

“Do you want to come in?”

Hell, had she wanted. When Sophie asked her in her apartment, Kate had no other choice than following her. Or Batwoman had no other choice as Kate had shown up as Batwoman, just standing on the balcony of Sophie’s apartment. Why use a door when you can take a more private way into an apartment.

Kissing Sophie was as addictive as it had been years ago. Her lips were so soft and Kate could drown in these, warm, sad puppy eyes that seemed to beg her all the time to hug Sophie, make sure she is all right.

Sophie. Her Sophie.

“Batwoman can’t have a girlfriend. You put a target on her back.”

Luke’s words weren’t exactly the words she had expected to hear when she told him, she and Sophie had been kissed. Or again, Batwoman and Sophie had kissed. A little bit more happiness would have been appreciated. Sophie had kissed her, she had done the first step and this had been the moment Kate had been waiting for for years. How could he not be happy?

Because he was right.

If anybody found out that Batwoman and Sophie kissed, that there was something between them, people would hurt Sophie only to hurt Batwoman. There were enough lunatics and sociopaths in Gotham to jump at the chance to hurt Batwoman.

Not to mention that this would be the end of Sophie’s career with the Crows. Her commander, Kate’s own father, had made this very obvious after he suspended her for helping Batwoman. Kissing Batwoman made it more than clear which team Sophie chose.

Unless she was playing her. Was Sophie trying to get the trust of her commander back by playing Batwoman?

No, that was not her, that was not Sophie. Sophie was...

The one, who had told Kate’s father where Kate and her sister were when Kate had asked her to buy her some time.

Sophie wanted to tell her commander who Batwoman was. When she had believed it was Kate. Did she still believe this? Did she know it? Had she ever told Kate’s father? No, she couldn’t have told him or Kate would have been in a lot of trouble.

You put a target on her back.

Do you want to come in?

Passionately kisses. Many of them. Kisses that should never stop.

Why had everything to be so complicated? Why couldn’t she just be happy? And was Luke right? Was it a mistake to see Sophie? As Batwoman? Did Sophie know who Batwoman was? Did she kiss Batwoman because she knew it was Kate behind the mask?

Only one way to find out.

Kate took the elevator up to Sophie’s apartment, the normal way to get there. Not a jump on the balcony, invading a place of somebody else. No, the elevator and the front door, as any other mortal. And not like a superheroine. The reaction on Sophie’s face should tell her if she knew about Kate’s secret.

What if she didn’t? How should Kate explain why she was here? She had never visited Sophie in her apartment. Not as Kate. And she had never been invited to come here.

“Your father suspended her, you know how much she loves the job, it’s okay to come here and see, if she is fine.” Yeah, if you were friends and if Sophie hadn’t told her to move on. But that was before she and Tyler broke up. Before she kissed Batwoman. Things had changed.

Taking a deep breath, Kate lifted her hand to knock on the door. This was the only way to figure out what Sophie knew, the only way to see if there was a chance for them. Or if her life was even more complicated than she thought it was. Because if Sophie had no clue Kate was Batwoman and her feelings were only for Batwoman, Kate’s life was screwed. Again.

She had to know. They had kissed. Really kissed and not just a peek on the cheek. Their tongues had danced, they both hadn't been able to stop the kiss. And Kate had felt like there had never been a separation, like they had never stopped kissing each other.

"For a superhero you are such a chicken," Kate mumbled and looked at her hand that seemed to be stuck an inch away from the door. How stupid must it look for anybody, who saw her. Standing here like a schoolgirl in front of the door of her big crush.

"This is ridiculous." She knocked on the door twice and put her hand down. It was time to act like an adult and not like a teenager. Otherwise Sophie would prefer Batwoman over Kate for sure. Who wanted a girlfriend, who was too stupid to knock on the door? Who was a chicken.

The door was opened and Sophie stood in front of her, dressed in sweatpants and a white t-shirt. What a beautiful woman.

