

# After The Honeymoon

By Wendy Arthur

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This romantic thriller is an Uber, however all characters are created by me.

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This story contains scenes of violence (psychological as well as physical), some of which are directed at women. Readers who are disturbed by or sensitive to this type of depiction may wish to read something other than this story.

This story depicts a sexual relationship between consenting adult women. If such a story frightens you, you better click on the X in the top right corner of your screen right away.

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Many, many thanks to my beta-reader, Norsebard. Your help is very much appreciated.

This story is the next 'episode' / sequel to "After The Storm", and while you don't need to read that to enjoy this story, it might help with some character connections and references.

Comments and/or opinions can be sent to [stagefreakmusic@hotmail.com](mailto:stagefreakmusic@hotmail.com)

## Chapter 1

Kate Marshall drifted out of a peaceful slumber, consciousness pulling her gradually from her dream. As her mind gained some clarity, she felt her body respond to the most delicious sensations. Unwilling to open her eyes, she concentrated on the incredible feeling of the tongue, laving her center with hungry intent. She could feel long, slender fingers brushing lightly across her abdomen in a caress that left a trail of goose bumps in its wake.

Her breasts heaving, body aching with arousal, she focused on CJ's skillful mouth as it teased every exquisite nerve ending to a maddening plateau. With full consciousness came satisfaction, and she climaxed hard.

"Ciara! Oh God, honey. Oh!"

Keeping her lover on the crest of the glorious wave, CJ slid two powerful fingers inside her wife and thrust with carefully guided pressure. Her tongue swirled gently around the swollen nodule, waiting for the moment where she could drive Kate to another blissful orgasm. The raven-haired agent basked in the taste

and texture of the perfect flesh beneath her lips, wanting nothing more than to pleasure her beautiful partner beyond all reason. When the moment came, CJ opened her eyes in wonder, as her own climax flowed through her. She was always amazed how her body responded to simply giving pleasure to her spouse. She watched Kate, as the silky inner walls pulsed repeatedly around her fingers in an almost painful grip and the actress's body writhed in ecstasy. She gentled the intensity of her oral stimulation, guiding Kate through her climax. Finally, feeling the pulsations ease off and hearing her wife gasping loudly, the agent slowly crawled up the petite five foot four frame, kissing a sensual trail over firm abs and glorious breasts towards two sumptuous lips.

“Good morning, beautiful. Time to get up,” the taller woman whispered seductively.

Kate laughed shakily, while trying to get some much-needed oxygen into her lungs. “Uh huh,” was all she could manage at this point.

CJ smiled and kissed her. Kate tasted herself on her wife's lips and immediately returned the kiss hungrily.

“I love your wake up calls. But what about you, my darling?” she asked once they'd parted.

“I'm fine. And anyway, you know I tend to, uh... come when I'm doing that to you.”

Kate chuckled and pulled the tall, stunning Federal agent down for another kiss. “Are you sure?”

“Yeah. Besides, the alarm is about to go off and...”

CJ was interrupted by said alarm clock and they both laughed. Dragging herself to her feet, the taller woman offered a hand to Kate and pulled her towards the ensuite. CJ decided that perhaps she hadn't been fully satisfied after all, as her wife made passionate love to her in the shower. That left them barely enough time for breakfast before they had to leave for work.

It had been five months since their tiny wedding in New York, attended by a few friends and family, with the glaring exception of Kate's disapproving mother. Unfortunately, Kate's brother had been away on business at the time but her father, Eddie, was there and had given her away. Eddie's partner, Jeffrey, did the same for CJ. After the simple ceremony, they had gone to Eddie's restaurant for dinner, drinks and a very musical night. The newly-weds had enjoyed every minute of it.

