this case the truth was better than any lie or fiction.

"Good. Lies complicate your life and we have no reason to lie. When they have a problem with our love, they're free not to meet us anymore. I'm not willing to make compromises on us, nor am I willing to act like we do something wrong."

"We don't." Sofia smiled and pulled Jenny closer to herself. In order to make the Border Collie understand, she was responsible for her too, she'd do most of the dog duties from now on.

"Good. I've been through a hidden relationship, it's nothing I want again." Maybe it was a reason why she kind of rushed into this relationship? With Grissom, she was kind of put in hold for five years, then had to hide their love and relationship, which was a hard work and not what she wanted. This time she wanted to enjoy it right from the start, they had lost four months because she was in Idaho and Sofia here, Sara didn't want to add another day to it.

"Did you tell him you are here?" Sofia couldn't deny a sting in her heart when Sara talked about Grissom and their relationship, even when it was more a negative comment than a good one.

"No, I didn't. Isn't he away anyway?"

"As far as I know, but I didn't keep in touch with him and I don't really talk about him when I meet your former colleagues." Which was seldom since she was a deputy chief. Crime scenes weren't her daily destination anymore.

"Somehow I've got the feeling we'll find out soon." Sara opened the door to the dinner for Sofia. "It doesn't matter where he is, all that matters is, you and I are together."

"I'm glad you think so too...and not surprised Greg is already here." The blonde grinned when she saw how the young CSI jump up as soon as he saw Sara. All over his face was a huge smile and it surprised her, he didn't let out a scream of joy. Who could blame him for it? Sofia had felt like that too when she saw the brunette waiting for her.

"Sara!" He pulled her in her arms and held her tight. "You're really here! I was afraid it was a prank."

"No, no prank, no illusion, it's really me." Sara laughed. "How are you?"

"I'm fine, more than fine now that you're here."

"Oh Greg."

"What?" He smirked before he turned his attention to Sofia. "A hello to you too, deputy chief Curtis."

"CSI Sanders, how are you doing?" She hugged him.

"I'm fine. Is the life of a deputy chief so boring that you have the time for a dog?"

"Jenny isn't my dog, she's Sara's. I'm the dog sitter."

"Okay. Did you guys meet outside? I didn't see your car, Sofia."

"We walked. Jenny needed a walk and I don't live too far away from here." Half an hour, not a distance she usually walked, but since Sara was back, most things, she usually did or didn't do, changed.

"Where are you staying, Sara?"

"With Sofia."

"Really? Wow, first you spent three weeks in Idaho together, now you come to Vegas and stay with her. Your relationship has changed."

"You have no idea." Sara laughed. Their relationship had completely changed. And when they told him and the others how much it had changed, they would be even more surprised.

Fifteen minutes later Catherine, Brass, Nick, Super Dave, Doc Robbins and even Hodges were there. Greg had insisted to sit next to Sara and Sofia had taken the other side of her lover, for obvious reasons.

"You really were a shepherd for the last years?" Catherine couldn't believe it. This didn't sound like the Sara Sidle she used to know.

"Yes."

"Unbelievable. And then Sofia takes a few weeks off and ends up at the same place you are. What a crazy coincidence."

"It did help your relationship." Nick noticed. "You don't fight anymore."

"No, we don't." Sara smiled. Maybe one day, about things like, who had to do the dishes, go shopping or vacuum the floor. Nothing compared to the bitching around, they had put up with years ago.

"And you're staying with her? Why not with me? You could have told me you come back and I had prepared my apartment for you. It's not that bad anymore." Greg complained.

"Not that bad anymore? There aren't video games parties every day anymore?" Sara teased him softly. If things had been different between her and Sofia, Greg would have been her first choice. But it was highly unlikely she had come back to Vegas without the blonde, without what she felt for her, after Sofia left.

"No!"

"It is rather unusual you're staying with Sofia." Catherine agreed.

"Depends on how you see it. I came back here to see her, because I missed her, so it makes perfect sense I'm with her." Sara sent a soft smile to her lover and took her hand. "To be honest, I don't want to be apart from her anymore, that's why I decided to stay in Vegas."

"Wait a moment." Hodges got excited. "Are you suggesting what I think you're suggesting?"

"I'm not suggesting anything, I'm saying it the way it is. I want to be with Sofia, she wants to be with me, we stay together at her place for a while and when it works out the way we hope, we'll look for a bigger place."

"Wow." Greg stared at her. "You and Sofia...? Really?"

"Yes."

"Wow."

"I can't believe it." Catherine said. "It sounds...wrong."

"Believe me, it feels absolutely right." Sofia assured her. Most of the time she had been quiet, it was Sara's evening. Now the topic was important to both of them. "I never missed somebody the way I missed Sara after I left."

"I never wanted to come back to Las Vegas, for many reasons, but I knew, that meant, I had no chance to be with Sofia. So I decided to give Sin City another try."

"Will you come back to the lab?" Greg was excited, he could be working with Sara again. All she had to do was come back to the lab and they'd be together again. It made him almost forget about the pain when she left, how hurt he had been and how much he missed her. She was back and she wanted to stay. Where else would she work if not with him?

"Ecklie made me an offer today, he saw me yesterday when I went to the department to let Sofia know, I'm back in town. She had no idea I came back, so it was a surprise to her too. He told me to see him this noon, we talked, he offered me my old job back, I told him, I'll think about it."

"And? Will you take the offer. Please!"

"You know Grissom isn't working at the lab anymore?" Brass asked.

"Yes, I know." Ecklie had told her, had made it clear, she could work the graveyard shift again, now that Grissom was gone and they obviously weren't together anymore. But her former boyfriend wasn't the reason why she came back and it didn't matter where he was or worked for her decision.

"He works at the university. You didn't tell him you're back?"

"No, I had no idea where he is and I was not sure if it's a good idea to see him. Tonight." Or at all. Sometimes when you close a chapter it was best not to go back to it.

"When you stay here, you might run into him."

"Well, you can let him know I'm back, the two of you are still in contact, I assume?"

"Yes we are."

"Will you come back to us?" Greg asked, more interested in if he had Sara back at the lab soon.

"No. I appreciated the offer Ecklie made, but I won't come back. I had enough violence and death. When I live in Vegas, it will be a part of my life, I'm aware of that, but I don't want to be involved with it, the way I am when I work as a CSI."

These were news to Sofia too. So far Sara had told her she decided to stay, but not what her decision about the job was.

"You won't come back to us?" Greg was obviously disappointed.

"No, but it doesn't mean we can't meet, Greggo. I'll be here in town."

"Do you have an idea what else you want to do?" Doc Robbins asked.

"Yes. A friend of Sofia made me a nice offer today, I can work at the Premium Gambling. He wants Jenny to check the casino and hotel for explosives, make sure, his guests and his casino are safe." Her dog lifted her head when she heard her name.

"The Premium Gambling? That's a Christian Devine casino." Cath said. She was still interested in the life in and around casinos, even after her father died.

"I thought his name is Patrick?" Sara wondered and looked at Sofia.

"Pat manages the place, he runs it, Chris owns it." The blonde explained.

"You know them?"

"We work out in the same gym."

"They're both very attractive."

"And very much married to each other." Sofia smiled. "You know them too?"

"I tried to get to know them better, unfortunately that didn't work out because, like you said, they're married to each other. A shame. My dad introduced me to Christian Devine before he owned a casino. His family is quite wealthy, they own two smaller casino off The Strip and the new big one right at the border to California. Do you think you'll enjoy this kind of work, Sara?"

"I'll see. It sounds interesting and is something different to all my other jobs, I had so far."

"You are such a great CSI, my master, how can you throw your talent away?" Greg complained. "We could really need you." He needed her.

"You mean, you need me?"

"Yes."

"Oh Greg." Sara kissed his cheek and hugged him. "I've no idea which hours I have to work, but we can meet here for breakfast or dinner. Or you come over and visit me. When you leave your Playstation alone, you can join Jenny and me for walks."

"Don't you take Sofia with you?"

"The last time I checked hiking trails weren't restricted to two person and no, you're not interrupting or are in our way."

"Will you visit us in the lab?"

"Of course and in case a crime happens, I'll call you and stay with you. Just to make sure you don't overlook important evidence because you're busy checking out hot girls or cars."

"Why would I check out a woman when you're around?"

"Morgan." Cath answered dryly.

"Who is Morgan?" Sara asked.

"Ecklie's daughter and our Greg is interested."

Right, Sofia mentioned something like that when she was in Idaho. Sara had to meet this woman, she sounded interesting and she wanted to know, if her Greggo really was in love with her.

"She's not like him, she's nice. We work together."

"Which you'd like to change. Or add a private relationship to it."

"Work relationships end bad, save yourself from the pain." Hodges advised. "I've been through this and I've seen Sara leave."

"You only want to date Morgan yourself." Greg accused.

"Her father dates my mother, she might end up being my step sister."

"Ecklie and your mother?" Sara looked at Sofia. Her lover didn't mention the whole graveyard shift was going to be related or involved with each other. What was this? A kind of a soap opera? When she heard those things she was sure, her decision not to go back to the crime lab was the right decision.

"That was fun and very interesting." Sara took Sofia's hand. Instead of taking Brass's offer of a lift back home, they walked back, Jenny's leash in the blonde's hand and the brunette's arm around the waist of the blonde.

"You broke Greg's heart. Again."

"What can I say? Your sexy friend made me an offer I couldn't refuse."

"So you think Pat is sexy?"

"Absolutely. If I weren't head over heels in love with you, I'd fall for him."

"You're not going to work for him!"

"Aww, you're jealous, cute."

"Did you tell him?"

"No, I don't have his number, you are the sexy blonde, who was pulled into his arms and kissed on the lips, I'm sure you have his number."

"Who's the jealous one?" Sofia asked sweetly.

"He kissed you on your lips in front of my eyes."

"He is a good kisser."

"Do you want to end up in my book of life as my shortest relationship?"

"You write the length of your relationships down?" The blonde asked amused. If that was true, she wanted to have a look into this book and see, how long Sara's relationships lasted in the past.

"Bitch."

"For you I can be a bitch, yes." The blonde kissed her lover. "I write Patrick's number down for you, you can call him tomorrow. Or you go to the Premium Gambling and tell him face to face."

"I don't have an appointment."

"He'll have five minutes for you, he is waiting for your answer."

"Jenny needs special training."

"I'm sure he'll take care of that. And I'm quite sure you'll work the day shift."

"How comes?"

"Pat knows I work from eight to five, he knows I want you around, he won't give you a shift, that will make you work when I'm at home. He knows I want the nights for us. No graveyard shift for you, you have to be back home on time to be with your girlfriend. Otherwise he'll be in trouble. Sexy looking friend or not, I kick his butt when he does anything, that gets you away from me."

"Our old shift almost fell off the bench when they heard about us." Sara laughed. "For some reasons they had problems picturing us as a couple." What a surprise, with their shared past.

"Might be because of the way you treated me a few years ago."

"Just because you're a blonde it doesn't mean everybody has to like you."

"Greg likes Morgan and she's a blonde." Not to mention this short affair he had with a killer, she was everything but a blonde and she wasn't like Sara. Ellen, or what her name was, was not like any of them. Which was, in the end, good because they didn't want to be killers.

"I'm sure if I wanted him, I could have him." Sara grinned widely.

"You don't want him, you want me."

"Do I?"

"Yes!" Sofia bopped Sara and pushed her into the elevator. "Don't get yourself in trouble."

"Are you threatening me with your cuffs?"

"A good idea, a very good idea." A helpless Sara, when the brunette couldn't control her smart mouth, the blonde could show her how punishment could look like.

"All talk no action."

"Careful Sidle, you're on thin ice."

"You're a pen pusher, you're no threat."

The blonde eyed the brunette and opened the door to her condo. She let Jenny off the leash, who walked straight into the kitchen to her water bowl.

"I really..." Sara stopped and gasped for air when Sofia's lips hit her pulse point and sucked on it. A moan escaped from her. This was an attack she didn't see coming.

"Dessert time." The blonde got her hands under the shirt of the brunette, pushed the bra up and massaged the nipples while her lips still sucked the soft skin of Sara's throat. The moment she had been waiting for all evening. No all day long.

"I've been waiting for dessert since...breakfast." Sara got hands under Sofia's shirt and let them run up and down. It felt so good.

"The whole time I hoped they were called in early, I wanted you so badly."

"Really?" Sara's hands opened the jeans of the blonde and sipped right between her tights. The heat and wetness told her, Sofia indeed had been waiting for this moment. The moans from the blonde were more evidence. Within seconds Sofia's hands were between Sara's tights, pushing her lover closer to the wall so they had some support. Their lips met and hot and furious kisses attacked the lips, while the finger dug deeper into the other woman, increasing pressure and speed, so that they carried each other over the edge within seconds.

Talking about a quick dessert.

III

When Sofia came home she found Tiger on his favorite place, her armchair, in the sun. Sara and Jenny weren't here, the brunette had sent her a text, she'd be back any second, only went out for a walk with her dog.

"Hey Tiger, are you back in control?" She sat on the floor and stroke the black fur of her cat. He purred and turned so she could reach his belly. "Your majesty likes the attention. I'm sorry I didn't give you a lot of attention the last two days. Sara's return...somehow changed my life out of the blue. Well, yours too, you have to live with a queen in the condo, Jenny will stay and it would be easier when the two of you get along. She's not bad, although I'm sure she doesn't like me too much, I take the attention of her owner away. Kind of what Sara does with me. That makes Jenny and you partners in crime."

Sofia wasn't sure the little meow meant she was right or he told her, she was nuts. Both was possible, the look he gave her was one, you gave a stupid little child. So it was the nuts comment.

The front door was opened and Tiger got back in his seating position, his attention to the door. Seconds later Jenny and Sara entered the living room. When Tiger saw the dog, he didn't move, only starred at her.

"Hey."

"Hi...wow, he stays."

"Tiger remembered he's the king and he has to man up."

"Jenny, sit." Sara ordered and her dog sat down, looking at the cat. "I could tell her to go to Tiger, but he might slap her."

"It will be better when he goes to her. He doesn't hide under the bed or on the cabinet, it's a start. We have to give them a little bit more time. Remember how much time we needed to get along?" The blonde grinned. They acted quite familiar to the car and the dog.

"You want to wait eight years until they like each other?"

"They are animals, they're smarter than humans." Sofia got up, pulled Sara in her arms and kissed her. She had been waiting for this moment the whole day. Back with her lover. "I feel like canceling my gym appointment."

"Don't. I won't go anywhere and you shouldn't cancel all your social appointments because of me."

Sofia couldn't think of a better reason to cancel everything than being here with Sara. Who wanted to sweat on a treadmill when you could get all sweaty with Sara in bed? That was a much more fun workout. "Will you pick me up at seven thirty?"

"Need somebody to wash your back?"

"If you were in the shower with me, we'd do a lot of things. Washing my back wouldn't be one of them."

"Probably not." Sara laid her head on Sofia's shoulder. "Are we rushing into something?"

"We are definitely on a fast track, but as long as we don't run to the next drive through wedding chapel we're fine." At least that was what Sofia told herself. Yes, they rushed, they moved in after one night, they told the world about them and...it was not like the other relationships the blonde had before. But the other relationships ended, this one wasn't supposed to end.

"Maybe next week."

"Let's keep this in mind for New Years Eve. Make it a special date for a special day."

"Did you propose?"

"No! I'm crazy in love, but not that crazy in my head." Not that crazy at least.

"Close to."

"Bitch!" Sofia bopped her lover. "I go and get my stuff for the gym. We can have a little snack afterwards with Chris and Pat."

"Are you sure we can leave Tiger and Jenny alone?"

"Sure, she won't be pregnant when we're back, Tiger is a gentleman." And neutered.

Sara laughed. Her girlfriend was crazy in her head. The time Sofia was at the gym, she would try to make Jenny befriend Tiger. Usually it was possible to have a cat and a dog live together in harmony, it only took some time when they both were adults and not a puppy and a kitten. Luckily they had this time and today was the first day, Sara would sit down and try to explain to them, they were all on the same side.

Being with Sofia meant get to know her friends. Sara had never been somebody, who wanted a lot of people around her, she socialized mostly with her colleagues. It was hard to have friends when you worked as a CSI, were on call almost every day, which meant, you never knew, if you made it to a party or an appointment. From what she knew it was similar when you were the police deputy chief. Sofia got her burn out for a reason and Sara was glad, her girlfriend managed to come home on time the last few days. Not only for her own sake, also for Sofia's sake. The gym had been a place, where the blonde could unwind after work, it was important she kept this place. Somehow Sofia became friendly with Patrick and Christian due to their mutual time at the gym, why let her make miss out an appointment with them? Of course she wanted to be with her, loved their time alone, but it was important to have other people in your life too. If she had have somebody close a few years ago, maybe she had never left Las Vegas.

At seven-thirty on the dot Sofia came out of the building, Patrick behind her. Next to him was a man, who looked like he just jumped out of an advertisement for a surfboard. Tall, the right amount of muscles, longish blonde hair, blue eyes and a killer smile. When Patrick was sexy, this man was über-sexy. It had to be Christian, the even more gorgeous husband of her future boss. Or was Christian her boss? As he was the one, who owned the casino.

"Hey." Sofia kissed Sara softly.

"Hey yourself. Are you all worked out?"

"I kept some energy for out walk back home."

"She also kept some energy for later." Pat grinned. "Her workout program was sissy, I've seen her doing much better."

"A smart woman saves her energy for important tasks." Sara defended her lover.

"Exactly. Honey, that's Chris. Pat's hubby and your future boss. You're better nice to her, Chris, or I start to investigate you and your family very closely."

"I'm always nice." Chris shot a smile at Sara and offered his hand. "Hey. I'm glad you accepted our offer, we need good people to run a good hotel and casino. Our guests are supposed to feel safe from any threat."

"How do you explain them the gang tattoo of your husband? The La Calle Roja are not known for being very friendly and sensitive?" Why not point out the obviously? Sara had seen the tattoo on Patrick's shoulder and she knew it. During her work as a CSI, she had come along a couple of crime scenes, bodies and perpetrators with this tattoo.

"Straight forward, I like that." Chris laughed. "It's his past, I don't blame him for what he did as a child and teenager, what is important to me, is what kind of man is he now."

"I left the gang when I met Chris. They wouldn't have agreed with my sexuality anyway."

"Since when are you together?"

"Sixteen years. We met when Chris was twenty and I was twenty-one. We're married for five years."

"Wow. A long time."

"When you found the right one, there is no reason to leave him. No matter what your friends and family say. To be honest with you, my family is not happy about my marriage and the relationship between them and us is complicated. When somebody approaches you and tells

you, he or she a member of my family, don't hesitate to call me and let me confirm whatever they tell you. Or tell you how it really is. Don't take their word for granted."