"Uhm...hi..." I thought it's a better idea to take the door instead of the balcony. Please, please, please let her react in a way that shows me she knows I'm Batwoman. Otherwise I have no idea what to do, what to say.

"Hi."

Wrong answer. Come on, you were more talkative when Batwoman stood on your balcony. You invited her into your apartment. You kissed her.

"I...can I come in?" If she made a fool out of herself she wanted no witnesses of it.

"Sure," Sophie smiled.

Did this smile mean she knew? Kate walked into the now familiar apartment. Already, the last time she had realized there had been nothing that reminded of Tyler. Did this mean Sophie had not bothered to take anything about their wedding with her? Was she done with Tyler? For good?

"Sophie, I..." She had to say something or...

"Was there something wrong with the balcony today?"

She knew! Kate exhaled. Sophie knew she was Batwoman. There was no reason to explain why she was here.

"I thought I try something more...conventional."

Sophie raised her brows. "Really? Since when?"

"Since flying up to a balcony is more Batwoman's style."

"And I am supposed to stay away from her."

"You are supposed to arrest her."

"And I'm supposed to go back to my husband, because that is what a good wife does. My mother loves Tyler and has no understanding for me...us...breaking up."

Shit. Sophie's mother was homophobic, she would never accept her daughter with a woman, no matter if this woman wore a suit or not. Kate had wondered how much fear of her family had played a part in Sophie choosing the academy over their relationship. With her mother back in the picture Sophie might change her mind again.

"I'm sorry."

"So am I." Sophie stepped closer to her. "I'm sorry my mom cares more about what others think than what I feel."

What Sophie felt? Like...what she felt for Batwoman? Kate?

"Are you...going to do what she asks you to do?"

"As she asks for the same your father asked for it's the easiest thing to do."

Kate closed her eyes. Not again. Please. Why couldn't Sophie stand up to what she wanted? Why was she putting the wishes of others over her own? They had kissed, they...it was not supposed to be over. If she had to wear the suit to kiss Sophie so it be, but not again an end to them because of somebody else.

"Okay." It was not like she could do anything. Like back in Point Rock, there was nothing she could do. It was Sophie, who had decided for both of them what was going to happen. All Kate could do was

accept the decision of...the love of her life. Her soulmate.

“On the other hand, I am an adult, I am...I love the job with the Crows, you know it's what I have always wanted to do. But I also want to be happy and when the Crows don't want me happy, I have to find a new place to be happy.”

Like, leaving Gotham? With Tyler? Or without?

“You want to leave? Gotham?”

“No.” Sophie stepped closer, her hand cupping Kate's cheek, “I'm not going to leave Gotham. This is my home.”

“Sophie...” How could the hands of this woman be so soft? And why was she capable of looking at Kate like she meant the world to her? How was Kate supposed to resist her? To act like she and Sophie hadn't been kissing lately.

“You know, you are much more confident when you wear that suit.”

She knows! Sophie knows who Batwoman is.

“That was before your mom came here.” She would not deny she was Batwoman, they had kissed, Sophie knew her lips. She couldn't have forgotten about everything about Kate. She also knew her eyes and...she just had to know Kate was Batwoman. Her last sentence was not an attempt to fish for information.

There was pain in Sophie's eyes for a second. Pain, the memory of her mother's visit had caused and Kate had put the memory in her mind. Why? Why had she mentioned Sophie's mother? Couldn't she just be quiet?

“My mother is not happy with how my life has changed, like your father is not happy with the fact I freed Batwoman, saved her from being taken in by the Crows. Those were my decisions – mostly. I admit, it was Tyler, who left because he knew I am not in love with him and he is stronger than I am. But I decided to help Batwoman, absolutely knowing it gets me fired when I'm caught.”

She had said so when she had freed her. Nevertheless she had saved her. And they had been so close, so very close.

“You did it anyway.”

“And I'd do it again. I believe Gotham needs Batwoman.”