Afterwards, they went for a short but perfect honeymoon in Montana. The entire week had been spent at their cabin in total relaxation, the basic necessities of life – sleep, food, making love – being the only activities required. But of course, it had to end and they reluctantly returned to the usual work commitments. Kate's TV show, *Deadline*, had really taken off since then and CJ was busy with a not-so-pleasant serial killer case that the Bureau had assigned her to. Being an FBI agent wasn't the nicest job in the world, but it was what CJ excelled at. She was a top class negotiator and psychological profiler, and seemed to always be in demand. But her recent permanent transfer to the LA field office had settled her nomadic lifestyle somewhat and she was glad to be able to spend every spare minute with her new wife.

Walking to the front door of their ranch house, CJ was intercepted by the blonde, who kissed her soundly on the lips. The agent opened her eyes, sighing happily.

“Still glad you married me?” CJ said playfully.

“Oh, yes. Every moment with you is like a honeymoon,” Kate replied, wiggling an eyebrow.

“You are insatiable, woman.”

“Only when you’re involved, Agent Carson. Be careful today.”

“Don’t I always?”

They kissed again and went outside. CJ waved to the actress’s chauffeur before driving off. Kate walked over to her car, where Tony greeted her with a smile and opened the car door.

“How are you this morning, Miss Kate?” he asked politely.

“I’m great, Tony. How was your weekend? Did you do the skydive?”

He smirked. “Yes, ma’am. I didn’t back out.”

“Well done. How much did you raise?” Kate asked as he began the drive to the studios.

“Almost two thousand dollars,” he replied, smiling at her in the rear-view mirror.

“Wow! That’s great. I’m proud of you, Tony. All that money for charity... amazing!”

“Thank you for your generous contribution, Miss Kate.”

He flashed her a winning toothy smile and they continued their easy conversation for the rest of the journey.

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CJ strolled through the familiar corridors of the LA field office, feeling as if things just couldn’t be better. Kate had changed her life in so many ways. She had always been a strong, confident woman, but now she felt a deep happiness. It was something she had never deemed truly necessary for her continued existence before. Now, she couldn’t live without the strength it gave her inside. Taking a deep breath, she opened the door to her office and saw the few agents who made up her immediate group of colleagues, busy at their desks – except for Agent Matthews, who was at the coffee machine, pen stuck behind his ear and a bundle of files clasped under his elbow. CJ went to him and grabbed the slipping bundle.

“Morning, Ethan. Here... let me help you.”

“Thanks, CJ. You want one?” he said, gesturing to the machine.

“Please. What’s all this?” She wiggled the files in front of him.

“They caught the guy last night. You know, the Pomona serial killer?”

“Great. Another one filed under ‘solved’, I guess. Is he alive?”

Matthews grimaced. “Barely... it was quite a stand-off, but they think he’ll live. They’re pinning nine murders on him. Seems if he does survive, he’ll be in jail for the rest of his life.”

“Sounds like a dramatic night,” CJ muttered.

“Your profile went a long way to catching him, CJ. I’m learning a lot from you,” he said, returning to his desk.

She liked Agent Matthews. He was the rookie in the group but he was sharp as a razor when it came to the details. She had known him since his first few weeks in the job and helped settle him in. She looked over at Agent Patrick. She knew he was leaving tomorrow, being promoted and moving to Florida, so he was clearing up some last minute paperwork of his own. Apparently, an Agent Green was transferring in to take his spot and CJ wondered briefly what he or she would be like. Hopefully, as friendly and efficient as Patrick had turned out to be. They were a small group in this office and since it was Powell's day off, that just left CJ and Matthews to work on various mountains of paperwork and some new case files that had been thrown at them by their Assistant Director, Mark Mulroney.

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Getting up from her seat and stretching, CJ headed to the coffee machine for the fourth time. Passing Matthews' desk on her way back, she spotted a photograph peeking out from one of his files. She pressed her fingertips onto the picture and slipped it further out. Her eyes widened in surprise at the familiar name in the photo.

"Why do you have a picture of 'The Double Take', Ethan?"

"Hmm? Oh, it's somehow linked to the abduction of some hot shot diamond merchant. Wanna see the file?" he asked, flipping the folder open.