"I only take your or Patrick's word for granted, you own the place, he's the manager."

"Perfect. Now, how about we get some dinner? I'm starving."

"You always starve." Patrick mocked his husband. "Where is your dog, Sara?"

"At home, Jenny and Tiger become friends...at least it's what I told them to do before I left."

"We could have a snack at Goldies." Chris suggested.

"A snack at Goldies costs as much as a full dinner for four at any casino." Sofia disagreed.

"You and Sara are invited, we need to celebrate her new job" Patrick said. "Sara, when you can make Sofia quit her job and work for us, you get a very, very generous bonus payment."

"I'm not sure I want to work with her, at work I don't want to argue nor fight because she's always wrong and I'm always right."

"Hey!"

The men laughed. "You have a good relationship." Pat said.

"Yeah, for a famous person, you're pretty down to earth, Sara."

"Why am I a famous person?"

"The way Sofia talked about you, like you were a famous star. It was so obvious she had a crush on you, but no matter what we told her, she didn't quit her job to be with you. We tried, we really did. Her comment was: she doesn't feel the same, she doesn't care where I am."

"Really?" Sara cocked her head.

"Don't listen to them, they're crazy." Sofia grumbled. She wasn't sure if she wanted to vanish somewhere or slap her friends. These old chatterboxes, couldn't they keep quiet about their conversations? Sara didn't have to know how much Sofia suffered, how much she whined and how much she missed her.

"I know you missed me, Sofia."

"So? You missed me too. You came here because of me."

"I did. And I'm sure if you had known where I was, you had come to see me too."

How to argue about this? Sara was absolutely right, if Sofia had known where she was, all her weekends she had spent in Idaho to be with Sara, even when it was for only a day. You do crazy things when you're in love and Sofia was in love.

The place Chris took them was ridiculous expensive, but when you didn't have to think about money, you didn't give the prize a second thought. Sara ordered a small salad and a white wine, Sofia a chicken salad and a beer.

"Do you want to come along tomorrow noon to sign your contract?" Pat asked. "You can take Jenny, I clear her with security. Also, I will have a look for a course for her, she needs to learn about the explosives. Shall I give you a list of dates, when these courses start?"

"Just sign us up for the first one, you want us on duty ASAP and I don't have anything to do."

"You have a girlfriend to look after."

"She'll be fine."

"Can you write in her contract she has to be nice to me otherwise she gets fired?" Sofia asked.

"No. We need her. She's our best instrument to get you."

"Why do you want her?" Sara asked. "And what for?"

"Because she's the best and we need her for our security."

"You have a head of security, I helped you choose one." Sofia disagreed with Pat.

"He's the second choice and when we open our second baby, we need a sheriff."

"Your second baby?" Sara asked irritated.

"The casino is our baby, it's our first project together. When it's open and we see it's a success, we want to open another player's heaven. It won't be a casino, it will be a little gated community, with it's own lake, supermarket, restaurant, disco everything else the rich and famous need." Patrick explained.

"I bought some land east of Las Vegas." Chris continued. "My construction workers are building five dozen small villas at the moment, all around an artificial lake, that gets its water from Lake Mead. This village is secured from the outside with a high wall and has its own life. Like Pat said, there'll be a supermarket, selling all the exclusive things, rich people need, there'll be a boutique, a disco and restaurants and bar. The highlight is a bar in the middle of the lake, where you can have a cocktail and gamble. Around the lake are slots, tables and wheels. Everything a gambler needs and when you look to the right or left, he sees a lake.

Which also means, the children can play and swim while the parents gamble, shop or have a manicure. We'll offer professional babysitter service, dog sitter and pick-up service from the airport. When your family demands some time, you can get a boat, cruise the lake and have wireless internet to our online casino, so you can place your bets while you check your "What's App" messages. Of course the access is limited to our service, you won't reach any other side without paying a high fee for it.

Our little village will have high end security and for that we need a skilled and talented person, to be in charge of everything. We thought about a sexy blonde, who is currently making pity money as a deputy chief and would look much better as the boss of everything, making double the money and have access to an amazing villa on Bora Bora."

"A villa on Bora Bora?" Sara asked.

"Yes, we have one there and when Sofia is the head of our security in the village, she can use her four weeks of vacation to go there."

"I smell blackmailing." The blonde said. Worse, she also felt how it might work out. A villa on Bora Bora.

"I smell a dream vacation, we are never able to afford ourselves." Sara sighed.

"Are you saying I'm supposed to quit my job and take their offer?"

"No...no...or...no. It's your decision and we don't know if people want to stay in this village. Far away from The Strip, from all the other casinos."

"We almost have you, Sara." Pat laughed. "You can go to Bora Bora even when Sofia decides to stay with LVDP. She's our friend, we don't blackmail our friends."

"Good."

"Will you take me or Greg?" Sofia chuckled.

"Who is Greg?"

"Her former colleague, who is heart-broken because she decided not to come back and work with him." And is in love with me and not with him.

"Ah, CSI Sanders." Pat said.

"You know him?" Sara was surprised.

"Honey, before I offer somebody a job, I check this person. Her life, her family, her former work places and colleagues. It's a delicate position, I don't want anybody being in charge for the casino and the guests, I want the best and reliable people. I don't care about a stolen candy bar as a child or a joyride with a stranger's car when you were sixteen, I want to know if you or anybody, you were or are close to, is involved in terrorism, organized crime or a religious group, that doesn't live in peace with Las Vegas and its culture."

"My family?" Sara's face turned pale. "I don't have a family. Except Sofia." She paused for a moment. When they checked as good as it sounded, they knew this wasn't the entire truth.

"And my mother."

"We offered you a job, which means, we didn't find anything, that upset us. Not even this shady police girlfriend. Are you sure she is for real? I mean, look at her, the way she looks, she's too sexy to be a cop. She might be a former model or actress, hired by the FBI or CIA for some undercover work. Or she's like this Truman guy, there are cameras following her and we're all just actors, some hired, some innocent bystanders and a delicate audience sees what we're doing every night."

"He's so... loco en la cabeza!" Sofia laughed.

"I'm not sure he doesn't have a crush on you."

"Oh, I do. She looks like Christian's sister, how could I not have a crush on her?"

"She's mine, you touch her, I know how to make a body vanish without leaving any evidence behind."

"And I'll support her if she needs some backup." Chris said. "A lovely concrete grave or concrete shoes and a dive at Lake Mead, at the deepest point of it."

"I'm glad police is around, I've got a witness. In case anything happens to me, LVPD knows at whom to look at."

"I won't do anything that might take my Sara away from me."

"Sara is above the law?"

"Sara is the law and above everything." Sofia kissed her lover and took her hand. Before she let anybody or anything get between her and Sara, a lot of things had to happen.

"Do you guys have a snack after every workout?" Sara asked when they were on their way back home.

"No, usually we work out and go home. Once or twice a week, it depends on how busy we are, we have a snack afterwards. You're welcome to join us. For the workout and or the snack."

"I pass on the workout and might join you for the snack sometimes. Depends on how busy I am."

"When you have to work too much, let me know, I've a very good relationship with your boss."

"You heard what happens when this relationship gets too good."

"I like it when you're jealous, that's so sexy." Sofia purred.

"Don't look at me like I'm your prey, your eyes are so full of lust, it looks like you want to jump me here on the street."

"It's exactly what I want."

"Push the thought aside, we're in public, your libido has to wait until we're home."

"Your eyes are the same, for your information, Sara Sunshine."

"Who can blame me? Even a gay man, who is married to his husbands for years, wants you."

"Consider yourself as lucky that I want you." Sofia got her arm around Sara's waist and kissed her cheek. "I could tell you in which ways I want you first. It will pass time until we're home and it..." Her cell phone rang. Not any ring tone, it was Animal of the Muppets and he sang 'Mama!' in style of Queen's Bohemian Rhapsody. Sara didn't have to be CSI or cop to know, who called her lover.

"Bad, bad timing." The blonde grumbled. "Hey mom."

"Where are you?"

"On my way home. Why?"

"I tried to call you at home."

"I was at the gym and had a snack afterwards. Did anything happen?"

"No, I call because you never call and to tell you, your father and I want to see you tomorrow."

"Why?" To say the voice of the blonde was suspicious was an understatement. Apparently spontaneous invitations was not what captain Curtis usually did.

"I met Paul, you remember him? Captain in Boulders, he got divorced a few months ago and I think it would be great, when the two of you met and have dinner together. You have a lot in common..."

"Mo-om! Don't." Sofia knew it. It had to be a set-up dinner date. Not the first her parents planned and wanted her to attend like it was the best event of the year. She hated those dates and she hated most of the guys, her mother picked for her. They all were a perfect match for

when the captain told her about them, when she met them in person, most of them were nightmares come true.

"Don't what? Don't interfere with my life? Somebody has to take care of your life, you are unable to do so, you don't get younger and the last time you had a serious relationship is years ago. I'm aware you have your affairs, you're not a saint, but you need a man by your side, you don't want to grow old and find yourself alone."

"Mom..."

"No, your father and I won't watch you end up lonely. When you don't take care of yourself, we will."

"Could I end a sentence, please?"

"Not if you want to give me a million bullshit reasons why you can't meet Paul."

"How about one good one?"

"Like?"

"I'm involved, I am in a serious relationship." No need for Paul, yes she remembered him from Boulder, he was okay, not a dream, but you could work with him. Work, nothing else. He was not the kind of guy the blonde wanted to spend the rest of her life with; or a dinner date.

"Why did you not tell us?"

"Because you never let me talk when you call. Whenever I try to say something, you interrupt me and tell me what to do or not to do."

"Who is it? Do we know him?"

Him? There was no him in her life. "Yes, you know each other from work."

"A cop? From Vegas? Perfect. In this case plans changed. Your father and I will be at your place for dinner tomorrow evening. Seven sharp. Make sure your boyfriend is there too, I want to meet him. No excuses, we see you tomorrow."

Before Sofia could say another word her mother had ended the call. Irritated the blonde looked at her phone. "She hung up on me."

"Captain Curtis rules the family, she doesn't care that her daughter outranks her." Sara had problems to stay serious. It had been hilarious to see, how Sofia's mother took control and Sofia had no chance to do or say anything without her mother's permission. When you wanted to meet a woman, who was naturally in charge, it was Sofia's mother. Sara knew her from crime scenes, Captain Curtis was a no-nonsense woman, who didn't accept anything else than a hundred and twenty percent and complete obedience from the officers around her. When she demanded the same from the CSIs at the scene, Sara had told her in a calm but firm matter of fact voice, she respected Captain Curtis as a police captain, but her boss was Grissom and he was the only one, she took orders from. They were both professionals, in different areas of the law enforcement, Sara didn't tell Captain Curtis how to do her job because she knew, the elderly woman knew what to do and she wanted her to have the same confidence in Sara. After this Captain Curtis and Sara had a very good work relationship. Sofia's mother appreciated women, who stood up for their rights and beliefs.

"Don't smirk like this, you're in this too. She wants to meet you." She wouldn't be in this alone, she had backup. Sara.

"She said, she wants to meet your boyfriend. How will she react when she finds out, your boyfriend is a girlfriend?"

"Worse, what if she finds out, you don't work law enforcement anymore but changed to private security?"

"That's worse?"

"Of course. You gave up law enforcement." In a cop family, that was the worst possible case. A betrayal of your job, city and country.

"Interesting."

"Is it okay to meet them tomorrow? Or is it too soon?" Sofia couldn't force Sara to meet her parents and when the brunette felt like it was too early to get this close with captain Curtis, Sofia could understand her. She wasn't sure if she was ready for that herself and it was her own mother. A woman, she knew since her birth. Maybe that was the reason why she wasn't sure if she was ready for it.

"Your mother didn't sound like she accepts anything else than a dinner together."

"And I'm asking you if you're okay with that. If not, my mother has to learn, not everything goes the way she wants it. A hard lesson, we all have to learn at one point."

"She had this experience with me at a crime scene, we've been through it." Sara grinned. "To answer your question, I'm fine with the dinner. We told our old colleagues about us, why keep it a secret from your parents?"

"Thanks." That made things easier for Sofia. "Now I want you even more."

"Luckily we're almost home because I want you too...a lot."

IV

It never appealed to Sara to be a housewife. Be at home the whole time, wait for your spouse to come home and listen to all the exciting news from the office, while your own day has been filled with things like shopping, mopping the floor and taking the dog out for a walk, where you met other housewives and chatted about your spouse's work and children. Today she felt a little bit like one of these housewives, she had taken Jenny out for a few walks, went shopping, prepared dinner and met somebody, she knew from the time, she worked here as a CSI. The only difference to the ordinary housewife life was, she had talked to her future boss. Pat found a course for Jenny, that started next week. From Monday on, Sara and Jenny would go there and learn everything they needed to know about finding explosives and how to react when your dog found some (don't try to handle it yourself, call the bomb squat).

Sofia was back home on time, obviously nervous.

"Are you afraid of your own parents?" Sara mocked her lover.

"No! I only...once they realize we're a couple they come to the conclusion, there won't be any grandchildren."

"Highly unlikely we'll have children, yes. Unless we adopt some. Which is a huge step and not a thing we should discuss at this point of our relationship. When we rush into things, it affects us, when a child is involved, we're responsible for it, when something happens, when our relationship doesn't work out, there'll be another person, an innocent child, who suffers too."

"Exactly. Life is complicated when parents are involved."

"Don't let the Captain hear that." Sara chuckled.

Sofia pulled Sara in her arms and kissed her softly. "Is it really okay for you to meet my parents? After less than a week together?"

"I met your mother before and from what you told me, she's the scary one. This is a fast relationship, why not meet your parents early? This way we have the first meeting out of the way and can relax. And you don't get invited to dinner dates anymore."

"If my mother acts like a petty tyrant, I kick her out of the house."

"Are you looking for trouble?"

"Of course I am, that's why I'm with you. Sara Sidle means trouble. It has always been this way." Sofia jumped aside so Sara's punch didn't hit her. She loved mocking her girlfriend, it was a fun part of their relationship. "What I wanted to ask you, now that you cooked dinner for my parents and me, will you prepare dinner every day? I could get you an apron and you wear nothing else than the apron when I come home. You can also hold it in your hands, it doesn't matter as long as you have nothing else on."

"You'd like that, wouldn't you?"

"A lot!"

"You'd be so horny every day on your way home, you'd break every speed limit. Forget it, there won't be a private peep show for you."

"Aww, how mean." The blonde pulled the brunette back into her arms, snuggled deep into hers. "I'm so glad you're here. Did I tell you that?"

"A couple of times. I'm really glad you want me here. If I had come here and you would have reacted like you didn't care, it had hurt me. Broke my heart and in that moment, I would have had no idea where to go. I came back for you."

"The greatest gift somebody ever gave me." They shared another kiss, that was broken by the doorbell. "Their timing sucks."

"Positive thinking, my dear."

"When I think of you, it can't get more positive. I want to stay in your arms and not open the door."

"All right. Jenny, open the door, please."

The Border Collie got up and went to the door.

"How handy, we've got a butler."

"Of course, we have a king, a king needs a servant...unless he accepts her as the queen and takes the stupid humans as servants. They are better in opening cans anyway."

Sofia laughed. Yes, she was Tiger's slave. At least the way he looked at her sometimes, made her believe that.

"Let's go and greet my parents." The blonde walked to her front door, where her parents stood, petting Jenny.

"Hey Honey, we had no idea you bought a dog."

"I didn't. Hi." Sofia hugged and kissed her parents. "Jenny is Sara's dog."

"Hello." Sara smiled.

"Miss Sidle, you are back in town? What a lovely surprise."

"Captain, it's good to see you again."

"Do us all a favor, call her Marie. Otherwise she falls into her role as a police captain and orders us around the whole evening." Sofia's father said. "I'm Mark by the way."

"All right, it's Sara."

"We had no idea this is a dinner party."

"Well, after you invited yourselves, mother, it could be a dinner party. Get into the kitchen, dinner is ready."

"Don't tell me you cooked."

"I didn't, Sara did."

"Really? How kind of you."

"It's the least thing I can do."

"Where is your boyfriend?" Marie asked when she entered the empty kitchen. "Don't tell me he won't come. Any excuse you come up with, we won't believe it."

"You just have to love them." Sofia sighed, rolled her eyes and stepped next to Sara. "To your information, mother, there won't be an excuse and there won't be a boyfriend."

"You lied to us?"

"Actually, I never said I have a boyfriend..."

"You said..."

"I said, stop interrupting me all the time, mother, I said I have a partner, which I do. The lovely lady standing next to me. Sara and I are involved and no, it's not a joke, it's a serious relationship. You better get used to it, or even better, like it, or it's all your problem, not mine. She makes me very happy, I missed her like hell and I'm the happiest woman on earth since she came back to Vegas, which she did to be with me. Over and out."

For a few seconds her parents looked at Sofia like she was crazy. "Are you serious?" Her father asked.

"Yes dad."

"Sara?"

"She's telling the truth. I came back because of her. When we met in Idaho in summer, something happened between us. I have no idea what it was, I only knew, I missed her, even when she left for only one day to get new supplies. When she left to go back to Vegas, I felt devastated. Sofia and I had not an easy nor nice relationship when we worked here together, but when we met again...I knew I had to come back to be with her."

"Okay."

"Okay? That's a rather short answer, mother."

"Well, it's your life, when Sara makes you happy, we're fine with that. I did want a cop for you, a CSI is law enforcement too."

"Oh boy, here we go, let's break her heart." Sofia grinned. "Sara won't work as a CSI anymore."

"Not? What will you do?"

"I got a job offer from a casino, security. Together with my dog, Jenny."

"A casino?"

"The Premium Gambling."

The mood of the captain changed visible, anger turned towards her daughter. "That was your idea, Sofia, don't deny it. I know you and this criminal are friends."

"When you're talking about Pat, yes mom, we are friends. He's not a criminal. Anymore."

"He has a rap sheet..."

"From the time when he was younger, that was years ago. People can change and shouldn't be blamed forever for the mistakes they made as a child and teenager. He didn't kill anybody."

"He assaulted people, that's worse enough. If he wasn't with this rich guy, he'd live on the streets. Or in a cell."

"You see my mother is a huge fan of Pat and Chris." Sofia sighed. She had been through this topic a couple of times.

"You didn't have friends like him when you were young. All these changes. Criminal friends, you decided to be a lesbian out of the blue..."

"I didn't decide to be a lesbian, I fell in love with Sara and I don't care about any other woman. Do you have a problem with her and me?"

"No, I...I'm only surprised."

"Good."

"Marie is not very flexible in her private life." Mark explained with a smile. "She is very flexible at work, which she has to be. At home she likes her routine. Give her a few days to get used to the fact, her beloved daughter loves a woman. And now tell me, what did you prepare for us? You made everything yourself?"

"Yes."