“So do I.”

“And I need her too. You.” Sophie closed the distance between them and kissed her softly. Her, not Batwoman. She was fully aware of who was standing in front of her, whom she kissed. And to Kate it felt like this kiss was even sweeter than the ones they had shared when she wore the suit.

“Sophie.” Kate drowned in the kiss. This was what she had wanted for years, what she had dreamed of for years. Sophie was kissing her, really kissing her. And she had chosen Kate over her mother and Kate's father. She, Kate, was worth more than anything and anybody else. Was worth more than the job, Sophie had worked for, hard worked for, for years.

“You know, you really suck at hiding who you are. Even when you wear that suit and the mask. When you saved me from the fall, when you kept me in your arms, touched my lips with your finger, I knew it was you. No matter what you said afterwards.”

“I had to lie.”

“I know. I wasn't ready. In fact, I told your father I believe you are Batwoman because I was afraid you might get hurt and that a thought I couldn't stand. It was the wrong thing to do, I have no rights to reveal who you are when you don't want it. And it was stupid to believe you'd stop when your father knows. You do what you want and not what people expect you to do.”

“Yes.” If she cared what people thought, what her father thought, she had given up on being Batwoman weeks ago.

“I'll try to be a little bit more like you. Do more of what I want to do.”

“You should always do what you want because it's your life and nobody has the right to tell you how to live it. L...liking women is not a crime.”

"I know." Sophie closed her eyes and leaned onto Kate's shoulder. "It will be hard. Very hard."

"What about your job?"

"I don't want to give up my job."

Of course not. It was way too important to Sophie. If anybody knew this, it was Kate. "So you are going to do what my father asks you to do?"

"I'm going to do what I told you back in the storehouse: there can't be another time. We both have to make sure there won't be another time when you need to be freed because if there will be another time I'm going to...do the same again and then I'll lose my job."

She'd help her again? Despite knowing it was the end of her career? Kate's heart felt like it was about to burst. If this was the truth, if Sophie really picked her over her job, then they had a chance. And it also meant Kate had to be more careful so she wouldn't be in a situation again, that required Sophie to risk and lose her job.

"Then I better make sure I'm more careful."

"Yes." Sophie smiled.

Kate pulled her into her arms. There were still so many questions on her mind. Some more important than others, some easy to ask, others that scared her.

"Does this mean, you are going to date Batwoman or me?" Was she hiding or would she stand up to others? Was Kate allowed to hold Sophie's hand when they walked side by side? Or was she supposed to act like they were only old friends?

"You are Batwoman, when I date you, I date her and vice versa."

"Well, nobody is allowed to know you and Batwoman are dating. Does this mean, nobody is allowed to know we are dating?" More hiding? It had been hard back at Point Rock, when they had to continue hiding here in Gotham it would make life more complicated. Kate already hid so much and she hated hiding. She sucked at hiding.

Sophie lowered her eyes.

She had known it. More hiding. Sophie was not ready to stand up for them. To show the world what they felt for each other. She wanted to keep everything between them, hide it from the world.

"I'm not sure I can be out and proud. I mean...it shouldn't matter, but...I don't think I can do it. Right now. I'm sorry."

"Right now means, you can? One day?"

"I want to but...I'm still married. At least on the papers. Tyler should know we are...back together, it's the fair thing to do. He knows...he knows I've never been over you and when you came back, all these feelings came back. Before we let anybody know, he should know and not learn it from somebody at work."

This was fair. It meant, Kate had to be patient for a while, she didn't expect Sophie to walk over to Tyler and tell him, they were together tonight or tomorrow. Surely, her girlfriend needed some time to get used to them being together, to get the courage to tell Tyler about them. And then there was her mother, her family.

"Okay."

"Are you really okay with this?"

"I'm not a fan of hiding, you know that. Yet, I understand you want to tell him and not want him to find out accidentally. Also, I understand you won't do it today or tomorrow. But...in a near future, I hope."