CJ nodded and took the papers over to her desk. Browsing through the abundant information, the tall agent discovered that the owner of the upscale bar – previously the manager – had been linked to the abduction via his license plate, that was captured on camera outside the diamond broker's workplace. The bar owner was now being investigated. CJ was very curious about the man who had been Kate's old boss, who she found, had previous convictions for drug possession. *'Makes sense, I guess,'* she thought, taking her mind back to last year and Kate's kidnapping.

CJ had met her wife in the most unusual of circumstances, when the very tough little actress had been abducted by, and later escaped from, what turned out to be her vicious, drug-induced ex-boyfriend, who had beaten her to within an inch of her life. When the agent found Kate on the mountain in Montana, it was the beginning of something very unique and powerful. They had an overwhelming connection to one another and it seemed to be love at first sight, accompanied by a strong spiritual bond of some kind. The ex-boyfriend who had beaten Kate, had also shot CJ years earlier, during a hostage crisis situation. The two women's lives had crossed paths in the strangest of ways, even before their meeting and it still bewildered CJ at times.

Focusing back on the file, she scanned through the other photographs, finding one showing the bar owner, Mick Fisher, standing next to that very same vicious ex-boyfriend, Jason Lee Burns. Her stomach heaved slightly and she wondered if she would ever be free of the haunting image of that face. Even though she knew he was now dead, the sight of Jason still made her feel ill.

"Ethan, can you make me a copy of this case file? I want to go through it tonight after work," she said in her calmest voice.

"Sure, CJ. You want in on it?"

"Yeah. I'll talk to Mulroney before I leave the office."

"Great. The AD gave it to me to do some initial legwork. I'd appreciate any help you could give me," the rookie said enthusiastically.

CJ gave him a nod and smirked inwardly at his exuberance. "I'll be glad to help. I'm interested to see where it takes us."

Matthews headed immediately to copy the file for the agent. When he'd finished, he put the new papers on CJ's desk and gave her duplicates of the photographs to add to it.

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The raven-haired agent wandered along the corridor, flicking through the file relating to the diamond broker, raising an eyebrow occasionally at various pieces of information. She didn't realize she had passed the Assistant Director's office until she heard him call out. She backtracked and glanced to the side, through the open door.

"Are you looking for me, Sir?"

"No, but you were heading for a brick wall," Mark smirked.

"Ah," she said, shaking her head in self-deprecation.

"Come in, CJ. Take a load off."

"I'd like in on the..." she flicked open the page, "MacPherson case, Sir," she requested, taking a seat and placing the file on his desk.

"No problem. I sent it to Matthew's to do some initial investigating, but I bet he'll appreciate your help," Mark nodded.

"Did you read through it?"

If this were any other agent, Mark would look for hidden meaning there, like he wasn't doing his job or throwing cases around without knowing what was involved. But CJ wasn't like that. She was pretty straightforward and he'd always found that honesty refreshing.

"Not in great detail but he's a very successful broker and I think we'll hear ransom demands soon."

"I don't know if it'll be that simple. I have a bad feeling in my belly. You know it's linked to Kate's old boss? This Mick Fisher who needs investigating... he owns The Double Take," she said, showing him the photo of the bar.

"I hadn't realized that. Your background knowledge will be quite useful here then."

"I'll get started on it in the morning," she said, getting up to leave.

"Keep me updated."

"Yes, Sir."

She finished up her day – very late – and walked down to the underground parking garage, taking the long way around to get some fresh air. The direct elevator was out of service anyway. Strolling down the street ramp into the dimly illuminated space, she walked along behind the row of parked Bureau vehicles, heading for her car. She faltered when she saw a dark sedan, stopped out in the middle of the driving lane.

Time seemed to grind into slow motion, as she picked out the form she identified as Deputy Director Stanley Francis, standing at the open passenger door of the car, with a gun in his hand. Hidden partially in shadow, she watched as the passenger got out of the seat and stood before Francis, shaking his head frantically, hands spread in front of him in a gesture of surrender. CJ's jaw dropped as she witnessed the Deputy Director shoot the man at point blank range, then turn towards the trunk of the sedan. That's when he saw her, not taking any time to identify her. To his panicked state of mind, she was just a witness that he couldn't afford. She didn't have time to draw her weapon and tried to jump out of the line of fire. But it happened too quickly and the bullet seemed to float through the air, the stinging impact sending the agent backward onto the hard ground. She could feel the blood rushing to her chest, the intense heat firing up her throat. Then blackness descended and CJ knew no more.