"Do you like cooking?"

"No, I can't stand it, I've never been good at it. But I've got the time and I knew it would mean a lot to Sofia when I do it. So please excuse me when something is not perfect, I haven't used a kitchen in a long, long time."

"I'm sure it will be fine. I see broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, steaks and brown rice. What kind of sauce did you make?"

"A béchamel sauce for the vegetables and a red wine mushroom sauce for the steak."

"Wow, very nice."

"I had help from the internet."

"They only give you an instruction, you have to do the whole work yourself."

"Don't praise before you have tried it."

"Oh Honey, you always believe your work isn't good enough - unless it comes to your CSI work, you knew you were perfect there." Sofia said and kissed Sara's cheek. Her girlfriend worked hard for their dinner, she was sure, it was perfect.

"Survived!" Sofia pulled Sara in her arms and kissed her. "We survived dinner with my parents, they weren't too bad, were they?"

"No. Your father is cute, your mom will get used to me. I hope."

"She will. You impressed both with the dinner and me too. Are you sure you don't want to do that every day for me?"

"Only in your dreams."

"Aww, in my dreams we do other things. Although, I might include the apron in my dreams. And some chocolate sauce."

"Your dreams will not come true."

"You didn't say never."

"Sex addict."

"You made me to one, I wasn't like this before."

"Uh-huh." The brunette grinned.

Sofia raised her middle finger.

"Another sex invitation. Sorry, I have some duties to fulfill. My dog needs her evening walk, you can clean the kitchen, I cooked, you wash and tidy up."

"We could share the fun."

"No, I leave the whole fun to you." Sara took Jenny's leash and immediately the dog was next to her. "We go for a little walk while Sofia and Tiger clean the chaos. When we're back, everything looks nice and clean and we can go to bed. Soon we have to go to work, the lazy life is over."

"You really want to walk without me?"

"Yes because I want you naked in bed when I come back...you have thirty minutes to clean the mess and be ready for me."

"Now you're talking." Sofia smirked. She could give the kitchen a fast clean-up and then get ready for Sara. They had to celebrate. Her parents were nice to the brunette, the dinner was perfect and they were in love. Which was actually the best reason to celebrate.

"You've got to admit, the apron can be fun." Sofia smirked. She had given the kitchen a fast clean-up, then undressed, put on the apron and went to bed. When the brunette pulled the blanket away, she found her lover dressed in an apron.

"Yes, I like the strings." When Sara had taken off the apron, she had used the strings to tie the blonde to the bed. With the hands of her lover out of the way, Sara had enjoyed some teasing and mocking before she freed Sofia's hands again because she wanted them all over her body. Where was the fun when you could only touch your lover and not be touched?

"So, you're going to wear it tomorrow for me?"

"Nope."

"Why not?"

"Because if I ever wear it, it will be a surprise. I had no idea you have a fetish."

"I do, you."

"Or the apron."

"It's a nice way to dress you up...you know, not a lot of clothes to hide your sexy body."

"How about a sexy dress?"

"When you wear one tomorrow, I'll be more than happy."

"And then you want me to strip for you?"

"Absolutely. I'd love to see that...and if you need some help with undressing, I can give you a hand or two."

"Where would you like to have your hands?"

A challenge? Sofia loved this kind of challenge. Slowly she let her hand ran down Sara's back, over her tight, back up and let it came to rest between the brunette's tights, made her take a deep breath.

"I like it there, how do you like my hand there?"

"It's...okay."

"Okay, uh-huh." Sofia moved each finger a little bit, felt the heat and the wetness. Carefully she let her index finger slipped into her lover, who moaned.

"Is this also okay?"

"A little bit better than okay."

"Only a little bit?" She let her middle finger slipped inside the brunette and started to move them both in circles. Now the moan became louder and the brunette moved closer to the blonde. Sara slipped onto the blonde, her mouth crashing on Sofia's.

"You want me to continue asking how you like what I do?"

"No, I want you to use your mouth for something better than talking; if you can think of anything else."

"I can think of a couple of things."

"Really? Then why not stop talking and show me what you have on your mind - and can do with your tongue."

Now this was a demand, Sofia more than happily would fulfill. Like some other things.

"Tiger, come here." Sofia called for her cat and it jumped from the cabinet on her shoulder. She loved it when he sat there, her mother called her a witch, but she thought, it was cute. "Let me get you a treat...or lets get us a treat. We have a meatball left, shall we share it... maybe even Jenny takes a piece of it." The last two days Sofia had been feeding the dog, who still waited for Sara to tell her, it was okay, although she was tempted to start eating right away. Soon she would understand, it was okay to take food from the blonde.

"Here is one piece for Tiger." Sofia broke off a piece of meat and fed it to her cat. "Jenny, do you want a treat too? Come here." The Border Collie watched her and sniffed at the meat when Sofia offered it to her. "Come on, you know it's okay, Sara doesn't mind and when you don't eat it, Tiger will." Jenny cocked her head, watched Sofia, Tiger, the door to the living room where Sara sat and read and sat down. "Come on, he eats it, I eat it, there is no reason why you shouldn't eat it." Jenny shook her head and lay down, her eyes moving towards the living room. She needed the approval of her owner.

"Sara, could you tell Jenny to eat the treat I offer her?"

"Jenny, it's okay." Within a second the dog sat up and wagged its tail.

"Thanks. See, it's okay." She fed the meat to the dog and gave Tiger another piece before she had a piece herself. "Again Jenny, it's okay." She held the meat in front of the dog and Jenny took it carefully out of Sofia's hand. "Good girl." She petted the head of the dog and gave one more piece to Tiger, who was surprisingly calm with the dog so close around. The last days he didn't hide, he stayed where he was when Jenny came back from her walk and he also went to his bowl. He still kept a distance between himself and the dog, sometimes, when he felt Jenny was too close to comfort, he hissed, but as the dog didn't try to get closer, they didn't fight.

"See, we can be a happy family, all we need is love and meat. Some vegetables for Sara too. Tiger, how about we go and watch some TV in bed?" They had done that often, watch a movie in bed, Tiger slept on her belly, purred. It was a great feeling to have the cat on her belly, the warmth and the knowledge, as long as Tiger was relaxed, there was no reason to be afraid or alarmed.

When she passed her front door, the bell rang.

"Oh, can Greg not wait until tomorrow? Does he miss you this much?" She mocked towards her girlfriend. Tomorrow they'd meet with Greg, as it was his and Sofia's day off. With Tiger still sitting on her shoulder, she opened the door and froze. That wasn't Greg.

"Grissom."

"Sofia." Obviously irritated by her appearance, his eyes moved up and down between her and the cat. "I'm...I've been told Sara is here."

"Yes." And she will stay here. Go away, she doesn't love you anymore, she's mine and I won't let you steal her.

"Could I talk to her?"

"If she wants to talk to you. Sara?"

"What? Don't tell me Greggo is here already, he's a day early."

"It's not Greg."

"Grissom." Sara stopped when she saw her ex fiancé.

"Hello Sara. Jim told me you're here."

"I think I leave the two of you alone." As much as Sofia hated it, she couldn't stay. Not unless Sara asked her to stay. "I'll be in the bedroom." Softly the blonde ran her hand over the shoulder of the other woman. This gesture offered more than the information, where to find her. It also told the brunette, when she needed the blonde, she was there, all she had to do is call. Or let her know right now, when she didn't want Sofia to leave.

"Thanks."

Jenny took place next to Sara, watching the new arrival.

"Why don't we go into the kitchen?"

"All right."

Sara turned, she needed the short walk to organize her thoughts and feelings. Grissom was here, he came by without telling anybody. Surprised her, surprised Sofia. Of course they had to run into each other sooner or later, Grissom worked here, when was about to work here and they had mutual friends.

"Would you like some coffee? Water?"

"No, thanks."

Sara decided, she wanted a glass of water. When she turned, Jenny had placed herself between Sara and Grissom, snarling quietly so he kept his distance and didn't get too close to her. To show her dog everything was fine, Sara caressed the hair behind the ears. It didn't fool Jenny, the Border Collie could feel how tensed Sara was, but it stopped her from snarling. For some reason, Jenny didn't seem to like Grissom. She never snarled at somebody before, unless this person threatened Sara in any way.

"Is this your dog?"

"Yes."

"She doesn't seem to be very friendly."

Jenny was a friendly dog, when she wasn't happy about somebody being close to her owner, there had to be a reason. A smart dog knew when something was wrong, but Sara didn't feel like pointing this out to him. "Grissom, why are you here?" Sara didn't want to spend all night discussing with him, he came here without an invitation. Yes, there were things they had to talk about, but he could have called her. When Brass told him she was back in town, he probably also told him, she was with Sofia now.

"The question is, why are you here? You should have come to me, our place."

"Didn't Jim tell you why I live here?"

"He said you're with Sofia. To be honest, I don't believe it, the two of you had a more than complicated relationship, how could that have changed. This much."

"I don't know." She really didn't have any idea why she and Sofia became lovers. It amazed herself, but it was, what she felt. She was in love with Sofia.

"Sara, we are engaged."

"We were." They never broke up officially, but after a few years of not living together, an engagement was over, wasn't it?

"You left me with a little note, then you come back, don't bother to tell me you're in town and I've to hear from a friend, you are with somebody else. Do you think that's fair?"

"No." But she hadn't been able to call him or see him.

"I think you should come with me and we talk these things out."

"I can't."

"Why not?"

"Like I said, I'm with Sofia."

"You really want me to believe you are in love with her?" His disbelief was obvious, he didn't believe a single word she said. "Sara, please. Get real."

"This is real although I can't explain it. When Sofia showed up in Idaho...something happened between us, I have no idea what it was, but when she left to Vegas, I missed her more than I missed anybody else before. I loved you, Grissom, I really did. Otherwise I hadn't waited five years before you let me into your life and I never planned to leave you; not the way I did and no other way. But...there were some things, that made my life bad and you couldn't help me sort those things out. You were...emotional not available enough."

"You are serious, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"Did you talk her into this?"

Sara turned and saw Sofia standing behind her. The sleeve of her jumper was in Jenny's snout, the Border Collie pulled her into the kitchen. When the blonde stood next to the brunette, the dog circled them.

"Grissom, you know Sara, do you think you can talk her into a relationship?" Sofia's fingers linked with Sara's. She could feel how tensed her lover was and regretted, that she left her alone with her ex.

"Yes I know her, that's why I don't believe this is for real."

"It is." Sofia pulled her lover closer. "Maybe you should leave."

"You're throwing me out?"

"No, I ask you to leave, I think everything is done, or do you have anything else to say?" She looked at Sara, who shook her head.

"This is crazy, you are crazy. You both are." He turned and left the house.

Without words Sara pulled Sofia in her arms and held as tightly to her as she could. For a few minutes they just stood there, holding each other.

"I'm so sorry." Sara whispered.

"Don't. It's not your fault."

"He has no right to come here, say those things to you."

"He's hurt, I can understand him, I'd have acted the same way." The blonde kissed the brunette gently. "You know, there's one good thing about him showing up."

"Like what?"

"Jenny likes him even less than she likes me. Better: she made me come here to be with you, she wants me with you and him away. What a smart dog she is."

Sara had to laugh. "Of course Jenny likes you. She treated us like a flock, we had to stay together and she snarled at Grissom the first time she saw him."

"The smartest dog ever. Lassie is nothing compared to her. I have to buy her a huge bag of treats."

"You can't buy her with treats, you can buy her with making me happy."

"How handy, I plan to do nothing else."

"Good." Sara placed her head on Sofia's shoulder. "I think I don't want to read anymore."

"I don't feel like watching a movie anymore. How about we go to bed, snuggled up and be happy we have each other - and our two babies."

"Sounds like a good plan."

When Sara woke up at some point during the night, she found herself in Sofia's arms. In her sleep, the blonde held on to her so tightly, it would have been impossible for her to get out if she wanted. But the last thing she wanted now was being away from her lover, not even an inch. She needed Sofia to be around, needed to feel her skin on other woman's skin, needed to feel the breath of her lover on her neck, their feet linked together.

She knew Tiger sat on the pillow next to Sofia's head and Jenny lay in front of the bed, when Sara let her hand fall out, she could stroke the hair of her dog. Who had surprised her today. It was the first time Jenny snarled at somebody, she didn't know and who didn't cause a threat to her or Sara. It was weird. Or it was exactly, what she always thought: Jenny knew who was good for her and who wasn't. It was sad to say so, but Grissom wasn't good for her. Not now, not in the stage they were in. He was hurt, she could understand him, she would be hurt too, but she couldn't lie to him, tell him everything was fine and could continue where they've left. It was the honest thing to do, tell him, she loved Sofia. Maybe it wasn't good that he had heard about it from Brass, but she had no idea how to tell him. When she was honest to herself, she had been afraid of this moment, the moment she met Grissom.

"Stop thinking this loud." Sofia mumbled.

"I don't."

"Yes you do, I can hear the little wheels in your head spinning."

"Only a little bit." Sara turned to face Sofia. She could only see shades of the blonde's head in the darkness, but she didn't need light to find her lips. "You worry."

"Only a little bit."

"Liar."

"Are you really fine?"

"It was disturbing to see him here. I expected to run into him somewhere in the city, I never thought he'd come here, harassing you. Us. I'm sorry it happened."

"We should have known Jim tells him, they're friends. And I can understand everybody is confused about our relationship, I'm confused too. The change is big."

"Sometimes a big change is exactly what you need to be happy."

"Do you want to go back to him? Do you miss him?"

"No." Sara kissed Sofia softly. "I don't want to go back to him and I don't miss him. If I would, I had gone back to him when I came back to Las Vegas. I missed you, you are the reason why I'm back here. Not Grissom, not Greg, only you and because of you I took the job at the casino, to be with you. If I had taken Ecklie's offer, I had to work nights again, I don't want to work nights, I want to be with you every night."

"Good." Relieved the blonde relaxed a little bit. Evers since Sara came back to Vegas, since they met their old colleagues, she was afraid, her lover would turn back to her ex, leave her because she realized, Sofia was not important, it was Grissom, who she wanted, whom she loved.

"I could tell you, you don't have to worry about Grissom, about me going back to him, but it won't help you, because fear is not realistic." Sara pulled Sofia closer, kissed her eyes and cheeks. "So I'm going to show you how much you mean to me, that you're the one I'm in love with."

"In doubt I get those handcuffs back and cuff you to my bed." The blonde tried to joke.

"I like being in your hands because I trust you. With my life. You saved me before we were a couple, you proved how good you are to me. No need for cuffs, you cuffed me to you with your heart."

"Better safe than sorry." Sofia slipped onto the brunette and pinned her down. "You are mine and I won't let any old man take you away from me."

"What about a young man? Like a former lab rat?"

"I might invite him into our bed, but he won't have you to himself."

"You want a threesome?"

"No, I want you for myself, but I could live with Greg in bed with us better than with you in Grissom's bed and me here all alone."

"Both things will not happen. This body of yours is now mine and I want it for myself. Every night, every morning and every evening. And when we have the time, during the day too."

"Horny babe, you're the dream of all porno lovers. The woman, who wants to have sex all the time."

"I don't want sex with them and I don't want them to watch. And I want more than sex from you."

"Really?" Sara laughed. "That's...good. I'm relived because I want more than your body. At the moment there's a lot of lust between us, I savor it, it's exciting, highly satisfying and makes me feel loved, but I also have like a million questions and topics, I want to talk about with you."

"Really? Like what?"

"Random stuff, work stuff, stupid stuff, it doesn't matter. I love listening to your voice, I want to know what you think, about serious, stupid, funny and not important stuff because everything, that has to do with you, is important to me."

"How about we talk tomorrow?"

"We should, we talked a lot today, I'm sure you can find other things to do with your lips."
She knew her lover could, she had experienced her lips a couple of times - and it got better with every time.

"Oh Babe believe me, I know a few things I can do with my lips - and yours. We could pick up where we left the last time and see, how much further we can go."

"I'm sure we'll both come to a very good end."

Girl I live off how you make me feel
So I question all this being real
Cuz I'm not afraid to love
For the first time I'm not afraid of love
Oh this day seems made for you and me
And you showed me what life needs to be

VI

"Ma'am, I'm sorry, this is not an establishment, that allows dogs unless they're guide dogs." The security man stopped Sara right after she entered the casino. "We're also not officially open."

"They are your new colleagues, Miguel." Christian stepped out of the elevator. Immediately the security man stepped a few steps back.

"Oh, I'm sorry..."

"Not your fault, I haven't told you about them nor that they have an appointment with me. Good morning Sara, hello Jenny, how are you today?"

"We're fine, thanks."

"That's good to hear." He opened a bag and pulled a collar outside. "May I?" He asked Sara and pointed towards the Border Collie.

"Sure."

He got on his knees, took off Jenny's collar and replaced it with a new one. It was bright red and had in golden letters SECURITY written on it. "Does she accept these dog vests?"

"I think so, we never had one."

"We also have a security vest for her, when she is fine with it, she can wear it too. This way everybody will see from a distance, you are security. Although after a few days your colleagues will all know you. People with dogs get reminded better than cashier or waitresses. Now, don't you look beautiful?" He asked the dog, who answered with a loud bark. "I guess that means yes." He got up again. "I've got your keycard, it has access to all areas."

"All areas? Your office too?"

"Mine and Patrick's office when we're in the office, yes. Can I give you a tour or do you want to discover everything on your own?"

"You take the time to show me around? The boss of everything?"

"Sure."

"Do I get this special treatment because I'm Sofia's girlfriend?"

"Yes." He answered honestly. "She's my friend and when the gym here is ready, I hope I can make her come here instead of the gym, where we met. She gets her own parking space and doesn't have to share the equipment with other people."

"Except for the guest."

"Oh, the gym for the guests is ready, we'll have a private one. Pat and I will live in this casino, we want our own gym and swimming pool."

"Up on the highest floor."

"There's a rooftop swimming pool, yes. For the guests. You'll see it on our tour; like everything else."

"All right." Sara took a look around. The casino floor was filled with slot machine, currently shut down. The tables for poker, black jack, crabs, roulette and all the other games were in order, empty, no chips, no cards on them. In a corner she saw two wheel of fortune. So far it didn't look too different to other casinos. The thick red carpet swallowed your steps, there were golden ornaments on the walls. No windows, no clocks. You don't want people to know what time it is, if it was day or night, all they had to care about was their games.

"How do you expect us to search the floor? It's open twenty-four/seven I suppose."

"You and Jenny will walk around, she can get under the tables. Obviously people will be irritated the first time, they do get an information when they check-in about our high security standards and that a search dogs works here twenty-four hours a day. So when they see the two of you, they'll know who you are. If somebody gives you a hard time, call security, you don't have to worry about them, your job is to find possible danger from explosions, not worry about people in a bad temper."