Sophie swallowed. "I hope I can."

"Sophie, there is no reason to hide. You won't lose your job because we are together. Dad might get the idea of asking me to join the Crows now that things between us are...better. Or, he thinks it's great you're not there because he doesn't like the idea of us being and working together."

"He had no problem with you and Tyler working together." Not that Kate would ever work for her father. No, the time when she wanted this, when she wanted to be a part of the Crows, was over.

"No. I'm not sure what the others will say."

“Screw them, they should mind their own business.”

“They need to have my back. If they don't have my back, I'll get killed.”

“Batwoman has your back.”

“I know and I'm glad she does.” Sophie pulled her arms around Kate. “I wish there was a way I could have both. Or at least don't have to worry about what my colleagues think about us.”

“It's the twenty-first century, people are cooler.” It was easy to say, yet hard to believe when your family acted like being a lesbian was like being a murderer.

“Not my people.”

“No dinner with your parents.”

“Oh gosh, no. Not...in the near future.”

If ever. Kate was not surprised, she hadn't expected Sophie to change her complete life in a blink of an eye.

“But, how about we have dinner tomorrow? I mean, I'm still off work and if you don't have anything going on, we could...”

“I'd like to.”

“Thanks.”

Step by step. Kate knew, she had to take it slow when she wanted to be with Sophie. And she had to be subtle, low key. Not her style, but who said you can't adjust your style?

Dinner with Kate. It hadn't been a long time ago that they had dinner together. Back then, Kate had asked her to meet her at a restaurant to tell her something important. Unfortunately, it had never come to this because the owner of the restaurant had felt offended by them holding hands for a second. As if it had meant what he thought it did. Back then, Sophie had been with Tyler and Kate...had told the man what she thought and had caused a little scene. It had been a nightmare to Sophie, who didn't want people look at her, didn't want people to believe, she and Kate were on a date.

Today, she was on her way to a restaurant to have dinner with Kate and this time it was a date. An unofficially date. She was still married, hadn't talked to Tyler and the idea of dating Kate – again – had not let her sleep a lot last night. Were they really going to do this again? Were they about to repeat what had been at Point Rock? They had been so great together, Sophie had felt safe with Kate and had known Kate always had her back. Now, they didn't work in the same team, quite contrary. Sophie's boss wanted Kate aka Batwoman out of town.

Kate was Batwoman. She had not been too surprised, she had suspected it from the moment when Batwoman saved her from the fall. Kate telling her, it hadn't been her didn't convince her. She knew Kate, knew her eyes. And her body reacted to Kate in a way it never had to Tyler. When Kate was around, she was happy, felt complete. Like everything was exactly the way it was supposed to be.

The question was, could she overcome her fear and be with Kate. Really be with her. Out. Or would she hurt her again? And what would Kate's father, Sophie's boss, say about them when he found out, they were a couple? Would he be cool with it? Surely, he would have less problems about this than her own parents.

Not to mention what happened when Commander Kane figured out his own daughter was Batwoman. One daughter terrorized the city as Alice and the other tried to save it by being Batwoman. How did Kate become Batwoman? Did she know Batman? Knew where he lived, worked? How did she get her hands on the suit and who changed it so it fit a woman? There had to be people involved, people, who knew Kate was Batwoman. Who was it? Somebody from the Crows? A cop? GCPD had called Batwoman for help.

So many questions and tonight was not the right time to ask them. Sophie was not going out with Batwoman, she was going out with Kate.

There she was, wearing jeans and a leather jacket. So Kate, casual and whatever she likes. It was not like they were going to a fancy restaurant, yet most other people had dressed up for their date. Sophie

herself had thought about wearing something fancy and then she decided to go denim. The same clothes, she had worn when she had kissed Batwoman the first time.

“Hey,” Kate smiled.

“Hey. Have you been waiting long?”

“No, I arrived a minute ago.”