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Ethan Matthews cursed when he saw the file lying on CJ's desk. Being the considerate guy he was, he grabbed it and went after the tall agent, hoping to catch her before she got to her car. Slamming his hand on the broken elevator doors, he clambered down the fire exit stairwell. He reached the parking garage just as a screeching vehicle left in a hurry. Thinking it was CJ, he turned to leave, freezing in his tracks when he saw the body lying on the concrete. His rookie heart pounding, he checked the tall agent for a pulse, while simultaneously calling 911 on his cell phone.

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Pacing the corridor of the ER, Agent Matthews tried to decipher what the hell had just happened. There was no trace of anyone else in the garage, no clue as to why someone would shoot CJ. The only thing he could come up with was that the occupant of the screeching car must have been responsible. If only he had gotten a good look at the license plate. '*Cameras,*' he thought, '*I need to seize the camera footage.*'

AD Mark Mulrone arrived a short time later. "Matthews. How is she?" he asked immediately.

"She's in surgery, Sir. Good strong pulse when I found her but she has a gunshot wound to the lower chest. She lost a lot of blood."

"What happened?"

"Just like I told you on the phone, Sir. I went down to the garage to give Agent Carson the file she'd left behind, and found her on the ground. Nobody else there, just a car leaving in a hurry," Matthews said apprehensively.

"Relax, Agent. Did you call her wife yet?"

"Wife, Sir?"

"Yes. They got married, remember?"

"Oh yes. Sorry Sir. I called the studios right after I called you. They said they would get her driver to bring Miss Marshall here," the rookie said, slightly embarrassed at his lapse in concentration.

"Good. I need you to go back to the office. File a report."

"Yes, Sir. Should I go over the camera footage right away?"

"Absolutely, Matthews. Oh, and Agent," Mark said over his shoulder, "good work."

Agent Matthews nodded and left.

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CJ tried to swallow but her throat was as dry as the desert. She had a dull pain in her chest and nausea swept through her. '*Morphine*,' she decided. She slowly pried one eye open, her pupil dilating in shock at the harsh hospital lights. Adjusting to the brightness, she forced the other eye to follow, slowly turning her head toward the muffled voices nearby. She could see Mark talking to a doctor and tried to speak.

"Mar..." she managed to croak.

He had heard her and finished up his conversation, the doctor following him in to check his patient's vitals.

"It's good to see you, CJ."

"How long?"

"You were in surgery for two hours and you've been here in the ICU for sixteen. They're moving you to another room soon," Mark replied in his gentlest tone.

"Katie..." she whispered, knowing her wife would have been sick with worry.

Mark nodded his head in the direction of a nearby chair. The agent turned her head slowly and saw the petite form of her wife, curled up under a blanket. CJ noted the exhausted features, the dark circles under red-rimmed eyes, and her heart melted. Kate was asleep and the taller woman didn't want to disturb her, but she really, really needed to make physical contact with her spouse. Mark seemed to sense her need and went to Kate's side, nudging her gently.

"She's awake," he whispered.

Kate's eyes immediately focused on the figure in the bed. She got up and leaned over CJ, kissing her delicately on the forehead, avoiding the tubes and wires.

"Hey you," she said, trying to hold back the emotion in her voice. But her tears were a dead give-away and the agent lifted her hand weakly to brush them away.

"I'm okay, honey. I love you," CJ murmured quietly, glad to see that Mark had moved the chair over to the bed. "Sit down and don't let go of my hand."

"I love you too. I was so worried," Kate husked.

Mark gracefully made his exit and the doctor finished up his exam.