"Okay. So we walk around the whole time. Are we supposed to talk to people, when ask me, what we're doing?"

"Small talk is fine, yes. Of course no details."

"Of course not. When Jenny found something, we call you or 911?"

"You call 911 and then me. I can't handle explosives, 911 will send somebody, who can."

"I like that order." Somehow she had expected him to be the first one, she had to call, so he was in control and could keep a low profile.

"You expected me to tell you, to let me know, we handle it between us and nobody has ever to find out about it?"

"Something like that, yes."

He laughed. "Sofia would find out and then I'm in trouble. I'm afraid of your girlfriend; and her mother."

"Her mother isn't your biggest fan."

"Of course not, I'm not the kind of person, she wants around her daughter, my family had some trouble with the law and captain Curtis knows about it. She is an amazing woman. I do have a little crush on Captain Curtis." He confessed.

"Not on her daughter?"

"The sexy blonde, she's more than beautiful and the two of you make an incredible couple. Her mother has some fire, that attracts me - and the fact she doesn't like Pat and me. I can't explain it. You met her?"

"Yes, a few days ago. She wasn't that thrilled about Sofia and me together. This constellation doesn't get her grandchildren."

"No, but a very happy daughter. I think I'll invite you, Sofia and her parents for a little dinner party when the casino is about to open."

"And what makes you believe Marie accepts this invitation?"

"Because it means a lot to her daughter and I want to offer her a job. Captain Curtis retires next year, I'd love to have her on board for a project. Her and her daughter."

"If I were a gambler I'd bet against you because the odds are against you."

"You don't know about the ace up on my sleeve." He blinked at her and stepped into the elevator. "All right, I don't think you want to see every room, we have three thousand, by the way. Plus fifty apartments and fifty suits and one Presidential villa."

"A villa in a casino?"

"Yes, a small one, but very...extraordinary." They stepped out of the elevator and Chris opened the next room to it. A spacious marble foyer greeted her, a huge golden mirror behind the door and an expensive carpet guided her into the living room, where a huge sofa stood in the middle, a fifty inch LCD on the wall.

"This is the standard room?"

"Yes, we have rich people, they want more upscale rooms. Each room has two bedrooms, two bathrooms, the housekeeper comes in twice a day if you want, around the clock room service. The bathrooms have a spa, you get massage in your room, you can order a bartender to mix you some cocktails here. Oh and in general, the elevator brings you only to the level, where your room is. So no strangers walking around the floor and everybody, who entered the elevator, has to scan their card, otherwise the elevator won't move."

"You have people leave their weight at reception?"

"No, but there're sensors in the elevator, that counts the amount of people. We wanted to make sure nobody gets into the elevator, rides upstairs with guests and doesn't stay in one of the rooms."

"You really want a secured place."

"Yes. People like to spend more money when they don't have to worry about anything."

"It's all about the money."

"Most times."

"Is your friendship with Sofia about money? Or any other benefits?"

"Isn't a friendship with Sofia a benefit alone?" He cocked his head. "Don't be so suspicious, Sara, I like Sofia, she is a friend, I don't plan to use her. There are no benefits from our relationship except the fact, she is my friend. Or do you have any benefits from being her lover?"

"Yes, I got this job offered."

"True." He laughed. "It happened without you knowing or asking for it, so it's something people can't use against you." He walked back to the elevator with her. Time to have a look at other rooms and all the other things in the casino and surroundings, she had to learn about.

"What are you doing?" Sara looked from her lover to the kitchen and back. Sofia was covered in something white, that was most likely flour, so was a big part of the kitchen. Even Tiger, who sat on a chair, had some white spots. There were kitchen tools everywhere, open packages of flour, sugar, cream and other ingredients.

"I'm baking."

"Pizza?" The first thing, that Sara came in mind when she thought about Sofia baking. Although, she never thought about her lover in the kitchen and preparing anything. The blonde wasn't a housewife.

"No, a cake. A black forest cake."

"The huge ones? With the cherries on top?" These cakes were massive, they looked like art and Sara had no idea, how one person could make such a thing in their own kitchen. Leave alone, how Sofia could make one.

"Yes."

"You can do that?"

"I have no idea, but I will win this war and present a cake to you."

"Why are you doing that?" Sara stepped into the room, carefully avoiding something, that looked like chocolate powder. "This has not by any chance anything to do with Grissom's appearance yesterday?" Did Sofia think she had to impress Sara? Make sure, the brunette had no reasons to go back to her ex?

"No...or a little bit...but mostly no."

"So what is the reason?" Carefully Sara pulled Sofia in her arms, cleaned the left cheek of her lover from flour with her index finger and kissed her. "You taste like chocolate."

"Chocolate is one of the ingredients, I took a sample. Quality control."

"Of course."

"After you made dinner for my parents and me, I thought I can make a cake for you and Greg. He is kind of your brother..."

"Since when?"

"Since I decided when he is like your brother, he is no competition. You wouldn't leave me for your brother."

"You're crazy."

"Crazy in love."

"Any other family members I recently got and don't know about yet?"

"No."

"Good. You didn't have to do this, but I think it's absolutely cute that you're doing it. No matter how the cake looks in the end, the thought is important. Can I give you a hand?"

"No, I have to fight this war alone. You can sit down, tell me how your time with Pat was."

"It was Chris, who showed me around." Sara let go of Sofia, walked to the table, picked Tiger up and sat him on her lap. Jenny, who lay down next to the table, watched her. The cat watched the dog, so Sara figured, as she watched Sofia, everybody was safe.

"The boss himself. Wow."

"Yes. Jenny got a new collar, a work collar."

"Do you wear a sexy uniform at work?"

"No."

"Bugger. I'd love to see you in a sexy uniform, take it off when you come home."

"You are such a cloth fetishist."

"Only because I love to undress you. How are the rooms?"

"Amazing. The cheapest room looks like a suit and the villa, they have for very special guests reminded me of a villa in a movie. For ten thousand dollar a night you can expect a little luxury, I think."

"Yes. Wow. Must be a palace. Maybe I can take you there for a night of luxury."

"I'd rather stay here and have a night of passion with you." Sara answered dryly.

"Don't make me pour the cream on you instead of the cake."

"Sorry. Not. All right, I leave you to your fight and take the tiger and the wolf with me in the living room...did you know Chris has a crush on your mother?"

"Yes." Sofia laughed. "Cute, isn't it?"

"Weird is the word I'd rather use."

"First I thought too it's weird. Now I think it's cute."

"He wants to invite your parents to a party...I doubt your mother will take this offer."

"Depends...I might invite them all four to dinner, without telling my parents Chris and Pat will be here too. Or I invite them for a dinner out and take them to their place."

"Your mother knows the Premium Gambler is owned by Chris, she won't let you trick her into it."

"Have a little faith in me."

"I have a lot of faith in you." Sara followed the movements of her lover, fascinated about the fact, Sofia made a cake for her and amazed about her own feelings, how much she wanted and loved this woman. These strong feelings still surprised her, it was a side of herself, she had to get used to.

"Can I ask you something?" Sara asked.

"Sure. Didn't we want to talk more anymore?"

"True." The brunette laughed. "How come you were single? I mean, you are a damn sexy woman, a successful woman, why are there no suitors? Why was there nobody you dated? I don't believe you had no offers."

"I had, most of them colleagues, which, in my opinion, is not a good mix. When you work and live together and have different ranks, it will sooner or later give you problems. It's different between a cop and a CSI, you work together too, but none is the boss of the other. And because I worked a lot, there was barely time to meet somebody, who I didn't work with. Plus the small, but very important fact, that after I met you again, I couldn't get my mind off you."

"Yet, you didn't come back to Idaho."

"I had no idea where you were. Of course I had found you, but I was quite sure, you weren't interested in seeing me. Not the way I wanted to see you. After all, I was surprised about every answer I got from you."

"Funny, I was sure you had a lot of fun here, enjoy all the attention being a deputy chief, all the dates, so you had no time for me. And you never turned when you left."

Sofia turned, walked to Sara, sat on her lap. "I didn't want you to see me crying." She hugged her lover. "It hurt so much, I was sure, when I turn and see you, see your eyes, I'll stay because leaving you broke my heart."

"It broke mine too."

"We should have talked to each other. Openly."

"Like we were ready for that. We're both people, who have to suffer before they talk honest and openly about their feelings."

"True." Sara kissed the throat of the blonde, nibbling on the soft skin.

"Don't delay or ruin the cake."

"I don't." Sara's hands wandered under the shirt of the blonde, ran over the soft fabric of the bra.

"You are." Sofia inhaled loudly. "You are."

"It feels like break time." The respond of Sofia's nipples felt like they were ready to concentrate on something else than a cake. They were more than attentive to Sara's fingers. The brunette wondered how they'd respond to her lips.

She got her answer a few seconds later, when under the now wet white fabric the nipples shone through and the moan, escaping from Sofia's mouth, were enough to make Sara continue and Sofia forgot about the cake.

"You ruined my cake." Sofia starred at the white something with cherries and chocolate sprinkles on the plate.

"I'm sorry." Sara smirked, which made Sofia's heart melt.

"And you make my life worth living."

"You're welcome."

"With this sexy smirk...I feel like jumping you again...gosh, you're so beautiful."

"You're such a love fool." Sara pulled Sofia in her arms and kissed her gently. "I love you."

"As long as you love me I can't be a love fool, I'm a lucky woman to be your lover. To get back to your sex offer, I take you up on that when our guest is gone."

"He's not here..." The doorbell rang. "Now he is here." There could have been more joy in the blonde's voice. "Why does he have to be on time?"

"He misses me and wants to be with me. Can't you understand him?"

"Better than anybody else."

"See." Sara kissed Sofia again. "Jenny, open the door, please."

"Our butler is very handy. She gives us more time alone and I...your neck looks so delicious."

"Down girl." When Sofia didn't stop talking like this, Sara couldn't be sensible anymore and would greet Greg with a sight of her and Sofia in a long deep kiss - or more. Something he surely didn't want to see.

"Am I not worth that you open the door?" Greg asked when he came into the living room.

"Greggo." Sara let go of Sofia and hugged her friend. "Sorry, I had to comfort Sofia, she ruined our cake and is very upset."

"Hey!" The blonde protested. The look the brunette gave her, dared her to tell the truth.

"It doesn't matter how the cake looks, it's important how it tastes."

"Thanks Greg. Can you stop holding my girlfriend?"

"No, not as long as she stays in my arms."

"Oh, they fight over me, what a nice feeling. Remember Honey, you told me, he's my brother."

"I'm your brother?"

"Yes, my cute jealous girlfriend decided you're my brother, so I can't be interested in you and she can stop being jealous all the time we're together."

"You're jealous? You think, Sara would leave you for me?"

"To be too sure of yourself is a mistake and when you take your girlfriend for granted, you lose her sooner than you think."

"Unfortunately I can't see any chance to steal her from you. The way she looks at you...I feel like I'm disturbing the two of you."

"You don't disturb us, I'm glad you're here." Sara kissed his cheek. "Have a seat, I get us some coffee."

"Thanks...oh, there's a cat too."

"Tiger, my man in the house." Sofia picked Tiger up. "You rule the place, don't you? We are all just servants."

"How do he and Jenny go along?"

"He doesn't hide anymore, but she isn't allowed to get too close to him."

"That will change."

"I hope so."

"Of course it will, it changed between us too. First you weren't allowed close to me, now I'm staying with you." Sara laughed. "Love needs time sometimes." She poured coffee for all three of them.

"A long time." The blonde sighed when she looked at the cake again. Instead of a white cylinder with cherries and chocolate sprinkles on top, there was a kind of oval egg with out of place cherries and a lot of chocolate sprinkles. Other cherries and the cake base gleamed through the white whipped cream, that seemed to become liquid at some places. In a short version: her cake was an accident.

"This is not how a black forest cake is supposed to look like."

"It doesn't matter how it looks like, it's made with a lot of love, this makes it the best cake ever." Sara kissed her lover.

"When I bake a cake for you, do I get a kiss too?"

"No!" Sofia answered for Sara. "She kisses only me!"

"Her jealousy makes her sexy." The brunette took the hand of her lover. "Tell me Greg, when will you ask Morgan out for a date?"

"W-what?" The red color of her friend's face told her, she hit bull's eye. The rumors about Greg having a crush on his colleague from Los Angeles seemed to be true. Very interesting, Sara had to meet this woman.

"Oh come on, you like her, it's obvious. I needed a minute with the two of you in a room and knew it." Sofia said. "Did you ask her out for dinner?"

"No! We work together."

"Ah, the old problem of fishing in the company's pool, yes, that is right. It can get you into a lot of trouble." Sara agreed. "The problem is, your heart doesn't care and sometimes you have to risk a thing or two to achieve what you really desire. I gave up my life and work in Idaho to be with Sofia. Three months of constantly thinking of her, missing her and driving myself crazy told me, I had to do something and the only way I could get her in my life or out of my head, was to come here and see, if she felt the same."

"What if she had been not interested in you?"

"Then I had wasted a lovely job and had to move on. But the question: what if would have been answered."

"The only thing I could think about when you showed up was: how can I make sure, she never leaves again?" The blonde smiled. "How many cuffs do I need and how many locks on my doors and windows."

"I don't think Morgan will react the same way."

"You never know until you have tried it." Sara looked at Sofia. "How about we invite them both for dinner?"

"A nice idea. When Greg is happy with Morgan, he won't try to steal you away from me."

"As if I had a change." Greg laughed half-hearted. "A blind man can see how much Sara is in love with you. I just wonder why you chose the casino job over your old job. Is it because of the money?"

"No, it's because of the work. I don't want to be surrounded by death every day and I don't want to work nights anymore. Sofia works days, I want to be with her, want to be able to spend time with her and have a regular week, with two days off. Chris offers me those things."

"Chris? You call your boss by his first name? You are this close already?"

"He's a friend of Sofia, we had dinner together and I have the feeling, I'll see him more out of work than at work. Same for his husband Pat." The man, who kissed her girlfriend in front of

her eyes. Sara was still mad and jealous about it, even when she knew, it meant nothing. This man had his lips on Sofia's. The blonde's lips belonged to Sara, they were her property, like the rest of the blonde's body.

Reading the mind of her lover the blonde smirked and squeezed her lover's hand shortly. "We will work something out. Our Greg has to be happy...although, she is Ecklie's daughter. Can you be happy with Ecklie as your father-in-law?"

"Who is talking about getting married?" Greg stopped them.

"It's a question, which will come up sooner or later and then you have to decide, if you want Ecklie to be your daddy."

"Stop scaring him. And me." Sara slapped her lover. They wanted to have cake and not think about being related to Ecklie.

"This was a lovely afternoon and evening." Sara hugged Greg and stayed in his arms for a while. "We should meet more often."

"I don't want to disturb you and Sofia."

"Did we give you the feeling you were disturbing us?" She looked worried at her friend.

"Well...it kind of feels like you and her have your own world and you don't want anybody else a part of it."

"I'm sorry, it's not supposed to be like this. We like to have you over and you don't disturb us." The last thing she wanted was that Greg felt uncomfortable when he was around.

"She really got you, didn't she?"

"Yes."

"It's good to see you happy, Sara."

"You are supposed to be happy too."

"Call it a little jealousy." He kissed her hair. "You know, back in the days, when we both worked together first, I asked Cath, if she believed you'd go out with me. She said, sure, just don't tell her it's a date."

Sara laughed. "She said that?"

"Yes."

"Well, I guess Cath and I didn't go along very well at the beginning. It's something that happens with me and most people. Super-Dave hit on me, I was not very nice to him. Being friendly has never been one of my strengths."

"Yet you are amazing and people love you."

"Let us meet for breakfast, bring Morgan, I'm curious now. How much is she like her father?"

"Not at all, they didn't have a lot of contact, her mother took her to Los Angeles and Ecklie was not happy when she wanted to come to Vegas. I don't know why, maybe because things get more complicated when family is involved."

"It does and family is always a weak spot. We know, people use our family against us, when they have the chance." Like she had become the target of Natalie because she was involved with Grissom, whom Natalie held responsible for the death of her foster father. The only person, she ever loved and who ever loved her.

"True. Will you be happy in your new job?"

"I hope so. It's a challenge and a new world. There'll be a lot of disgusting rich people with their exquisite problems, but I like the fact, I can work with Jenny. She needs something to do, can't be at home all the time."

"Border Collies are work dogs, yes, and you can't take her with you when you're a CSI."

"Exactly. So, will we have breakfast with Morgan the day after tomorrow?"

"How am I supposed to tell her, she should come but not the rest of the team? It's like asking her for a date."

"Gosh, you're so cute." She kissed his cheek again. "Tell her I want to meet her."

"Why would you want to meet her?"

"To see if she's like her father."

"Sara, I can't say that."

"Then figure out something else. The day after tomorrow, seven o'clock. Go and get her, Tiger." She blinked at him and pushed him out of the apartment. Time to put some pressure on her friend. When he waited for the woman to make the first step and she did the same, they'd stand on the same spot forever and never get lucky. In any way.

VII

"Is there anything you need? You want me to get you before you start?" Chris asked. "Or does Jenny need anything?" He and Sara stepped out of the Premium Gambling. Jenny had finished her first week of training and to see, how much she had learnt, they tested her in the casino.

"You got her two bowls, snacks, a blanket, she has more stuff than I had at some places I worked."

"Wait until I show you what I bought for you."

"For me?"

"Yeah, mink coat for the cold days outside, leather boots, alpaca gloves..."

"You know I'm a vegetarian and won't wear a mink coat. The thought of you own something like that makes me like you less."

"I know you're a vegetarian, I'm a vegan, so I'm against all these things too. None of my stuff will ever get a mink coat or leather boots. I can't tell my guests what to wear, I can tell my employees what not to wear."

"You're a vegan and you buy Sofia Argentinean steak?"

"She's my friend and when she wants to eat meat, it's her decision. When she's fine with it, so am I. It's not a crime. Or did you throw out all meat when you moved in with Sofia?"

"No. For the same reason." Sara smiled. "So you like animals."

"I do."

"Does that mean you spend some of your precious money on organizations?"

"No, I don't believe in supporting groups, a lot of money gets used to pay for employees or bosses."

"Isn't that an excuse?"

"It would be if I didn't use my money at all."

A car stopped next to them. The black tinted window of the driver's side rolled down. "Get into the car!"

"Am I under arrest?" Sara tilted her head.

"Do I have to arrest you to get you in here?"

"Shall I call my lawyer for you?" Chris offered.

"No, when my future mother-in-law asks me to get into the car, I do it." It was the first time Sara called Marie her future mother-in-law and it felt good. It felt like she was family, like Sara and Sofia belonged together forever.

"Keep your hands off her, Mister Devine."

"I see you later." Sara hugged Chris.

"Are you joining us at the gym?"