“Good.” A part of her wanted to hug her, kiss her, but they were at a public place and the chances somebody they knew saw them was big. The Crows had their cameras everywhere. “Want to go inside?”

“We should go inside or we won't get dinner and I'm hungry.”

“Then let's go.” Sophie was not sure if she could eat anything, she was way too nervous. And remembering how their last dinner together worked out made her even more nervous. What if they were asked to leave again? What if Kate stood up for them again? Had Sophie the strength to do the same? Or would she just sit there, quietly, not saying a thing and blaming Kate later for doing the right thing?

Her nightmare became reality when the waiter took them to a table in the middle of the restaurant and not in a quiet corner. She had hoped for some privacy and being out of the eyes of others. This table screamed being in the spotlight, being seen by others. And to make things worse, there were candles on the table, like they were here for a date.

All right, they were here for a date, but nobody was supposed to know about it. This was not how a low key date looked like. At least not for Sophie.

“You don't feel comfortable,” Kate said, disappointment in her voice.

“I am...a little bit irritated that we sit in the middle of the room.”

“And people can see us, see us having dinner together, candle light dinner.”

“Yes,” Sophie sighed and looked down, “I'm sorry I'm this...shitty when it comes to standing up for myself. For being myself.”

“What do you think is the worst thing that can happen?”

“Tyler and your father coming in here, together with my mother.” This would be a hellish trinity and Sophie had no idea whom of these three she'd be afraid to face most.

“I confess, that is a horrible idea, yes, but I doubt they are all three hanging out together.”

“No.” Sophie stopped as the waiter came back to bring them the menu.

“Would you like some wine to start?”

“Yes, please. Merlot?” Sophie asked Kate.

“A glass of Merlot sounds lovely.”

“Very well.”

Sophie took the menu as if it could help her to hide when needed. She was so nervous. “I'm sorry I'm not the company you hoped for.”

“Actually, you are the only company I hoped for, Sophie. I hope, you relax a little bit, we are having dinner, nothing else. Rumor has it, friends can have dinner together, too. And as we haven't ordered these candles, as candles are on every table, nobody can say we have planned a romantic dinner. It's how the tables here look like. We are only two old friends having dinner together.”

Except that they weren't.

“Yes. Thanks for coming here, giving me a chance to make it up for the last time we tried to have dinner.”

“I'll try to keep my hands to myself.”

Sophie sighed and looked sadly at Kate. She'd like to hold her hand, sit next to her, kiss her. “Maybe we can go for a walk after dinner. I could...walk you home?”

Kate smiled. “I'd like that. And I hope I can go home after dinner and don't have to go somewhere else.”

Like when Batwoman was needed.

"How do you know that you have to go? Does somebody call you?"

"Sometimes, yes. Most times...I hear what's going on. My sister is not exactly low key."

"Can I ask you something?" Sophie played with her napkin.

"Sure."

"It's about your sister and you don't have to answer."

"When it's about her I'm not sure I can answer. She is...not always easy to explain and the person I knew when I was a child."

"No, I figured." Sophie closed her eyes. There were moments on her mind, that had been there for weeks and she hadn't been able to let go of them, hadn't been able to come up with an explanation why this had happened. "Alice had the chance to kill me many times, yet I believe the only time she really tried to was when she dropped me off the plank. After that... Tyler and I were with Mouse in the office, all he did was tranquilize us, tie us up. Then when she escaped, she held the gun to my head, she could have killed me in a blink of an eye, like she has killed many other Crows before. Yet, she vanished without harming me." At nights, she still felt the gun on her temples, felt the cold iron on her skin. She knew, all it took was moving a finger an inch and her life was over and there had been nothing she could have done. At that moment she had been at the mercy of a psychopathic serial killer, a woman, who had killed dozens of people. The woman, who was the twin sister of the woman Sophie...cared for. "I'm glad she did."

"Believe me, so am I. What I don't understand is why. Is it because of our past?" Present. Their past was about to become their present. At least Sophie hoped that the good times of their past could become their present and future.