"I'll be back later, Miss Carson," he said, patting her on the shoulder. "Press the buzzer if you need anything."

Once they were alone, CJ motioned for Kate to lean closer.

"I'm gonna need your help. You're the only one I trust," the agent whispered to her love.

Kate drew back slightly, eyes wide in question.

“Bureau Director shot me,” CJ husked, before a wave of dizziness came over her.

“Sleep now,” Kate said as calmly as she could. “I’ll be right here when you wake. I’ll help you, CJ.”

Blue eyes drowsily slipped shut and Kate put her hand to her chest to try and calm her racing heart, wondering what on earth was going on.

## Chapter 2

The room was dark when CJ awoke. A few small lights from monitors and a slither of brightness from the corridor allowed the agent to get her bearings and scan the room. She had been moved from the ICU and couldn’t believe they had rolled her in here without waking her. *‘I must have been so out of it. Ugh.’*

She could feel a warm weight on her thigh and glanced down to see Kate’s head keeping a much-needed contact with her as she slept. The agent sighed and reached down, gently caressing the soft skin on Kate’s cheek. Green eyes fluttered open and the smaller woman rose to kiss her wife.

“Hi. Are you okay?” Kate said, clicking on a night-light.

CJ tried to clear her groggy throat. “Yeah. Am I allowed some water?”

“I’ll go and check with the nurse. You wait right here,” Kate replied, with a wan smile and a wink.

The special agent smirked at her wife’s amazing ability to make her smile, even when she felt like complete shit. Kate returned with a small plastic cup and a large, clear jug of iced water. CJ eyed it hungrily, licking her lips then coughing out a strangled giggle.

Kate raised an eyebrow and looked at her partner in surprise. “What?”

“I was just admiring your jug.”

The actress smiled widely. “They just dug a bullet out of you and you’re thinking about breasts?”

“Just yours, Katie. Always yours,” CJ replied, wiggling a dark eyebrow.

Kate shook her head and poured a cup of water. She leaned over and pushed the button to elevate her wife’s bed slightly. Perching on the edge, the petite actress helped CJ take a drink.

“Thanks, honey. What time is it?”

“A little after 3:30am.”

“Has Mark been by?” the agent asked quietly.

“No. But Agent Matthews was here about five hours ago. He wanted to speak with you... seemed quite troubled. Can you tell me what’s going on?”

CJ sighed. “Yes. Would you close the door and join me in here?”

Kate frowned at the wires and tubes. "I don't think so, sweetie."

"There are no wires on this side and I need to hold you," the taller woman said, sticking her lip out persuasively.

Kate closed the door, the pane of glass still letting a little light into the room, and returned to the bed. "I'll lie on this side, but *I'll hold you*," she said, switching off the night-light and moving tentatively beside her wife.

Once Kate was settled, leaning back against the pillows, CJ laid her head on the actress' shoulder, feeling an arm drape carefully around her. The smaller woman pressed her lips against her spouse's hair and waited.

"I... I don't know who to trust at work right now," CJ began. "I witnessed a cold-blooded killing in the parking garage. I couldn't see the man clearly. It's not very well lit down there, but I'm pretty sure I recognized the shooter."

"You said it was someone from the Bureau?" Kate whispered at her ear.

"Yes, Deputy Director Francis. He's not my boss but I know him."

"Does he know you?"

"I think he knows *of* me but I have a feeling he didn't know who he was shooting. He just panicked," the agent said thoughtfully.

CJ broke into a coughing fit and held her stomach, her face twisting in pain. Once she relaxed, Kate gave her more water and kissed her tenderly, thinking over what she had just heard.

"Why do you think Francis killed the guy?"

"I don't have a clue, Katie, but I'm gonna find out," the agent said, handing back the cup.

"I wonder if Agent Matthews has some info. He seemed eager to talk to you."

"I'm sure he'll be back." CJ paused. "Hey, didn't you go to work today... I mean, yesterday?"

Kate laughed humorlessly. "Listen to you. Like I'm gonna head off to work while you're in here with a hole in your chest."