"It's a tempting thought to sit there, watch Sofia in her tight shorts and shirt working out, sweat running over her body, the clothes soaking wet...and as a little bonus I get to see you and Pat the same way...I will be there, with a beer and pizza."

"This starts to sound like a foursome...what a pity I'm a married man." His eyes moved to Marie. "Captain Curtis, may I invite you to a little party? We'll have a little pre-opening party on Friday. You and your husband are welcome to join us. Your daughter and her beautiful girlfriend will be here too."

"I'm supposed to support a criminal family? A mobster?"

"In case you're right with this accusation, this is your chance to investigate my casino and me first hand. You can have a look around, see who will be there. No security will stop you and you can spend time with your daughter and her amazing girlfriend."

"Sara, do I have to arrest you before you get into the car?" Marie looked at Sara.

"Yes Ma'am, Captain. Later Chris." Sara opened the backdoor for Jenny and when her dog sat down, she got on the passenger's seat.

"Finally." The police captain took off without any more words to the man, who watched both women driving away. "I thought I had to get my cuffs out."

"This handcuff obsession must be a family problem. Sofia had the idea to cuffs me to her bed so I can't leave anymore."

"He is your boss, why do you hug him?"

"Because he is one of the best friends of your daughter and I decided it's best when I'm open-minded towards her friends. I don't have to like my boss, it helps and makes the job easier, but I should like Sofia's friends so we can all go out together. I don't want her to give up her friends, nor do I want to be a few nights per week without her because she spends time with her friends."

"Do you think Mister Devine and his husband are a good influence?"

"You want an honest answer?"

"I always want an honest answer. The truth and nothing but the truth."

"Okay." Sara leant back. "I have no doubt Christian's family were involved in illegal activities, I worked cases, that included them. I never worked a case, that involved Christian nor Patrick as a suspect. The last days I spent some time investigating his casino and work, or their work. From what I found out, there was nothing illegal involved."

"What if you observe illegal activities during your work there?"

"I told both, I won't close my eyes when I see anything illegal and will call the police."

"Good."

"Come and join us."

"An evening with...them?"

"Have an eye on your daughter."

"Your future wife? I had no idea the two of you talked about a wedding already."

"We didn't. It's too early."

"But you want to marry her? If the two of you are still together in the future?"

"When we're still happy and in love, why not?"

"Good. I want to see my baby walking down the aisle."

"She'll be a gorgeous bride." Sara sighed happily when she thought about Sofia in a long white dress. What a picture! How was she supposed not to rip off the dress of her wedding and have her in front of the altar?

"Wake up."

"Sorry, the thought of Sofia as a bride made me dream of the perfect wedding. Where do you think she wants to go on honeymoon?"

"Sara, it's too early."

"Doesn't matter. I want to give her a trip to a spot she likes, she worked a lot and needs to rest. When she stays in Vegas, she won't forget work, she sees it wherever she goes...how mad would you be when Sofia and I fly to Bora-Bora, Chris has a house there..."

"It's your decision where you go on vacation."

"Marie, I ask you. I don't want to bring something up, that upsets you. I love Sofia and you're her mother, you're important to me." She never said anything like that to a mother of a boyfriend. This relationship messed with her head seriously. And it felt right.

"I tell you what, I'll come with you to this party. Maybe, just maybe, this Christian isn't as bad as his family."

"Thanks. That means a lot to Sofia."

"I know. Being a mother means, you have to do things, you believe are wrong, but have to give them a chance to make your baby girl happy."

"Sofia is a lucky woman to have such a great mother."

"Which makes you a very lucky future daughter-in-law." Maria smiled.

"Yes...where are we going to, by the way?"

"Nowhere, all I wanted was to get you away from that man."

"Really? He's my boss."

"Doesn't matter."

"Oh Marie, it will be very interesting to see you at that party." Sara wasn't sure Sofia would enjoy having her mother around. Nor did she believe, Chris would enjoy the company of the police captain a lot.

Sofia found herself at the university as a part of police enforcement looking for new cadets and skilled member for the labs. The money the city of Las Vegas offered wasn't great, a lot of companies offered you more money for your skills, so she had to tell them why it was in their best interest to work with them. But how make it sound more interesting to go to a place, where you get yelled at instead of a company, that greets you with a new sports car.

"You will get the students, who believe their work is art and feel honored to give their talent to the state."

"Grissom." The blonde turned. Why was she surprised to see him here? He worked here and it was common knowledge to the university staff, she'd be here.

"How are you?"

"I'm fine, how are you?"

"There were times when I was better. Times, when my fiancé was with me. When I could trust my friends." She didn't need to hear these accusation to know, he was mad at her. That he blamed her for not being happily married to Sara.

"I didn't steal Sara from you."

"Not? Then why is she with you? You barely were friends."

"I know and I have no idea how things changed."

"You make it very easy for yourself, Sofia."

"What do you want me to say, Grissom? That I'm sorry?" She sighed. "It would be a lie, I'm not sorry she's with me, I love her and she loves me. I had nothing to do with her leaving you four years ago, it wasn't my fault, it wasn't for me. We ran into each other, it was a coincidence and something happened between us, that neither Sara nor I can explain. I can understand you miss her and you want her back." But you won't get her back, she is all mine now and I'll never let her go.

"I won't give up on her."

"You never looked for her when she left..."

"How do you know?"

"Because if you had, you would have found her. She used her social security number, you lived together, you must have access to these information."

"I respected her decision that she needs some time."

"A few years? Grissom, that's lame."

"She's mine, Sofia."

"Not anymore."

"Sara is not a lesbian. She enjoyed our sex."

The blonde shook her head. She didn't want to go there, didn't want to talk with Grissom about him and Sara, nor did she want to talk to him about their sex life.

"Grissom, you can't force her to love you."

"She loves me, she's only...confused."

"Believe what you want to believe, I need to go."

"I'll fight for her."

"Just don't hurt her."

"The right thing can't hurt you."

When the thing was right for him it didn't mean it was right for Sara too. Sofia had no intentions to push her lover into a direction, she wouldn't put any pressure on her, but she

surely would not watch Grissom steal Sara away. If that was possible because the brunette had a mind of her own. Something Sofia admired.

"Goodbye Grissom." There was no point in talking to him anymore. Obviously they were on two different sides and they both wanted the same thing: Sara. The brunette wanted the blonde, Sofia would be damned if would let her walk away to her ex. Sara was hers and Sofia wouldn't let her go. Not unless Sara wanted to go and yet then, she wasn't sure if she could let her go without a fight.

"I met your mother today."

"I met Grissom today."

"Where did you meet my mother?"

"When I left the casino with Chris. Where did you meet Grissom?"

"At the university." Sofia pulled Sara in her arms and took a deep breath, inhaled the scent of the brunette. "He wants to fight for you." She thought about if she should tell her, if she should let her know, what Grissom said or if it was a bad idea, to pull her into this. They didn't live five hundred years ago, when you put on an armor and fought for the woman you loved. Especially not when you were a woman too.

"When did he decide this? When he heard I'm back? Or did he look for me before?"

"I have no idea." Actually, she was sure, he didn't look for her. Or not hard enough, like she pointed out to him before.

"You worry I might go back to him."

"I love you and...there's fear, yes. You were in love with him for years, did a lot of things for him, put up with a lot of things, when he tells me he wants to fight for you, I know he knows you quite well, he knows what you like and...he's a serious opponent."

"You don't have opponents, I love you and not him."

"He seems to be serious about getting you back."

"I'm serious about our love and I want to be with you." The brunette kissed the eyes of her lover. "Only with you."

"What if he fights dirty?"

"The only way for him to get me away from you is to abduct me I doubt he will break the law to get me back, he didn't get through a lot of trouble to find me before. So don't worry about him, he won't get me back. Your mother and I talked about you and me getting married."

"What?" Sofia's jaw dropped down. Sara and her mother did talk about a possible wedding between Sara and Sofia? Was this for real or was it something the brunette made up to cheer her up? Then again, it was too crazy not to be true.

"I told her how much I love you and we talked about her dream seeing you walk down the aisle, which made me get lost in this dream. I think you're very sexy in a wedding gown, it's my time to have a clothes fetish and I'm sure when you walk down the aisle towards me, it will be hard not rip off the dress and have you in front of the altar."

"Sex in the church? In front of everybody? Honey, you're worse than I am." Sofia laughed. It was crazy, her lover and her mother talked about a wedding. It was way too soon...wasn't it?

"I spend a lot of time with you, I learn from you."

"When you are going to propose to me, you have to go down on your knees."

"Sorry, I won't propose to you, it's too early. Your mom thinks the same."

"Looks like you and my mom get along pretty good." Which was a relief. After the dinner Sofia wasn't sure how her mother thought about her new relationship. She knew her father was fine with it, he had always been fine with whatever Sofia made, with her mother she had had quite a lot of fights and disagreements.

"We do. She'll come to the pre-opening party of the Premium Gambling."

"What? How did you...?" This couldn't be real. Sara made her mother change her mind and come to the party? That was against all odds. Like so many things in their life.

"I'm good and I know what to say to make Marie come to a party. She likes me."

"All you want is the house on Bora-Bora."

"Oh, I asked her if it's okay when she goes there because her opinion matters to me and she says whatever makes us happy and is not illegal is okay with her."

"Wow." Sofia was impressed. Most of her boyfriends had been scared or very careful around her mother, only a few dared to disagree with the captain and when they did, mostly they regretted it. Apparently Sara found a way to get along with the police captain.

"Your mother likes me. Like your father said, she needs some time to get used to me and when she finds out I love you and would never hurt you, she likes me...do you think she'll do anything to Grissom when she hears he wants to steal me away from you?"

"I'm willing to risk it only to make sure, he can't get you."

"He won't get me, if I wanted to be with him, I had come back to him. I chose you, accept it, you don't get rid off me this easily."

"I never want to lose you."

"Who is the one, who is about to propose now?" Sara mocked and kissed her lover again.

"Not me, when I propose to you, I do something like, hanging a ring on Jenny's neck and send her to you with a little heart-shaped note, that says: Say YES!"

"You want to involve our daughter?"

"Sure, our son is not very cooperative when it comes to orders; unless he orders something." Sofia laughed. Their daughter, their son. Yes, they were a little family and she loved the thought of being a family with Sara for a long, long time. Eternity sounded pretty good to her.

IIX

The long black silk dress fell softly over lovely shaped curves, long blonde hair fell over a naked shoulder, black high heels made long slender legs even longer, almost endlessly. Lips, deep red, like a mixture of blood, roses and red wine, blue eyes, the color of the Caribbean ocean, sharp cheekbones like of a goddess.

"Stop starrng at me."

"Start stripping for me."

"We are supposed to go to a party and it's not a party for two in our bedroom, it's a party with a lot of rich and famous and important people in an extremely expensive new casino." Sofia added some makeup to her face, checked herself in the mirror and caught the eyes of her lover, still watching her, dressed in a blue dress, wearing her hair high, showing off her long neck, the soft skin, Sofia so loved to kiss. Why couldn't they have a party for two in their bedroom? She had a lot of ideas of how that party could...work.

"Just by the look at you I get so horny I could die." Sara's voice was husky.

"I want to rip off your dress and have you right here, right now and forget about the party. Nobody there can give me, what you can give me."

"You better stay at least a yard away from me or I can't guarantee for anything." Maybe separate rooms were a better solution. And a separate car later or they'd end up having sex on the backseat. A yard away was within touching area, was very close, and when she read the signs of her body right, her body was so not willing to listen to her brain to be sensible. Her body wanted Sofia; out of the dress and then under/next/on top of her, naked, sweaty, moaning and groaning, coming.

"Ditto." The eyes of the blonde said the same. Lust, so much lust. Love and affection.

Sara got up, leaned at the doorframe, her eyes still on Sofia. "This reminds me of the moment we met again, when you wanted to give me the keys to my garage. The pure touch of your fingers made me lose it, made me want you more than anything else."

"And then we lost each other in each other's arms." Most amazing sex ever. She wished she remembered more about it, slowly parts of it came back, but mostly is was lost in passion. The best way to suffer from a short term memory loss.

"Yes. Do you know how beautiful you are?"

"I try my best to look not too bad next to you so people won't wonder what an amazing woman like you does with somebody like me."

"Somebody like you? A goddess." Sara stepped closer to the blonde. Sofia was the model type, the woman, men turned and ran into street lights for. "We'll be with a lot of people, presumably very good looking people and yet, you'll be above all of them."

"Liar." Damn the safety distance, she wanted Sara. At least in her arms. They wouldn't be late when she had her lover in her arms for a few seconds. "You smell so good." Sniffing the throat of her lover, the blonde moved closer.

"Remember the perfume you liked so much last week?"

"Oh yes...yes...you bought it?"

"Sure. I figured, when you like it so much, it will make you like me even more when I wear it."

"You want me to jump you even more? Want us to have more sex?" Was that even possible? They were like rabbits, at least it felt like it and yet it felt like, it wasn't enough.

"Sex with you is very satisfying and I enjoy it a lot, why would I not want to have more of it?" Sara nibbled on the neck of her lover. "You taste good, you smell good, you look good, I want you."

"We'll be late."

"I so don't care." The brunette opened the zip of the blonde's dress, let it slip down slowly and kissed the skin, she set free this way.

"Sara..."

"Tell me to stop and I will stop." That was a lie. It was almost impossible that words would stop her now. She sucked on the pulse point. Gosh, she wanted this woman, no matter what and she didn't care about a party or any people waiting for them. She wanted her lover, now and she wanted her to come with her.

"Don't..." Sofia gasped.

"Don't what?" She did ask, didn't she? You could say, she tried to stop it, tried to listen to a protest. But there were so many sentences, that could start with 'don't', how was she supposed to know what her lover wanted to say?

"Don't stop."

The party started at seven o'clock in the evening, they were supposed to meet Sofia's parents at half past seven and arrived at the Premium Gambling shortly after eight. Redressed, holding hands and with a soft smile on their lips.

"You are late!" Marie greeted them before they could say a word. The elderly woman gave them another stare. "You are late because you had sex."

"Very satisfying sex, to be more accurate, mother." Sofia smirked. Her mother wanted the truth? She could have it. "Sorry, Sara looked too good, I couldn't wait until the end of the party."

"Are you a couple of teenagers?"

"If I remember correctly, I never felt like this when I was a teenager."

"Certainly you never let your mother wait then, you were too afraid of her." Mark added.

"Things have changed."

"Ladies." Pat stepped to them. "You look breathtaking." He pulled Sofia in his arms and kissed her - again on her lips. "I might have to call security to make sure, the men and some women in the casino will keep their hands off you."

"How about security makes sure you stop kissing my girlfriend and I take care of the rest." Sara pushed him away from the blonde. "The next time you kiss her, I kick your balls up your throat and your husband won't have any fun with you in the bedroom for a long, long time. You might be my boss, that doesn't mean, you can kiss my girlfriend. Especially not her lips, they're all mine. Am I clear?"

"Are you serious?"

"When it comes to Sofia I'm always serious." Yes, for her lover she'd threaten her boss. Work was one thing, her love life another one.

"You threaten your boss, an interesting way to start your job."

"I only make some rules very clear, rules, that doesn't involve work. Sofia is mine, keep your hands off her."

"Don't you think you should let Sofia decide, who can kiss her and who not?"

"No!"

"Aw, you are so sexy when you're jealous." Sofia kissed Sara. Was there a better declaration of love than her lover telling her new boss she'd hurt him in case he didn't take her hands off Sara's girlfriend? "I love you and there's no reason to threaten Pat."

"Your lips are mine If he has to kiss you, he can kiss you on the cheeks."

"I think I can settle for the soft cheeks too. Before we get into a fight."

"Does your husband not mind?"

"No, he knows I don't care for women...not in a sexual way."

"Stay away from her lips, understand?"

"Understood." Pat grinned.

"Captain Curtis, what a pleasure to have you here." Christian joined them. "Mister Curtis. Thank you for coming."

"Thanks for the invitation, you have an impressive place."

"Oh, thank you. We planned this casino and hotel to be something special, we have a lot of places to gamble and live in Vegas, this is one, that won't be open for everybody. Plus we wanted to have people here, who are interested in other things than gambling. Sometimes a couple has different interests, we hope we cater every interest. Have you seen the library?"

"You have a library in here?" That was something Sofia's father was more than interested in. He didn't come here for the casino, the gambling, he wanted to know what else was offered. A library was exactly his cup of tea.

"Oh yes, guests come with family, not every member is interested in gambling or not old enough. We have a library in the third floor, have a look around, if you find something interesting, you are more than welcome to borrow it."

"Thank you, I'll have a look later."

"Captain Curtis, it's obvious from who Sofia has her beauty." Chris smiled at Marie.

"Suck it up." Marie hissed.

"Mom, you're not very polite. He invited you."

"And I will use this invitation to find out, what he is really up to."

"Oh Marie, can't you just one evening relax?" Mark sighed. "When you want to investigate whatever, I go and have a look at the library."

"You want to leave me alone?"

"You're not alone, Sara and Sofia are here and you are busy with your investigation."

"Mom, you can save yourself the trouble of investigating Chris, believe me, I would have never sent Sara here when I wasn't sure, everything is all right. Why don't we get us a beer, something to eat, sit down and watch people? Or we wander around the casino, see what kind of rooms you can buy when you have too much money. Sara could be our guide, she knows the rooms."

"A cop is always watching out for crime."

"Okay, here's an order from the deputy chief for you, captain Curtis: relax, drink a few beer and clock off. Got it?"

"You're my daughter."

"I'm also your boss. I outrank you, mother. Take your order, as you have learnt at the academy, Captain." Sofia grinned. She barely used her rank, especially not on her mother, this time she enjoyed it a lot.

"Do you really have a problem with Pat kissing me?" Sofia sat next to her lover, handed her a bottle of beer.

"You are my girlfriend, a guy kisses you. What do you think? Of course I don't like that."

"This guy is gay."

"He could be married to the pope, I don't care, he puts his lips on yours, I kick his balls. You are exactly the kind of woman, who can turn a gay guy into a straight one. Or at least bi, so he wants you."

"So cute, you're sexy when your jealous." Sofia kissed Sara gently. "Honey, I like Pat, a lot. He is more like a brother to me, than my own brother is. We've been through this before, when we meet, we kiss. It doesn't mean a thing, not a sexual thing. The last years he and I didn't end up in bed, we won't do it in future. If you don't trust him that's fine, but you should trust me because I love you."

Sofia was right, she should trust her. It was okay not to trust Pat, but her lover? "Sorry."

"It's okay, I'd be jealous too, but there's no reason to be jealous. You're the only one I want. I think I made that quite obvious before we came here."

"All right, you can greet him...but I don't like it."

"I like you."

"You better love me or you're in trouble."

"Trouble is my middle name, I told my mother what to do, pulled rank on her, believe me, I am in trouble. You better make sure I'm safe and not locked in a room before we can go home."