"Maybe. I don't think she does it because she has a good heart. Deep inside her crazy and sick world she wants me by her side and she knows when she harms you, that will never happen. I told her, it won't happen anyway, yet she believes I might change my mind. Like a part of me still hopes she will change. A ridiculous and stupid thought, however it's there."

"She is your sister." Sophie understood why there was some hope left in Kate. For years, she had believed her sister had died years ago in the car crash, Kate had felt responsible for it, had blamed herself for it. "You haven't turned her in."

"No." Kate lowered her eyes. "I should, I have to. I mean...she is the opposite for what I stand for and yet I can't get to call the cops or the Crows. Like I couldn't have Nocturna kill her."

"How did she tie you up?"

"She bit me. It was totally unexpected, we fought, I thought I had her down and then she moved up and bit me, injected me with Special K. If you hadn't saved me...either she had drained me or your guys had arrested me."

"I think I still owe you a rescue or two," Sophie smiled.

"You told me, there can't be another time."

"No, there can't. Not if I want to work for your father and I hope, you will never be at risk again. It's a not likely, but it's what I hope."

"Sometimes hope keeps us going. For a long time it was the only thing that kept me going," Kate whispered, not looking at Sophie.

Sophie knew, Kate was not only talking about her hope that her sister was still alive, she also talked about them getting back together. The way Sophie had left Kate, had hurt her, it was a surprise Kate didn't want Alice to end her life.

"I'm sorry. When I told you that if I could change the past, could jump on the motorbike with you, I'd do it. Back then, I couldn't. I was too afraid."

Kate blinked like she had no idea what Sophie was talking about. "Are you...less afraid now?"

Was she? Sophie was not sure. She hoped she was stronger and braver, that she could stand up for herself now. She was second in command, had been acting commander, nothing should scare her. In

reality we all had things that scared us, no matter how brave, strong and well-trained we were.

"I hope so." As Alice had pointed out, she was caught in her own prison, in her own lies.

"Good. Because your husband entered the restaurant."

Oh shit. That was the worst case scenario. Or second worst case scenario, her mother showing up would have been worse. But Tyler...he was worse than her commander. Commander Kane knew what had been between her and Kate, he was the only person Sophie had ever told that she loved Kate. What had changed that she didn't dare to tell him about her feelings for his daughter now? Was it because was Batwoman? And Tyler...he had been not cool when he found out Sophie and Kate had been together for three years. Which was not a surprise considering the fact that Sophie had kept it a secret and couldn't tell him, she was not interested in Kate anymore. She had tried. Hard. And then Kate came back and no matter what she told her, that she told her to move on, she knew it was not what she wanted and that the signals her body sent made it clear it were all lies. Like it had been a lie when she had told Kate in Point Rock that she didn't love her.

"He saw you."

Great. A scene in a restaurant. Again. Sophie closed her eyes and wished she could just disappear. Or that something happened that got Tyler's attention off her. An earthquake. She needed a light earthquake so people had other things on their mind.

"Sophie."

Damn. Sophie looked up at Tyler. She hadn't seen him since he had told her to decide if she wanted the same future he wanted. This should tell him she didn't. It was not what she had planned, he wasn't supposed to find out this way, she wanted to tell him in private.

"Hello Tyler." What was she supposed to tell him? Should she apologize for what he saw?

"Kate."

"Hi Tyler."

Gosh, Kate sounded so casual as if Tyler showing up was nothing special, was no problem at all.

"I think I go to the ladies."

No! Don't leave. Sophie's eyes starred at Kate, who got up and excused herself. It was the polite thing to do, she was giving them some time and space and at the same time it was the worst thing she could have done to Sophie.

Tyler sat on Kate's chair, watched Sophie like he was trying to figure her out. Good luck with that, Sophie had problems figuring herself out.

"I heard you are suspended. What happened?"