The actress convulsed at the words and held a hand over her heart. CJ covered it with her own.

"I'm sorry, CJ. I was just so damn scared."

"I know. But I also know you can't afford to take any time off right now. Promise me you'll go in today. I'll be right here when you get back."

"I... I don't..." Kate saw the dark blue eyes look up at her, one eyebrow raised. "Oh, all right. But I'll be real quick. No re-takes."

"I'm not going anywhere for a few days. No need to hurry on my account."

“I’ll be hurrying on *my* account. I can’t stand to be away from you right now,” Kate said against her ear.

She noticed her love getting drowsy again and clasped the agent’s head gently to her shoulder. Listening to CJ’s breathing even out, Kate decided to close her eyes for a few more hours.

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CJ sat in her bed, eyeing the hospital food warily. She was in a crappy mood today. She was missing Kate, even though it was her who told the actress to go to work. The piles of so-called nourishment in front of her didn’t look very appetizing and she prodded grumpily at them with her fork.

She looked up as the door opened and Agent Matthews paused outside, pretending to knock. The tall woman smirked, despite her bad mood, and waved him in.

“You look a hell of a lot better, CJ,” he said, sitting in the chair next to her.

“Better than what?” she grinned.

“Uh... better than the last time I saw you.”

“Right. Kate told me you were the one who found me. Thanks, man.”

“If you hadn’t forgotten that file, I might not have. Not in time, anyway.”

CJ winced at that and changed the subject... sort of. “Kate said you came by yesterday?”

“Yeah. I need to talk to you. I... but not here.” He seemed nervous.

“Could you help me with my pillows?” CJ said, gesturing him to come closer.

“Sure.”

When he reached over her, she murmured, “Spill it.”

He immediately spoke in a whisper. “Someone deleted the camera footage of when you were shot. Almost immediately.”

CJ inhaled deeply as he continued, maintaining her calm.

“I’m worried, CJ. It had to be a Federal agent, to get access to that.”

“Did you tell anyone? AD Mulroney?”

“No. I wanted to ask you first. I didn’t know who to trust... who to talk to. What the hell happened in that garage, CJ?”

She pushed him back gently and he took his seat. He held eye contact with her and she evaluated his sincerity. The tall agent decided she could trust him... a little.

“Ethan, I will tell you what happened, but not here. I intend on being released soon. Let them do whatever investigating they want. But I’ll need your help. I’m not telling them everything about the shooter until I have more information.”

Matthews nodded thoughtfully, although he didn’t quite understand the last cryptic sentence. “Okay. I’ll do anything I can to help you.”

She smiled at him, then turned to the door where a vision in blue denim and a white blouse stood leaning on the frame.

“May I come in?”

“Of course. You’ve met Ethan, haven’t you, honey?”

“Yes.” Kate crossed the room and kissed her wife, before turning to the rookie. “Hello again, Agent Matthews.”

“Please, call me Ethan. Well, I should get going.”

“As soon as I’m out of here, we’ll talk, Ethan. Doc says, day after tomorrow,” CJ said, not hiding her delight at the prospect of getting out of hospital.

Kate stole a glance at her spouse and motioned to the rookie with her head. “Dinner... our place?”

“Sounds like a great idea. Come to the house, have some dinner and we can sit and figure some stuff out,” CJ offered with a smile.

“You’re on. I’ll update you again tomorrow, CJ. Nice to see you again, Miss Marshall.”

After he left, Kate snuggled up at the taller woman’s side, curling her arm gently over the tender stomach. “Is this okay?”

“It’s better than okay. I think the damn catheter is more painful than the bullet hole. It’s coming out tonight, though. Thankfully.” She sighed. “I missed you so much today.”

“I missed you too. So much so, that I haven’t eaten dinner. I just came straight here,” Kate said, nuzzling a soft cheek with her nose.

CJ turned her head and kissed the full lips, trying not to ignite her passion. Of course, it didn’t work, so she broke the kiss and shook her head, trying to get rid of her lustful train of thought.