"Your mother starts to enjoy the evening, she even talked to Chris without accusing him of being a criminal."

"He can be very charming and my mother is somewhere deep down a woman too. A good looking man makes her compliments, takes interest in her and her work, she melts. Especially she knows there is no hidden agenda, that includes illegal activities."

"I wonder what happens when he offers her a job."

"As a part of the security team here?" Her mother working in a casino? Not very likely, no matter how charming Chris was.

"No, for the village. You refused his offer, I don't believe your mother will agree because Pat and Chris are criminals to her, but I'm sure he knows how to make the offer very tempting."

"You can't buy my mother with money."

"How can you buy your mother?"

"The only one, who can bribe her, is you."

"I?"

"Yes, you are with me, you're her hope that I settle down."

"Blackmailing her with our relationship? Forget it." Sara got her arm around Sofia's waist.

"How about a little bet?"

"We're in a casino and you turn into a gambler? Really?" The blonde laughed.

"Scared?"

"No. Bring the bet on."

"I bet your mother will accept Chris's offer. Not tonight, but in the end she will."

"What? No way! Why would she?"

"Because he'll make her an offer she can't refuse." Sara used her best Godfather voice.

"You're crazy. The bet is on."

"Good. She won't accept as long as she works for LVPD, but she retires in a few months, his offer will be very interesting by then because she loves what she's doing and he gives her the chance to patrol the streets, be in charge, be the law."

"Sounds reasonable, still I don't believe it. What's the stake?"

"The winner chooses the honeymoon destination, the loser is on kitchen duty for a month."

"Honeymoon? Another propose?"

"No, it's a future thing, to make you understand, this is serious. When we can get married legally I might want to marry you. Like Marie hopes, I make you settle down."

"Or I propose to you, catch you off guard."

"Maybe. I like both ideas." Sara smiled. Both included them together and - very likely - a lot of sex. What else were honeymoons for?

"I raise you and say, the loser is the sex slave for a week."

"You only want to have some fun being the loser."

"No, I want you to have some fun after you cleaned the kitchen." Sofia took Sara's hand. "I want you to wear the apron...only the apron." A small one.

"Sick pervert." The brunette kissed her lover.

"Just in case you win, which will never happen, but what would you want me to wear?"

"Your badge on a necklace and four pairs of handcuffs, which are cuffed to the bed-posts."

"Gosh, you know how to make a girl wet."

"I'm not sure about the 'a girl', but I surely know how to make my girl horny." Sara smirked.

"You don't happen to know a possibility for us to have some private time?" Sofia's voice was husky, her throat was dry, all these pictures, that were spinning in her head, making it very difficult for her to focus.

"Better, I've got a card for one of the rooms because my boss said, when we are too tired to go home, we can crash there. Maybe what he really meant was, when we need some time alone, we can have sex there and rejoin the party later."

"I so don't care what he thought, get us into this room." Sofia didn't care if it was polite to leave for a while or not, all she wanted, all she could think of, was to rip off Sara's dress (again) and have her. In the bed, on the carpet, on a table, it didn't matter, all that mattered was, it had to be soon or she'd jump her girlfriend here in front of everybody.

"You are an embarrassment to your badge." Marie said.

"Why?"

"Because if Sara ever does anything illegal you will not report her because it would take her away from you and you're addicted to her. You're turning into a sex addict. Don't look at me like this, I know where you have been and I know what you've done. Your hair is messed up, your makeup looks different I recognize the look in your eyes."

"What can I say? I'm addicted to her and she looks so...delicious tonight, I can't resist." Sofia smiled and took the hand of her lover. An hour was all they had taken, an hour away from the party, for themselves.

"Did you find anything interesting in the library?" Sara asked Mark to change topics. It was strange Sofia's parents knew what they did, there was no reason to talk about it.

"As a matter of fact I did. He has very nice books in there, not only novels, also historical books of Las Vegas, Nevada and the United States of America."

"Sounds good. Like Greg might like it too." Her friend liked the story of Las Vegas, the mobster, the history. It could be useful for his research for his own books.

"You should take your baby brother here." Sofia suggested.

"You've got a little brother?" Marie asked surprised.

"She means our former colleague Greg Sanders. Since Sofia decided Greg is my little brother, she is not jealous anymore. Yet, she and Pat kiss all the time they meet. On the lips."

"Tell her to stop."

"I did, the problem is, they do this for a long time and she says it doesn't mean a thing and because I love her, I have to learn to accept it. And I trust her with my life."

"If she ever destroys your trust, let me know, I have my ways to punish her."

"No need to, I can handle her myself."

"The two of you can't handle yourselves, you're way too much driven by sex. Try to behave like adults every now and then. Start now by not ripping off your clothes anymore until you're back home."

"We might not go home, we have a room here. Courtesy of the owner...did he told you about his new project? The village?"

"Yes. Megalomania."

"I think it's an interesting plan. Jenny and I will work there too."

"Are you fine with being surrounded by addicts and criminals every day?"

"Isn't it the same like in my job as a CSI? The only difference is, I won't come across murder that often anymore. At least that's what I hope."

"When your boss needs a librarian or a professor for American history on his project, I'm happy to take the job." Mark said. "I work my twenty hours per week at the university, I could do a few more."

"I let him know..." Sara stopped, thought about if it was a smart idea to say, what she was about to say. "You work at the university, do you work with...Grissom?"

"Not with him, but I know him, yes. And I know, he's your former fiancé."

"Yes. Did he talk to you about Sofia and me?"

"No. Should he?"

"Let's say, we had some disagreements about her and my relationship. Somehow he got the idea he wants me back, after he didn't look for me all the years before."

"Some men are like: what I can't have, nobody is supposed to have." Marie said. "Let me know when you need some help."

"We'll handle him."

"You have powerful friends."

"Mom, we won't involve Pat and Chris in this, why asked a casino owner and his manger to help us when we have a police captain at hands?"

"Not to mention my girlfriend works for LVPD too." Sara said. Not that she intended to ask Sofia for help, she could handle Grissom herself. He was not a psychopathic ex boyfriend, who might get violent and do stupid things, he was way too smart and rational for that. And she was sure, they had been through too much together, that what they had before, could be forgotten and he hurt her in any way. Disappointment was normal, not understanding why she was with Sofia too, but everything else wasn't like Grissom.

"I'm pretty sure your girlfriend is very attentive when it comes to you" Marie said sweetly.

"She is, you raised a very attentive daughter, a really wonderful woman." Sara kissed Sofia. Marie could not have raised a better daughter and she was happy to be the woman by her side.

IX

Her first day at work was over, Sara and Jenny walked for eight hours through the casino, the garden and the sidewalk, her dog found four of the five hidden explosive examples, they used to give Jenny success. Four out of five wasn't too bad, when you considered the Border Collie started her training, which she still had, only four weeks ago.

"How was the first day of work?" Pat asked when she came out of the changing room.

"I saw so much money changing owners, I feel like I spent eight hours in a Swiss bank."

"Oh believe me, every real Swiss bank would laugh about the amount of money we deal with here. A real big Swiss bank handles money, that could buy a small town."

"You plan to buy a small town yourself."

"A small village and we use mostly money of other people. In a legal way because otherwise your stunning girlfriend would haul our asses in jail." He sat on a stool, tied his longish black hair back in a ponytail and gave a woman, who walked by, a smile, that almost made her walk into the wall. "Careful, Honey." He helped her back on track and kissed her hand.

"You're such a...gentleman."

"I know."

"Don't they all know you're married? To a man."

"Surely they do, some are married themselves, but it doesn't change the fact, they can still dream. Plus I look pretty good next to any woman."

"Or you make every woman look good next to you."

"Your words, not mine." He smirked. "By the way, thanks for not kicking my balls up my throat when I greeted Sofia yesterday."

It was part of their deal, she wouldn't bitch around about their relationship anymore, she promised Sofia and she kept her promises. "She doesn't need you to look good, she does it on her own."

"I know." Chris crossed the room fifty yards away from them, when his and Pat's eyes met, the black haired man mumbled. "Mo ghrá."

"What?"

"Never mind."

"You tell me what it means or I google it. I find it out either way."

"Blackmailing your own boss? Interesting strategy for your first day at work. It's Gaelic and means 'my love', which he is."

"You're Irish? What's an Irish kid doing in a Spanish gang?" Or what was an Irish man doing in a Mexican gang? He wasn't involved in gangs anymore.

"My mother is Irish, my father Mexican. I barely know any Gaelic words, am fluent in Spanish and English. How about you?"

"No other language than English, you know that, you checked me. And my family."

"You're not happy about it, the family check."

"I believe private life is supposed to be private because otherwise it's not a private life anymore and it has nothing to do with my work."

"You're right and it won't be use here, nor will it be talked about with anybody than you. That includes Sofia."

"Thanks." Sara knew she should talk with her girlfriend about her mother, it was...nothing bad. Maybe tonight. Unless her lover had other plans...actually Sofia had other plans than talking every night. Or more correctly: the blonde had one plan for them every night and Sara loved this plan.

This was getting interesting. Sofia tried not to move, not even to breathe. She was on her bed, Tiger sat on the blanket, Jenny had her head on the bed and watched the cat, who starred at the dog, less than a yard away. With tiny steps he came closer to the dog until there was only

a foot between them. Jenny's eyes were on Tiger, patiently she waited for the cat to come to her. The last days they almost came close and it looked like Tiger was about to stop the fighting he put up before and accepted the dog as a new housemate.

Half a foot away Tiger sat down, his eyes on Jenny and lifted his paw, like he was ready to slap the dog right on her nose. Instead of pulling back, Jenny stayed and looked at Tiger. The cat let his paw down, lifted it again and stepped closer to the dog. She had to give it to the dog, Jenny was very patient and she didn't flinch once. Inch for inch the nose of the cat got closer to the dog until Tiger's whiskers touched her nose. A quiet noise came from Jenny's throat and Tiger rubbed his nose carefully on hers before he stepped back and came to Sofia, who picked the cat up and kissed it.

"You are such a great guy, Tiger. I'm proud of you. Jenny and you became friends, now we are a real family."

"Are we celebrating?" Sara came into the room, wrapped in a towel.

"Yes, Tiger gave Jenny a nose kiss, first he looked like he wanted to slap her, she never pulled her head back, then he gave her a kiss and now they're friends. Finally our kids are siblings."

"Good, I hope in a few weeks we find them cuddles up on the armchair." Sara looked at the cup of tea next to the bed. "This doesn't look good."

"It's a bad time of the month, a very bad one. I had had cramps the whole day, there's a reason why you are still wrapped in the towel and not already naked under me."

"I wondered why you didn't visit me under the shower." The brunette let the towel drop.

"That's mean! Torture!"

"A little bit." Sara put on a shirt and boxers. "Look at the bright side, you can save all your energy for the next time while I...well, I guess I have to look for another lover tonight."

"I feel bad, suffer and you are making fun of me, not fair."

"Life is not fair, did you never watch 'The lion king'? Scar tells you this right at the beginning, when he is about to eat the little mouse."

"The mouse escapes." Sofia pulled Sara in her arms and kissed her. "Give me one evening and I'll be better."

"Honey, I give you two. It might shock you, but I also love you when we don't have sex. It's not your gorgeous body, that made me fall in love with you, that makes me stay with you. Actually it's you, your personality." The brunette slipped under the blanket and snuggled closer to her lover. "Can I get you anything?"

"No, all I need is you...and the tea."

"Then tea and me is what you get." Sara kissed her lover.

"Thanks, it's just one day and not every month, but...it is very annoying right now. Very inconvenient."

"See it as a test: can we be together without having sex or will we fight and not stand each other. Is sex what keeps us together or is there more to our relationship?"

"Of course there is more to us, sex is only...a very nice and satisfying bonus."

"We could go to the other point on our relationship plan."

"Which one?"

"Talk. You know, use our lips for something else than kissing." Sara got out of bed.

"Where are you going? We can talk here, there's no need for you to leave and talk to me from another room."

"I'll be back in a second."

"Second is over."

"Patience, my love, patience." Sara came back, switched off the lights and slipped back into the bed. "The apartment is ready for the night, we can stay in bed, don't have to get up anymore. The kids are here, our boy sits on the bed, the girl lays in front of it, the whole family is together. Almost like Christmas, which is not too far away anymore."

"Our first Christmas together. My parents want us to come over for dinner, is that okay with you?"

"Sure. Will we get them something together?"

"We can go shopping tomorrow. And we should do something about Greg and Morgan. Our Greggo is not able to ask the girl out, we have to do it for him. How about a little party, a dinner party and I plan to use the Premium Gambling for this. Their nice restaurant, a movie afterwards and...you never know, a room."

"It won't be a problem to get Greg to the casino, how do you get Morgan there?"

"I'm the deputy chief."

"She's a CSI, you can't tell her anything."

"No, but I can ask her to come to a certain place. Imagine, our Greggo happy with a girl under his Christmas tree...I really hope he doesn't have this nerdy tree anymore. You surely know it, the one with the..."

"...with the computer game figures and the red Ferrari on top as the Christmas star? Yes, I know that tree. So Greg, although I hoped he grew out of that by now. When was the last time you saw this tree?"

"Four years ago."

"Okay, his crazy hair is gone, he wears formal clothes at work, he must have changed his Christmas tree too."

"A grown-up Greg." Sofia kissed Sara's hair and held her stomach. Sometimes it sucked to be a woman.

"I like the crazy haired one, with the loud music...I bet he doesn't do that anymore. It's a shame, he lost his innocence, but we all do in this kind of work." Sara sighed and petted Jenny's head. The dog looked at her with sad puppy eyes. "Okay, come here, Sweetheart." A little earthquake appeared when Jenny jumped on the bed and rolled herself to a ball in front of Sara, who got her left arm around the dog. "You are not supposed to be in bed, but Tiger is here too and you are an equal part of the family. Plus you slept so many nights next to me in the tent, it would be wrong to send you away. You're my baby girl, my protector." Sara kissed Jenny's head, who licked her hand. "I love you too, Jenny."

"Now I'm jealous."

"Never try to get between a woman and her dog."

"I won't, you are right, we can't let Tiger sleep in bed and send Jenny away. Tonight it's kids night, they can all stay here, it's not like we need any privacy."

"Do you want painkiller?"

"I took some, thanks. All I need is you and the kids around. A lot of love is the best medicine."

"Here's a lot of love in this bed." Sara could feel it. Her lover held her in her arms, she held Sofia's right hand and her left arm was over Jenny's belly. Her dog lay still, relaxed and she felt Tiger taking his spot next to Sofia's head on the pillow. "Honey?"

"Yes."

"I have to tell you something."

"That sounds...serious." And it made Sofia's stomach turn. Good or bad news? Didn't people always start with 'I have to tell you something' when they had bad news? When they were about to say something, the other didn't like?

"It is...you know Pat and Chris checked me before they offered me the job."

"Yes." So what? They could check Sara as much as they wanted, there was nothing bad about her, there were no secrets hidden. Were there?

"There's something I haven't told you."

"Don't tell me you're married."

"What? No!"

"Any other hidden husbands? Boyfriends? Wives?"

"No! Don't be silly!"

"I'm not, I'm anxious you want to tell me, it's over."

"What? I love you, why would I come up with such a bullshit?"

"I don't know, it's...it's a constant fear to lose you, that you tell me, it's over."

"Tell your constant fear, it can go and fuck itself, you're mind and I'm going to keep you!"

There was more anger in Sara's voice than she wanted it to be there. Leaving Sofia, what a stupid idea, stupid fear. Why would she leave the woman she loved?

"Okay." Sofia wasn't sure if she was amused or shocked. Tell your fear to fuck itself? What happened to her lover? She was really angry. But in a nice way. A way, that made it obvious, she wanted to be with Sofia, no matter what.

"It's about my family...my mother."

Sofia had never heard Sara talk about her mother, the brunette never mentioned her. "Is she in San Francisco?"

"Yes."

The blonde could hear from the 'yes' there was more to the story.

"Okay, I try to cut this short, not turn it into a long story of my fucked up childhood. She...my mother...she killed my father when I was twelve and she was sent to a state facility. She's a schizophrenic...and when you tell me now you don't want a daughter of a lunatic around I can understand you."

"Why would I send you away because of something your mother did thirty or so years ago? Do you believe I'm that stupid? Because if you do, you should send me away."

"I don't think you're stupid, but I...I never told you."

"If my mother killed my father I wouldn't tell easily. It takes trust to tell somebody this, you need time to build up some trust. It took me a while before I told you why I had these three weeks off and a burn-out is nothing compared to a mother, who killed her husband."

"It's bad."

"Were you close to your father?"

"He abused me. I can't say I was awfully sorry when he was dead. More like I felt he got what he deserved."

"Shit." Sofia kissed the hair of her lover. An abusive father, a mother, who killed him, Sara's childhood hadn't been a piece of cake.

"Yeah...I suppose Pat and Chris know those things, when they check on people, they check thoroughly and Pat told me more or less he knows about my mother...I never wanted them to know, but as they do...I want you to know too. Because you're my girlfriend and I would have liked to have some more time before I annoy you with my family story...but waiting would have meant I keep you in the dark while they know what's going on. I wished I had had more time and not this kind of pressure."

"Sara, you are not to blame for whatever your parents did." Not only her mother did something wrong, her father did so too. Maybe more than her mother.

"Still, they are my family, a part of me...you could think I'm half a schizophrenic and half an abuser."

"Or I believe you're Sara, nobody is like you and I love you."

"But my family..."

"Hey, you know my parents, am I like them?"

"Actually, you're a lot like your mother."

"Wrong answer!" She wasn't like her mother! Not at all! Not even a tiny bit! Her mother was a pain in the ass most times, Sofia wasn't.

"Believe it or not, you are like your mother."

"I am not! Just because we're both cops, it doesn't mean we're alike."

Sara smiled. "I like your mother and your father."

"They can be a pain in the ass."

"Something else you have in common with them."

"Hey!" That was not a nice thing to say.

The brunette kissed her lover. "I love you and...I'm sorry I didn't tell you about my mother before."

"You told me now, that's soon enough. We have the rest of our life to tell each other our secrets, no need to do it the first year of our relationship. Remember, when we're tired of sex or have days like I have today, we need something to do and I don't want to sit with you in front of the TV, stare at a reality show and have nothing to say to you."

"Good, I also didn't plan to sit here in silence and you lose you with every word not spoken more."

"You could tell me about your job. A casino is full of stories."

"So is a police department and you work with people I know."

"So do you."

"By then you might work for them too. And your mother too."

"We have a bet about my mother, when it comes to me...I'm happy where I am now...most times." Not always, sometimes she felt like she should leave her job right away and take Chris's offer, join them at the casino. They'd pay her better, treat her better and she could be close to Sara. There were so many reasons to leave the department, yet it was the place, she wanted to be. At the moment.