He'd find out anyway, there was no reason to lie to him. She had lied to him enough. No matter if these lies hadn't been planned or wanted. "I found Batwoman tied up by Nocturna and freed her before our men saw her." She had taken her time to untie Batwoman, she had enjoyed being this close to her. It was not because she was in control and Batwoman was helpless, hell no, Batwoman was never helpless, it was because they were only inches apart and Sophie had been able to touch her.

"Why?"

"She saved my life twice, I thought I owe it to her."

"Twice? I know she caught you when Alice pushed over the plank."

"Remember the court employee, who became judge, jury and executor? When he had the cop killed, I was in the storage room too, with Batwoman. Commander Kane had sent me after her. When the riffles shot, she saved me and brought me to a doctor."

"I had no idea. Why didn't you tell me?"

"I was embarrassed." And she had been sure it was Kate, she didn't want to tell anybody before she hadn't talked to Kate.

"And I never saw the wound."

"No." No, back then they hadn't exactly had an active sex life. It had been her fault, she had pushed him away. The longer Kate had been back to Gotham, the less intimacy she had wanted. As Batwoman



had taken her to Mary's clinic, a clinic Sophie hadn't known before, there was no official statement of a doctor, no sick leave note.

"Are you working with Batwoman?"

He had asked her the same, when she had lied and told everybody, she hadn't seen or talked to Batwoman and he saw a surveillance video of them talking. These videos were had downfall.

"No."

"But you would let her go if you found her again."

Yes. Yes, she would risk her career for Batwoman. Kate. "I can't promise I won't. She is not our enemy. She fights criminals, just like we do."

"It's not her job."

"Batman did a great job protecting the city, he has saved many lives."

"He also attracted many crazy people."

"Alice was here before Batwoman was. I'm afraid Gotham attracts them itself." Some city drew criminals in, no matter who tried to protect the city. All right, that the criminals in Gotham liked to dress up was different from other cities, but that was the only difference.

Tyler looked in the direction Kate had left. "Is this a friendly dinner or your decision?" Tyler's face was stoic when he asked the question. They hadn't talked in weeks, hadn't seen each other since the day he told her to decide what she wanted.

"Kate heard I was suspended and she knows how much my job means to me."

"You are not answering my question, Sophie. Again."

Yes, she had a tendency to answer his questions without answering them. Every time it was about Kate she did this. It should tell him more than any answer did.

"I think our dinner is about to be delivered." Kate reappeared and made Sophie exhale only to let her wonder the next second if it was good when Tyler and Kate were together at the same table.

Tyler got up to let her sit on her chair again.

"I think I have my answer."

"Tyler..." Tyler what? He knew the answer and it didn't change just because she was too coward to say it out loud. "I'm sorry."

"So am I." He pulled the ring off his finger and laid on the table. "Maybe Kate wants it." With these words he walked away, not looking at her anymore.

Sophie buried her face in her hands. It hadn't been a loud scene, it hadn't been a nasty fight, yet she felt like hell. He had made the decision for them. Again. Because she wasn't strong enough to be honest to him and to herself. Again.

"Coq au vin."

The voice of the waiter made her look up. Kate had been right, their dinner was ready and she had to get herself together.

"That's for me. Thank you." She waited until Kate had her plate too and the waiter excused himself.

Now it was time for the next awkward conversation. Kate hadn't left because she needed the bathroom, she had left to give Sophie time and space to work things out with Tyler and she was smart enough to see, Sophie hadn't been brave enough to be entirely honest with him.

"I am not strong enough to stand up for myself."

"He made the decision for you."

"No, he understood the answer I gave him without words. He is not stupid, he knows us being here means, I don't want to go back to him, that I don't share the same dreams and plans for my future he does." Sophie looked at the ring, unable to touch it. "He told me, he wants kids, family traditions. I can't see myself as a mother. Nor as his wife."

"Have you ever seen yourself as his wife? Really committed to stay with him until the end of your life?" Kate asked softly.