“I, uh... I’d better not kiss you again. Not like that and not until we get home.”

Kate gazed into the wide blue eyes, her nostrils flaring from her own instant arousal. “Why, I do believe you are blushing, Agent Carson.”

“Please, don’t tease me. I may just have had surgery but I still really, really want you. This is so damn frustrating.”

“Let’s change the subject then. Why haven’t you eaten your meal? It looks... uh... delicious?” Kate said, scrunching her nose at the plate.

“That’s not the word I’d chose. You should go get some food, honey. Oh... who’s taking care of Kamali?”

Kate giggled. “Seriously, CJ, you’ve been in here for days. Did you think I just left him to starve?” She shook her head. “Tony is more than just my driver. He’s become a good friend and he loves our dog. He’s been walking him and feeding him when I was away.”

“Wow, that’s good. I need to spend some time with Tony. He seems really nice. Maybe we should invite him over sometime? We need to socialize more.”

“Hmm, maybe. We could have people over a little more, but I like that our home is our personal haven, CJ. Our lives are busy enough, so let’s not have too many parties,” Kate teased gently.

“So glad you said that. I think of it that way too.”

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After the agent dozed off, Kate headed to a nearby café to grab some food. Her mind was still on the whole shooting incident thing. She was afraid for CJ, afraid that someone in the FBI knew she was the witness that night. She tried not to show it to her spouse – not yet – not until CJ felt better. *‘No major trauma, but the bullet missed her heart by one point five centimeters, Miss Marshall.’* The Surgeon’s words echoed in her head. She took a deep cleansing breath, ignoring the lurch in her stomach and walked back to the hospital.

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Two days later, Kate’s car pulled up outside the house. She and Tony had gone to pick CJ up and the agent was now trying to get out of the vehicle by herself.

“Whoa! This is never going to work if you don’t let me help you, sweetie. Doctor’s orders,” the actress said, sliding an arm around her spouse.

“It’s not too bad, honey... just this constant, dull pain. But you’re right, I do need your help.”

Once indoors, Tony greeted Kamali and took him for a walk while the couple set up a comfy spot on the large couch, with quilts and soft pillows.

Once the driver left for the day, Kate and CJ had dinner. The actress watched with amusement as her wife tried not to guzzle the delicious food. Later on, they were snuggled up together, CJ leaning back on Kate’s chest as they lounged on the couch, the actress’ legs wrapped around her wife’s thighs. Kamali lay boneless on the floor, exhausted after Tony’s energetic jog around the farmland.

“When’s Ethan coming over?” Kate asked quietly.

“He said yesterday that he had a couple of cases to wrap up, reports to write. He’s gonna stop by tomorrow night. Will you be here?”

“I will if you want me to be. I managed to break from filming for a week, to take care of my baby.”

CJ turned her head and looked at her in surprise. “You did that? For me?”

“Of course. It’s not as if it’s airing next week or anything. We’re filming next season right now and there’s a story line running that I’m not in much. I asked them for a special favor... they said yes. So, I’m all yours for the next seven days,” the smaller woman said, kissing the nose in front of her.

“Do you know how much I love you?” CJ asked, her eyes wide with devotion.

“I do. Do you remember that ‘soul’ thing we talked about at the cabin? It’s definitely true for us. I love you with all my heart, CJ. You’re more important than anything else.”

“I hope you realize that the same goes for you, too.”

Tears filled Kate’s eyes at the thought that she’d almost lost her wife. The agent lifted her arm over her head and wrapped it around her spouse’s neck, nuzzling her face up against the actress’s skin. They sat in silence, crying out all the emotion from the recent events. It definitely felt good to release some of the tension and they slept well that night, carefully wrapped around one another in a loving embrace.

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CJ descended the stairs slowly, her nostrils filled with the smells wafting through the kitchen door. She followed the scent and found Kate, checking under the lid of a pot on the stove. Approaching silently, she slipped her arms around the petite waist, making the smaller woman jump.

“Hey sexy, what smells so good?”