"I know two men, who are more than happy to make you happy with a new job...and they better don't want to make you happy in other way."

"My jealous girlfriend." Now she was jealous of two men and not only of Pat?

"So? They're sexy."

"You are sexier. I saw you naked in the shower."

"Did you see them also naked in the shower?"

"No comment because if I say yes you would be jealous and when I say no, you don't believe me."

"You saw them naked!" Not denying was a confession. Her lover saw the two men naked. So much for they were gay. "Were you naked too?"

"People are naked in a sauna."

"A sauna?"

"Yes, we went to a sauna...you have a towel with you, but you are mostly naked, as you should know." Sofia grinned. There was no drama involved, only a harmless visit at the sauna last winter to get warm. Sometimes the winter in Las Vegas could be cold too.

"Did you like what you saw?"

"Does the question mean, was it worth looking? Yes, they don't have to hide." Neither did have Sara, but why mention that? The brunette should know she thought she was the sexiest person alive. Sofia told and showed her often enough.

"Okay."

"Okay? That's all." Too easy. No more questions? No scene? No drama? When was the storm about to hit?

"I can't talk more, when they vanish and I've said too much, everybody will know it was me, who made them vanish."

Sofia laughed. "My bad ass girlfriend, she plans a double murder."

"So? Greg won't work against me, he'll help me hide the bodies and evidence."

"Worst part of this scenario, I'd help you too because I love you too much, can't be without you." Her mother had been right. In case Sara ever did something illegal, Sofia wouldn't arrest her. It was impossible for her.

"Pat and Chris, they can't hold a candle to you. Even when you take your dog into our bed."

"You have your cat in the bed, our kids are equal."

"Especially now that they're friends. That kind of made my day." It was good to see Tiger be nice to Jenny, the dog behaved so good since she was here, never gave the cat a reason to be afraid or to attack. She deserved his friendship and maybe from today on, they were friends. Or two very different siblings.

X

Christmas was almost there, Sara and Sofia didn't need all the decoration and music to know this, their work schedule told them so. The days of the blonde were longer, her colleagues were busier and people seemed to lose the rest of their mind over presents, food and parties. All in all, it was the same craziness like every year.

"Care for some lunch?"

"Greg!" What was the CSI doing here? It was almost two, he should be at home in bed, resting for his next shift. Sofia pushed the report aside, got up from her desk to greet her friend. "Why aren't you in bed?"

"I worked until ten minutes ago, got some lunch and thought, I have a look if you are here and are in the mood for some lunch."

"Have a seat." Sofia had skipped lunch, so she was in the mood for food.

"Thanks. I got fish and fries."

"Perfect. How is the case going?"

"The case? The cases. I work on four cases at the moment, it seems like half of the properties in Las Vegas are victims of burglars and thieves. We get called to more and more cases. What happened to the spirit of Christmas?"

"I'm afraid people lost this year ago. A reason why your job is safe."

"Yeah, great. I wish I had some more time to my personal life. Not that I have one."

"Did you invite Morgan to the Christmas party?"

"At the Premium Gambling? I can't! How can I explain myself to her?"

The blonde shook her head. "Listen boy, you either ask her or I ask her for you. Your choice and you have time until tomorrow." By then she had to tell Pat how many tickets she needed. Her and Sara's plan was to take Greg and Morgan with them, let them spend a few hours together, no crime and no work involved. The best time to get to know each other better and find out, if there was more between them than friendship.

"No! You can't! How would you explain it to her?"

"Sara and I have tickets for the Christmas party at the PG, we want to take you and we can't take you alone with us, it would look strange when you show up with a guy by your side. Plus I'd like to get to know her better. She didn't strike me as a suspicious woman, why would she wonder that you ask her to join you? You are colleagues, you are friends, why not go there together?"

"It sounds...like a date."

"Because it is a date!" This was harder than she thought. Greg seemed to be out of the game for a long, long time, too long.

"But..."

"Greg, when Sara and I can be together, don't you think you and Morgan can so too? I mean, you never fought, you liked each other right from the start, the opposite to Sara and me. We should be the proof that wonders exist and happen."

"True." He still couldn't believe Sara and Sofia were a couple, a happily in love couple and yet, whenever he saw them, they looked exactly like this. A happy couple, very much in love.

"So you'll invite her tonight."

"Okay, I try."

"Not try, you will do it! It's the PG, aren't you curious?"

"Like hell. The owner is a friend of yours, isn't he?"

"Yes."

"Did you see the rooms? I saw pictures...are they real?"

"The rooms are real, yes and yes, I saw them. Sara gave me a tour, we also stayed in a room when they had the big opening party. For this party we have one too, so when you and Morgan don't feel like going home, you can stay there."

"I don't..." He stopped. Telling the blonde, he wasn't the kind of guy, who took a woman to a hotel room the first night would be a lie, she knew about his short and very stupid affair with the teacher slash killer. Ellen. God, she had gotten into him, made him believe, she was serious about their relationship. She played him, lied to him although her words, that she had loved him since Tuesday, the day they met, had been in his head for many days.

"It has been a while and she's not Ellen." Sofia read his mind. "You can't stay away from love forever because you have been burnt once. Morgan is not Ellen, you know her, you know she's not a criminal and she doesn't play you. Actually she's perfect."

"Shouldn't you say Sara is perfect?"

"Morgan is perfect for you, Sara is perfect for me."

"Okay." Greg laughed. To him, Sara was also perfect, but that his little secret, he better kept to himself.

Christmas had never been important to Sara, most times she worked because she didn't have a family, didn't need to be at home. The last years she stayed in Idaho, enjoyed the snow and the silence. There wasn't much work to do around that time of the year, all she had to worry about was, to get herself a nice book and have a warm place at the fire. With some colleagues she had a Christmas dinner, that was all she did as a celebration.

This year was different, not only was the silence of Idaho far, far away and replaced by the craziness and life in Las Vegas, she also had to care about her lover, had to find a present. A special one, she couldn't buy Sofia a book or a pair of shoes and continue life. No, she had to think about something special, had to find this special thing and wrap it up in a nice box.

"When you plan to steal something, be aware of the fact, you will be watched!"

Surprised the brunette turned and looked at Marie, who stood behind her, obviously on duty.

"I know the deputy chief, I might get away with it."

"No you won't. The video doesn't lie, your girlfriend can't save you."

"Luckily I don't plan to steal."

"Why are you staring at these things without buying one?"

"Because I try to figure out what is best for Sofia...and now the thought of that her mother doesn't like me just added itself to the mix."

"Don't worry about me, worry about Sofia."

"I do, still, I'd rather be friendly with you than at war. So tell me straight to my face what you think of Sofia and me together. Be honest, I can't stand liars."

"Sofia decides for herself what is right or wrong, it's not my right to tell her, who she can love or not. What still irritates me is that she apparently fell in love with a woman. You are good for her, I can see that, you make her happy, I see that too and these things are important to me. Yet, you won't give her children, she likes children and yes, it's still strange to see the two of you together."

"Tell me about it." Sara signed to the other woman to leave the shop with her. They sat on a bench in the mall. "We both don't understand it, but we enjoy it a lot. We're good for each other, we love each other."

"I know. Give me some time to get used to it. When it's a consolation for you, I like you more than most of her ex boyfriends."

"That's a start." Sara smiled. Or did it only mean, the blonde had a very bad taste when it came to her boyfriends?

"Are you scared of me?"

"No, why should I? When we worked together, we cleared the air between us, I respect you, as a police captain and as Sofia's mother. But fear? No."

"Good."

"I like your husband, he's so...I don't know...nice, kind, lovely. The soft counterpart to you."

"When Mark is nice, kind and lovely, that makes me..."

"You know I didn't mean it this way, don't try to play me, Marie." Sara stopped the elderly woman before she could continue to talk. "I'm not one of your suspects and not a person, you can intimidate by twisting words."

"Do you talk like this to your bosses?"

"I told Pat I kick his balls up his throat when he doesn't keep his hands off Sofia, you know I do. Like you, I prefer the straight forward way. So, straight forward: I love Sofia, you can't scare me away, you have to live with me, like it or not."

"Yet you can't figure out what to give her for Christmas."

"There are a lot of things I can think of, I try to find the best one because she deserves nothing less than the best."

"Good answer."

"Christmas seems to be very important to Sofia." When Sara came home last night, the apartment she had known was gone. It had been kept in smooth black and white, some red colors, the perfect mix between power and sex, so much Sofia, the sexy blonde in the powerful job. Since yesterday it was...a small version of a Christmas themed Disneyland. A huge golden Christmas wreath greeted her at the front door and because a door had two sides, there was one on every side of the door. The red carpet in the hallway had been replaced with a carpet of Santa in his sleigh with the reindeers. Stars, candles, small boxes and pine branches were placed all over the sideboard, chains of lights gave the hallway a new look.

In the kitchen were more lights, candles, stars, a bowl of pine branches, decorated like a Christmas tree and a big reindeer silhouette shone in front of the window. Next to the smell of the pine was the smell of cinnamon and oranges, latest were built up like a pyramid in a shelf. Utensils like dish cloths or oven cloth had lost their former color and had Christmas motives all over them now. There was even a étagère with cookies on the counter.

Irritated by all this decoration Sara had continued her way into the living room, a part of her still not sure, it was the same apartment she had left in the morning. Here a seven foot tall Christmas tree, a real tree, not plastic, was the new center of the room. Decorated in red and gold ornaments, lights shaped like candles it shone and made Sara's jaw drop. It wasn't the Rockefeller Christmas tree, but it was...big and bright and...a surprise. Around the tree were some boxes, of which the brunette hoped, they were decoration too and not actual gifts.

When she could drag her eyes off the tree she was caught by the next surprise: A huge Santa Claus silhouette was in front of the living room window. It covered the whole three by two yards window and here Santa was not on his own or with his reindeers, he sat on a Harley Davidson. Next to the TV stood nutcracker, other figures, which looked rather strange to her, a big Christmas crib, more candles, pine branches and stars.

Not sure if she really should have a look into the bedroom her curiosity took her there before she realized it. Another tree, not as big as the one in the living, but also very nicely decorated, light chains with light bulbs shaped like stars and candles. In the middle the bed, on top of a fluffy looking red woolen blanket lay her girlfriend, dressed in an angels costume. It had to be an angel from the southern hemisphere, as Sofia wore nothing else than a white-golden string, bra and matching wings; all for a very short time after Sara came into the room. Her personal highlight of the Christmas home.

"What is on top of your list?" Marie's voice got Sara out of her dreams and back into reality. She could have lost herself in the memory of the Sofia angel for a while...and then rushed home without buying anything because she would have been so horny, it wouldn't have fit to the spirit of Christmas. Although, didn't they say Christmas was about love? Love and lust could be the same sometimes.

"A vacation trip to Hawaii says you're worth a lot of money, I like a tent and other camping equipment more because it's how we met again. So I'm thinking of taking her to Idaho in June, horseback riding, sleeping in a tent, adjoined sleeping bags. A memory of how

everything started, reliving the first weeks of our new relationship with the advance of knowing what we feel for each other."

"Much better than Hawaii. You can leave that for your honeymoon."

Sara cocked a brow. "Our honeymoon?"

"You date my daughter, you're serious about it, you made her fall in love with you, harder than I've ever seen her fall before, you better stay with her for the rest of your lives, which means, you will get married one day. My baby daughter will wear a white dress and will look stunning."

"She looks stunning, no matter what she wears."

"Especially when she wears her birthday suit?"

"Most beautiful woman ever walked on this planet. All right captain Curtis, I won't stop you from working any longer and will continue my shopping. Any special wish you have for yourself for Christmas?"

"Make my baby happy."

"I do my best." Sara got up. "Will I see you at the Christmas party in the PG?"

"Sofia invited me, if it makes her happy, I go there. Although I'm not happy about spending time with criminals. Formal criminals and a family, which has criminal ties."

"Or, you go to the place of two men, who are close friends of your daughter, who like her a lot, care for her and she likes them too, cares for them. They make Sofia happy, doesn't that make them quite all right?"

"When you look at it this way." Marie rose. "I give them a chance...Sofia is right, I can't blame them for their family or their past. We all made mistakes and we're not responsible for what our family does."

"Exactly." It took Sara a while before she realized this herself. She wasn't her mother and she wasn't responsible for what her mother did or does.

"You worked overtime again."

"Sorry, there're a lot of cases on my desk, we're short on staff and...you know the life of a law enforcement person around Christmas." Sofia pulled her hands off from behind her back and offered Sara a rose. "A sign of love...a way to apologize?"

The brunette pulled her lover into her arms. "No need to apologize, I love you and I worry when you work a lot. You suffered from burn-out once, don't have to get through this again, I don't want you to be sad. And sick."

"I know. Back then...I had nothing except work and some workout time with the guys, after that I worked again. Home was a second office. Now home is you, when I come home, I want to do nothing else than be with you, spend time with you."

"Did you have a lunch break?"

"Yes, with Greg."

"Really?"

"Yeah. He came along, brought lunch and we ate and talked. He'll ask Morgan to join him at the party, I told him if he doesn't do it today, we'll do it for him. Some pressure might get him to ask her out. Your baby bro is not really a Casanova."

"Runs in the family."

"Hah! You ripped off my clothes the first chance you had in Vegas!"

"The tension and lust between us was so clear and it wasn't like we thought, we just acted."

"In a very satisfying way." Sofia nibbled on Sara's earlobe. "You know, coming home to you, being able to hold you in my arms, it helps me more than a week off. With you I can forget about everything that worries me and you take my mind off work."

"How about you say hello to our kids and I let some water into the tub and we have dinner in the tub."

"What did you cook, my sexy housewife? And why aren't you wearing the angel costume?"

"You're the blonde, the angel. I got us Pizza and beer and red peppers with aioli."

"Nice. Especially the beer."

"Go, say hello to the kids, then get undressed."

"Want me to strip for you?"

"Later, when we go to bed because when you strip, I can't guarantee for anything."

"Okay." Sofia kissed Sara and let go of her. Dinner in the bathtub with her lover, pizza and beer, a cop couldn't ask for any better combination for dinner, through in a sexy naked woman next to you, it was perfect. A wet dream was about to come true.

"Hey Jenny." The blonde hugged the Border Collie, which lay on her side, only lifted her head lazily and wagged her tail a little bit. Next to her was Tiger, snuggling into the warm hair of the dog. "You found a new favorite place, didn't you?" She petted her cat. "I told you Jenny is a nice girl." Tiger stretched and turned his head so Sofia could scratch his neck. Since he made the first step and realized the dog was not the enemy nor a threat, they liked to share a blanket or the couch, warming each other like a couple in love. "Did you have a good day at work, Jenny? Took care of Sara and found all the hidden goodies? You're a hard working dog, which makes you invited to the party and we have to get a doggy, sorry kitty bag, for the man in the apartment. He's a real pasha, he doesn't leave, expects us to work and get everything for him. Let me give you an advice: don't fall for them, you're better off with a woman...are there lesbian dogs? I have to google that." The blonde got up and went to the bathroom.

Candles were lit, a tray with two beer bottles, peppers, aioli and a pizza stood on the corner of the tub. What a sight. Together with the Christmas decoration it looked like a photo of a travel advertisement. Now it was her part of the deal. Without any care she let her pants fell on the floor, the shirt followed, then her socks, the bra and slip. Hot water surrounded her feet and when she let herself slip into the bath, the smell of beer and pizza vanished and was replaced by fresh flowers. Like she was in a mountain lake with hot water in spring time.

"How is the water?"

Sofia's jaw dropped. Who cared about the water when Sara entered the room and was naked? Not only this divine sight made her forgot to breathe but also what she saw above the left breast of her lover. A tattoo.

"Since when do you have a tattoo?"

Sara looked down to her tattoo on the leg. "You know about it, it's old."

"I mean the new one."

"Oh." The brunette grinned and stepped into the bathtub. "Nice, isn't it?" She sat down next to her lover, pulled her into her arms and kissed her. When they broke the kiss Sofia took a closer look at the tattoo - and maybe more than the tattoo now that she was this close. It was the letter S and on the lower part was the dog face, that looked like Jenny while on the top sat a cat, that looked like Tiger.

"You got a tattoo of Jenny, Tiger and me?"

"Sexy, isn't it? They have this tattoo artist in the casino, I felt like something new, so I went to him and we came up with this."

"You have me on your body."

"You're on my body quite often. Oh and before you get too smug, it's not forever, it's not a real tattoo. A few weeks and it's gone. So it's not like you, you'll stay with me forever."

"You got yourself a temp tattoo?"

"Yes. Want one too?"

"Absolutely!" She wanted a portrait of her lover on her arm. Or also over her breast? Over her heart? Actually she wanted Sara everywhere, but she couldn't get a full body covered tattoo of her girlfriend, could she?

"We can go there tomorrow, as you see, she's really good. What do you want?"

"You."

"Me? Seriously?"

"Sure. I want a portrait of you over my heart, also a small Tiger and Jenny, so the family is complete. How long will it last?"

"Not longer than half a year."

"When it's gone I want it redone so you stay with me. I've never understood how people could get a tattoo of their lover, you never know how long your love lasts, this is the perfect solution, although I'm quite sure, I won't let you go."

"Same here. Maybe I want a photo of us on vacation as my next tattoo."

"You, naked on the beach?"

"You want somebody else to see me naked? On a picture?"

"Actually not." The blonde grinned. Nobody was supposed to see her girlfriend in her birthday suit.

XI

Red is a lovely color for a dress, it's also a nice color for a ribbon. "Why aren't you wearing a red ribbon instead of this dress?" Sara embraced her lover and kissed her naked shoulder. With a ribbon, the blonde would be the perfect Christmas gift, one, Sara would unwrap herself immediately in their bedroom and play with the whole night. Or even better: for the rest of her life.

"Because if I wore a red ribbon and nothing else you would unwrap me and we never make it to the party, which would upset Pat, Chris and my parents. Probably also Greg, who needs our support for his date, which is no date because you're not supposed to date your colleagues."

"Luckily we're not colleagues anymore."

"Uhm." Sofia grinned. Her lover ignored this rule once, worse, she dated her boss, not only a colleague.

"What? A rule is only broken when people know it's broken."

"For a law enforcement person you have a very...interesting sight on right and wrong."

"When it comes to my private life I believe other rules than law enforcement matter. Imagine we'd live in a country, where we aren't allowed to be in love. That law would make our relationship illegal, but not wrong. Not to me."

"Your point." The blonde finished her makeup. "Do I look all right?"

"Darling, you look wonderful and that not only tonight."

"Aw, you are so sweet when you use song lyrics and add your own charm to them. I love you." Sofia kissed Sara and pulled her in her arms. "We'll have a great evening with nice people, excellent food and in the end a late night/early morning sex in the hotel room."