"No. Not when I was honest with myself. I tried to tell myself it was the best for me, for my career, that

it was what everybody wants me to do, to be. Pretending to be the person people want you to be gets you where you want to be in society, it doesn't make you happy. It keeps you in a prison, a self-made prison and I'm still not capable of opening the doors and throw away the key. Your sister was right. She might end up in a cell one day, in a dark hole, my prison is one I chose myself and that is worse." "Are you...telling me this was our last dinner?" Kate hadn't touched her food. Like Sophie's food, the steak lay on the plate, untouched, getting cold.

"No, I'm telling you I am not strong enough to be the person you want me to be, the person you deserve to have by your side. I'm just...me." A weak excuse for a highly trained agent. No wonder Alice had made fun of her instead of killing her. Sophie was too weak to waste a bullet on her.

"You look like you had a run in with your sister."

"Worse." Kate leaned back on her chair and watched Luke. Why did he always wear a suit? He could wear anything he wanted or was it a part of his disguise?

"Sophie."

"Why would you bring up her name?"

"Because if not Alice did something crazy it's Sophie who can shake you enough to look like hell. Don't tell me she wants to tell your father who Batwoman is."

"No." Kate was not sure what was worse: Sophie telling her father she was Batwoman or Sophie not having the strength to stand up for herself. Kate had no idea what had happened between her and her husband while she had tried to give them some space, what she had seen and heard was, that Tyler had given Sophie the ring back and Sophie hadn't told him, she wanted to be with Kate. On top of that, Sophie had kind of put their relationship on pause. A relationship, that had just started to warm up again.

And Kate missed her lips, missed kissing Sophie already.

"But?" Luke's voice missed the usual tease, the mock he had used when they had watched Sophie in the bar.

"But she kind of decided you are right: Batwoman can't have a girlfriend. At least not the one she wants to have." How had her cousin manage? Had all these different women made him happy? Or had he felt as lonely as Kate felt. She had tried to move on, she had tried to be with somebody else and Reegan had ended it after two dates. For a very good reason. Kate had lied to her. Something, she couldn't change in order to make sure Reegan had no idea what her real job was. Had Bruce not cared that he had hurt so many women? Did he believe these lies were the better alternative to the truth? And had he left because he was sick and tired of the lies and wanted to live an ordinary life?

"I'm sorry."

"She left me the second time. Kind of."

"Will she go back to the Crows?"

"Yes." As Sophie had said, it was the only life she knew, the only thing that defined her. She had no idea who she was without her job and Kate was afraid, Sophie needed her job to escape the truth about herself, the truth, she didn't want to hear, to see. "She won't tell my father I'm Batwoman and she will help me again. At least that is what she told me." Which meant, Sophie would pick her over her job. Or had these been only words?

"We better make sure she doesn't have to save you a second time."

"Exactly my thoughts."

"How about you put on that suit and catch a lunatic? Somebody walks around and cuts women with a

carpet knife. Makes them grin from ear to ear.”

“Am I only one who thinks about the Cheshire Cat and that Alice is involved? Grinning from ear to ear, it’s what the damn cat did in the cartoon.”

“With Alice everything is possible. Sometimes psychopaths like to pair up.”

Yeah, that was why Alice and Mouse got along. They were both psychopaths. Maybe they found a third person to play their sick games.

“Or, she is related to one of your cousin’s old enemies. This city has some many crazy psychopaths, they have families and sometimes the family members are very much alike.”

Like her and Bruce. Both put on a suit to protect the city and both of them were alone because of what they did.

“I’m on her.” Kate got up. It was not like she had anything else to do. Being a single, Again. Only for a second she allowed herself to imagine how great it could have been if Sophie and she had worked together on this, had stopped whoever hurt the influencer. Sophie and she had been such a great team at Point Rock, they had complemented the other. Everything could have been perfect.

If Sophie was ready to come out and stand up to the world.

But apparently she was not ready for this step.