"Or we go home and make sure the kids are fine."

"The kids enjoy a few hours without us and they don't want to hear us having sex."

"They miss us anyway." Sara petted Jenny's head. Her dog felt it was time to leave, she knew the signs when Sara got ready for going out. Usually she joined her, this time, it was different. It wasn't like the dog wasn't allowed to come with them, as an employee she was welcome, but it was boring for her, she was better off here at home with Tiger.

"We bring them something nice when we come back...this blue dress looks amazing on you. When they have a Santa there, will you sit on his lap and let me take a photo?"

"You want me to sit on the lap of a man, who likes it when little children sit on his lap? I never understood how somebody, who is called a pervert the rest of the year, can be the star only because it's Christmas."

"Santa is a pervert?" Sofia wasn't sure if she was amused or shocked. Did they have a collection of perverts in their apartment?

"If he didn't wear this ridiculous suit and people would use their brains, they came to this conclusion. Imagine it's summer and an old man pulls little children on his lap, while he sits in boxers on Fremont Street. The police would arrest him within minutes."

"How do you feel living in an apartment, that has a lot of Santas in it?"

"It's weird, I feel like I live in a Christmas advertisement. I know what it means to you and I know it took a few hours to decorate everything, that makes it okay. Plus I really like the angel costume you wore."

"Of course you do, who is the pervert now?" Sofia smirked.

"We're both adults, nothing illegal happens between us. Anyway, I'm fine with the decoration, I told you before."

"Good. Now, shall we get ready for the big party? I'm starving and there's enough space in my dress for a really nice dinner and your hand."

"I like the fact you calculated my hand too. It will find its way in your dress tonight, more than once, I'm sure of that."

"With this dress, I made sure it would."

"Beauty has two names." Pat kissed Sara's hand. "Sara and Sofia. You both look absolutely fantastic."

"You mean, beauty has three names." Chris corrected his husband. "Marie is the third."

"That's why we came here, to be told how beautiful we are and have perfect food with that." Sofia smiled and leant back. Fancy sushi, caviar, vegetables, she had never heard of and the best Argentinean steak you could ask for. A mixture, that didn't fit and yet was perfect.

"I didn't come here to listen to slimy people." Marie said coldly.

"She came here to be ungrateful." Mark grumbled. "Honey, we have an agreement, you keep your part, I keep mine."

"Blackmailing a cop is..."

"Essential. Sometimes. Keep your part of the deal and nobody gets hurt."

This sounded more than interesting, her father told her mother what to do. Usually it was the other way around, they must have had a conversation before they came here, about their evening plans. She had to find out what it was.

"Sara."

"Greg." Sara hugged her friend and kissed his cheek. "Thanks for coming here. What happened to your hair?" His crazy hair wasn't crazy at all, it looked calm, like he was...a lawyer.

"I thought, at a place like this, I can't show up like...I looked years ago. It's...wow."

"Not the worst place to work, I know. Greg, these are Pat and Chris, Pat is..."

"The manager of the casino, Patrick and the owner Christian Devine. They're about to write Vegas history with this casino. It's an honor to meet you."

"Mister Sanders, the man, who changed from the lab to the crime scenes outside, the man, who listened to loud rock music and wore weird masks at work."

Greg's face turned into deep red. "I..."

"Don't worry, Sara didn't tell me a single word, I think people should create the work place in a way, that suits them best and try new things. When nobody steps over borders, you can't discover new lands. Now, another beautiful lady, Morgan Brody, the daughter of the Sheriff of our wonderful city. I have to say, Mister Sanders is a very happy person to be your date of the evening." This comment added more red in Greg's face. "I heard you lived for a long time in Los Angeles, Mister Sanders, you should show her the view from the roof terrace. We have a bar up there, I let the bartender know, you get two glasses of champagne on the house. There's also a heated pool, if you care for a midnight swim, let the lifeguard know and he'll make sure, you have a swimsuit available."

"Thank you very much." Morgan said. "I think I skip the swim, it ruins the makeup."

"Not that you'd need some, we do have a wide collection of makeup too. I let the room next to Sara's and Sofia's prepared for you."

"Wow, that's what I call service."

"He's like that all the time, he flirts with women while his husband stands next to him." Sara chuckled.

"A man like Pat makes a woman feel special just by being next to her." Sofia kissed her lover's cheek. "

"He's lucky I'm not jealous." Chris said, his hand on Pat's waist, pulling his husband in his arms. "Although, I'm not sure if Mrs. Brody isn't the lucky, with a good looking man like Mister Sanders by her side. Not to mention, he's also very smart and knows how to have fun. I'd say he's pretty good catch."

If Greg's face got any redder it was at risk to burst.

"Why don't we get you something to eat?" Sara saw the dilemma her friend was in. "Morgan, can I get you something too?"

"The sushi looks good."

"We get you some." Sara got her arm around Greg. "Come on, you look hungry. Leave your hands off my girl, Pat. Or else."

"Don't worry, I keep my lips on her."

"Balls to the throat."

"Or fist in the mouth." Chris suggested.

"The big boss and I agree, a very good sign." She pulled Greg away from the little group.

"Pat kisses Sofia?"

"He does and one day I'll hurt him. You shouldn't forget to breathe, your face is red like a tomato."

"They...Morgan doesn't know..."

"Greg, she does."

"What?" Shocked he stopped and his eyes widened.

"She knows, she's not a stupid woman, she's a smart woman, who has eyes."

"You...are you sure?"

"Yes. Which tells me, she likes you, otherwise she wouldn't be here. It's Christmas, my very crazy about the Christmas holidays girlfriend, told me when you go with somebody to a date around Christmas, it's serious and not only fun. Unless you're in a dive and the PG doesn't look like a dive to me."

"It's fantastic, I need to have a look around...what am I supposed to do? With Morgan."

"Get her some dinner, a glass of champagne and then you do what Pat told you to do, you take her to the rooftop bar and pool, she'll love the view."

"When she really knows...I have no idea what to do."

"Oh come on, she's not the first woman you date." Then again, as far as she knew, he was also not a man, who dated a lot of women.

"But the best."

She let him get away with this comment as they never dated, so he didn't degrade her.

"They have a dance floor upstairs, care to dance with me to some Christmas songs?" Sofia kissed Sara and pulled her closer.

"What is it with you and Christmas? Our home looks like a Christmas advertisement and you play Christmas songs all the time on the car radio. Were you not allowed to celebrate when you were a child?"

"Nope, we had lovely Christmas days; when mom had time for us. But even she didn't work all day, so there were always a couple of hours family time. How was Christmas when you were a child?"

"Not good, you don't want to hear about it."

"I do, but not today, I'd like to hear about it when you're ready to share. No matter how bad your past was, it's a part of you and I love you, no matter what happened to you years ago."

The brunette smiled and kissed her lover. "Thanks, I love you too."

"When I recall it correctly, you had a lot of fun last night under the Christmas tree."

"Yeah, I unwrapped a very special gift." She had unwrapped her girlfriend, the blonde had a point, the Christmas tree was great, especially when you had sex under it in the lights of the candle lights. Or Sofia was dressed in nothing else than tinsel. Actually there are a lot of things you could do with Christmas decoration when you were home, locked the door and switched off all phones.

"Where do you want to celebrate New Years Eve? Any wishes?"

"I offered to work the night shift and hoped you'd be here, we could be at the rooftop bar and watch the fireworks together."

"You offered to work?"

"Yes, my colleagues have family, I don't work Christmas night, so I figured it's fair when I work that night. My boss said when my good looking girlfriend wants to join me, he has no

problems with that. You are more than welcome to walk around the casino, check for explosives, bad people and other things, your colleagues can arrest. Plus you have all drinks and food free. We can't drink champagne together, but we can be together."

"You have an interesting way to celebrate the first New Years Eve with your girlfriend."

"Unique, like our relationship. Plus I make sure, she can spend this evening with her friends, as they'll be here too."

"Your point. Poor Tiger will be home alone."

"Is he scared on New Years Eve?"

"The apartment has a good soundproofing, he is fine. So, with you working tomorrow night, when will we celebrate?"

"When I'm back. You have dinner with your parents, I pick you up at midnight and then we celebrate. You have Christmas Day off, you can sleep in and I have to be back in the casino at four in the afternoon, we can unwrap ourselves until the morning."

"And our presents."

"Yeah, them too." Sara wasn't too excited about the presents. The idea of unwrapping the blonde appealed more to her. Much more than anything.

"Deal."

"Sorry to interrupt your lover's conversation." Pat said. "I thought you'd like to know, your young friend is in the pool and has a beautiful blonde in his arms."

"Really? Chris turned Greg around?" Sara asked amused. "Sorry for the end of your marriage."

"Nah, we turn it into an exciting threesome later. Maybe even a foursome, depends on how open-minded Miss Brody is."

"Okay." As long as Sofia wasn't included in their plans Sara was fine with them.

"Greg and Morgan...he doesn't have her in his arms like...like they're friends?" Sofia asked carefully.

"No, the way they kiss it doesn't look platonically at all. The only disappointment is, she had to do the first step, for a good looking man, he is shy as hell. Luckily Morgan is a smart woman and knew, she had to kiss him or nothing happens. They might need the room I ordered for them."

"You did everything to get them lucky tonight, didn't you?"

"Sofia, I want people happy, when I can do something to get people together, I'm happy to do it. They're also welcome to have their wedding party here."

"You're so generous." Sara said ironically.

"No, he knows it's perfect publicity when the daughter of the Sheriff gets married here, celebrates here. Smart business handling and advertisement." Sofia answered for Pat.

"I knew you're not the deputy chief because of your good looks."

"If it was for good looks, Sofia would be the president of our country." Sara grinned. There was no woman, who was more beautiful than Sofia, so when you had to be beautiful to be the president, it was her job.

"The two of you are so cute. My husband wants to know if your mother enjoys the party."

"She looked like it the last time I saw her, she was in a conversation with the major while my father is lost in the library. Again." The library of the PG became the favorite place of her father. He had been here a couple of times, to read and research.

"He likes it there a lot. Actually, I think he would make a perfect librarian, do you think he'd enjoy a job here? Telling interested guests about the history of Vegas and the States."

"You have to ask him, the last time he mentioned he'd agree to a job offer here...why do you try to get my whole family involved with your business?"

"Because your family is good in what they do. What about your brother?"

"I'm sure you know more about him than I do. Honey, how about we hit the pool too?"

"The rooftop pool or the whirlpool in our room?" Sara cocked her head.

"Oh boy..." That was a hard decision. A private pool party with her lover or a pool party with their friends, an amazing view and a pool bar? She couldn't pick only one. "First the rooftop then the whirlpool?"

"Deal. How about you, Poster-Boy? Want a swim too?"

"I'd love to, unfortunately people expect me to be available here, in my suit and making conversation with important people. In fact, my husband expects it of me."

"I was wondering, when you decide to dump him, how much money will you get?"

"Why? Want me to cheat on him with you Sara and we share the money?"

"That would mean I've to cheat on Sofia, you can't offer this much money."

"I couldn't offer you any money because when I cheat on Chris, I get nothing of his money and will lose my job. A lot of money for some sex, don't you think?"

"Yes. What happens when he cheats on you?"

"I get for every year we're married a million dollar plus half of the establishments we've built up to that date. Also a lot of money for sex."

"True. Is there also a settlement for a divorce both want?"

"In this case he keeps the money he had before we got married and we share what we made together. Why are you so interested in this?"

"I was wondering how rich people deal with their...future without each other. You hear a lot about Hollywood contracts, I wondered if you guys did the same."

"Want to do something like this with Sofia?"

"Sofia and I have some time before we get married, we don't have a lot of money, so I'm not sure we need a contract."

"You cheat on her and her mother will make sure your body will never be found." Pat grinned. "I will help her with it because my sexy deputy chief loves you and when you hurt her, I'll hurt you. So be nice to her, stay with her and make her happy. I need to go, see you ladies later." He kissed Sofia - again on the lips - and left.

"One day his balls are in his throat."

"You like him, you won't do it." Sofia grinned and kissed Sara. "I love you, you're so cute. Care for some bikini time? Maybe you can help me out of my clothes up in the room."

"I'm sure I can help you out of your clothes, I doubt I will help you back into any kind of clothes."

"Fair enough, it's the same the other way around. I'm more than happy to help you undress, but don't expect any help when you want to get dressed." It would take some time before they were in the pool, undressing always took its time; or actually, the sex after the undressing took some time.

Sara was sure since the few weeks she was with Sofia, she had redressed herself more often than all the months before. Of course they didn't manage to change into swim suits and go straight up to the rooftop pool, taking off each other's clothes always led into sex and none of them was willing to stop the other one. Why prevent something you want and enjoy?

"I wonder if the hormones are to blame." Sofia wondered.

"Blame for what?"

"Being horny all the time. You know, menopause isn't that far away, the body wants sex as long as it's young."

"Did you jump every guy before I came back to Vegas?"

"No!"

"Then it's not reproduction, you can't blame your hormones completely, you have to blame yourself too. You're simply horny all the time, probably have been like this all your life."

"Absolutely not! Just because I'm a blonde it doesn't mean I want sex all the time!"

Sara smirked. She could start with, her blonde lover wasn't a real blonde after all, but the last time she mentioned that, Sofia had punished her in a...in the end satisfying way, but until

they got there, it was a long suffering. She didn't want the same experience tonight. Not yet maybe later. "Yes you do."

"Well...with you...before you...I was different."

"Of course." Sara smirked coy.

"Let me tell you one thing, Sara Sidle: I'm not the only one, who wants sex all the time. You are not better because you have sex with me all the time, which makes you just as horny as I am. I never heard you complain about it."

"My girlfriend is a sexy blonde, everybody will understand me." Sara kissed Sofia. "Come on, time for the pool. You need to keep me dressed there."

"Ditto." Sofia opened the door for them. "I can see your tattoo when you wear your bikini."

"So? Everybody knows I'm in love with you, no need to explain myself."

"True." She had to get a Sara tattoo herself. Maybe New Years Eve, when her lover worked and she was here to watch her, enjoy the good food and drinks for free.

They found Greg and Morgan still in the pool, not swimming, but sitting at the bar, that was surrounded by the pool.

"Can I see your ID, please." Sara said and sat next to Greg. "Are you sure you're old enough to drink with the lady?"

"Yes ma'am, I'm over twenty-one. Sorry, I didn't bring my ID into the pool as this area is closed to people under twenty-one anyway. How is the party going on downstairs? Is everybody happy?"

"Everybody looks happy, they have a lot of alcohol, good food, live music. How about you?"

"Me? I'm good. Very good."

"We can see that." Sofia grinned. "Did you free our Greggo, Morgan? Poor shy guy didn't dare to kiss you, you had to do the whole job, we heard."

"He took me here, we shared the work." Morgan squeezed Greg's hand. "I like shy guys, you don't have to worry they wander off with the next woman when you turn around for a second."

"True. You better make sure she stays with you, buddy. Pat already offered you can launch your wedding party here." She turned to the bartender. "We share a Lover's Divine, thanks."

"Seriously? Is he in a hurry getting his place more in the public eye than it already is? A wedding of a Hollywood star draws more attention to the casino than the daughter of the Sheriff."

"The daughter of the Sheriff means, this place is a good place, not a mob place. It attracts anxious people, who want to be sure, they don't leave or win money and get into problems afterwards."

"I don't like being used."

"Me neither...but I like the idea of a wedding party here; when he offers a sensible prize."

"Luckily you have time for that or do you plan a spontaneous wedding?" Sara asked.

"No, we have time."

"Man, a new girlfriend just before Christmas, that means you have to go shopping for her, have to find the perfect gift for her, debate if you want her to meet your parents...no wait, you both work, you don't have to worry about that."

"Do you work too?"

"Until midnight, I pick Sofia up from her parents."

"No party with the captain."

"Nope. Not this year. Sofia and I will have our own private party at home, she'll be my angel."

"Are you Santa Claus?" Greg laughed.

"Oh, I'd love to undress her from that suit!" What a great idea, Sara as Santa in a red suit and she'd be an angel, they could make so many great pictures and have a lot of fun undressing each other later. "Honey, I get you a Santa suit when you wear it for me!"

"Forget it, Greg can do role-plays with Morgan when she likes them, I don't want to look like Santa "Pervert" Claus."

"Santa "Pervert" Claus?" Morgan looked irritated at Sara.

"My lovely girlfriend is sure Santa Claus is a pervert because kids sit on his lap. She doesn't understand he is a kind of a nice old uncle."

"That's exactly what child molesters are, nice old uncles."

"Don't let her near small children, they get a trauma and lose their joy in Christmas." Greg laughed. "Although Sara is not completely wrong, we arrested two guys, who dressed like Santa Claus and had their hands, where they didn't belong. One touched children, one teenage girls. The Christmas fairy gets abused, but I'm sure there are good Santas, who really want nothing else than children happy. And I'm sure when you wear a Santa costume, Sofia won't complain, no matter where your hands are."

"I don't need a silly costume for that."

"True." The blonde smiled. "No matter where her hands are, as long as they're on me, I'm happy."

"Your animals must enjoy the quiet night with you gone." Morgan laughed.

"Our babies will have a party."

"Did you call them?"

"Very funny, Greg."

"In fact." Sara sipped on their cocktail. Whatever ingredients were in Lover's Divine, it made her head feel lighter. Plenty of hard alcohol and some syrup with extra sugar so people drank it and felt good about it. "Jenny can call 911 when something happens."

"She dials the emergency number? No way, she has paws and not fingers."

"Believe me Greggo, she can call 911. Not on the phone but when I was a shepherd, I had an emergency system, a little gadget like a walkie-talkie. It had one button, you press it for longer than three seconds and an emergency signal goes out. Back then to my boss, now to Sofia and me."

"Really? And she knows what an emergency is or you have to tell her?"

"She was trained to use it when I'm at risk. Once I fell, banged my head on a stone and lost consciousness. She got to the gadget out of my pocket and stepped on the button. Then she rolled up next to me to warm me and stayed until they came to help me. This little toy is under our bed, she knows where it is and when she has the feeling help is needed, she'll use it."

"Do you believe she uses it like when there's a fire or somebody breaks in?"

"Hopefully."

"Our daughter is such a smart girl." Sofia praised. "A smart head, like her mother."

"Of course, I trained her well." Sara shot back dryly.

"Teasing each other is an essential part of your relationship, isn't it?" Morgan asked.

"Yes, it's the foreplay we can have in public." The brunette's foot found the foot of her lover. You had to come up with ideas when you didn't want to spend the whole time in your apartment, away from other people and yet wanted the tension, that made you lose yourself when not stopped. Deep down she felt these tensions already, which told her, she wouldn't spend too much time at the bar before she and Sofia would excuse themselves to get changed in their room...and take their time for that. After all, it was Christmas, unwrapping pretty things was part of the holiday deal.