“I assume you’re talking about the food? Not me?” the actress teased.

“Ooh, don’t make me think about your scent. I’ll get all horny. What we havin’?”

“Sesame chicken with lightly-spiced rice. I figured Ethan and his wife would like it.”

“His wife?” CJ’s eyebrow curled.

“Yes, my darling. You know, you really should get to know your colleagues better.” At the agent’s questioning expression, Kate explained further. “He called earlier today when you were asleep. He wanted to know if he should bring all the files from some case you two were working on. I told him to bring everything and if need be, I would leave you alone to work. He said something about his wife and I suggested he bring her tonight.”

Kate stopped and turned in her partner’s arms. Noticing the stunned look on CJ’s face, she smiled and kissed her thoroughly. “Do you think you could manage to help me set the table?”

The kiss lingered on CJ’s lips and the agent’s eyes were still closed. They popped open suddenly and Kate saw her flinch.

“You okay?” she asked with concern.

“Hmm... sometimes it just catches me out. Guess I still can’t flex my muscles too well,” she smirked.

Kate raised CJ’s shirt and checked under the dressing. The agent watched her, feeling so loved by this woman that she nearly started bawling.

“The wound looks all right, sweetie. Maybe it’s just healing, huh?”

“Yeah. I have to say, I feel much better than I thought I would. I was lucky,” the taller woman said, lost in thought.

“You were.” Kate kissed her lightly and went to get the plates.

The doorbell rang and CJ shuffled across the hallway. She opened the door to find Agent Matthews standing there, on his own, with a bottle of wine in one hand and a thick folder of papers in the other.

“Hey Ethan. Come in. I thought you were bringing your wife?”

“I was going to, but the twins got real cranky and I think she wanted to stay home with them. Melissa’s coming down with something.”

“Twins?” CJ was stunned at the amount of new information she was finding out about this young, handsome man.

“Yeah.” His face became all soft and dreamy. “We have twin girls, Melissa and Sarah. They’re almost eleven months now.”

“Wow. I never knew that. Let’s go in. Kate’s prepared a great meal,” CJ said, ushering him into the spacious kitchen diner.

After the greetings and a pleasant dinner, they retired to the living room and Ethan spread all the files he had brought over the large coffee table. CJ carried the bottle of wine – although she was on fruit juice – and they settled on the couch.

“Let’s go over this, Ethan. And it’s okay that Kate’s here. She’ll know everything I know, but please don’t let that get around,” the tall agent said seriously.

There was no way this young guy was involved in any of this. She was pretty sure of that and felt comfortable with her decision to trust him.

“Nothing we discuss about this will be shared CJ, until we both agree to let the boss know. You know, I really think we can trust him. Mulroney’s been really worried about you. When we left the hospital the other day, he was so angry about you getting shot.”

“Let me think about it a little more. And let’s see what we come up with tonight, okay?”

“Sure.”

Kate watched all this with interest. She believed that CJ had sized Ethan up nicely. He was a great guy with a young family – so much to lose – he wouldn’t be tied up in this. And it seemed CJ was his mentor. The actress doubted he had anything but sincere professional intentions toward her wife.

“So, when we were in the hospital, you said something about the shooter?”

CJ nodded. “I can’t be a hundred percent sure, but it definitely looked like Deputy Director Francis. He shot the guy, point blank, then saw me and shot me.”

Ethan’s mouth hung open, his eyes bulging. “Oh God. I can see why you don’t want to tell anyone about this right now. Shit!”

“I’m not sure what he’s mixed up in... and I don’t know who else might be involved. I need you to keep your eyes and ears open in the office until I get back.”

“Absolutely, CJ. I guess that explains the camera footage being deleted. Do you want me to go back and look into this now, or stay with you and go through the abduction case?”

“There’s nothing you can do at the office tonight. Let’s take a look at this file. I’m interested in its connection with Kate.”

At the mention of her name, the actress looked up from her pensive glare at the floor. “Me?”

CJ showed her the copy of the file, waiting for her wife to recognize the names.

“What do Mick and Jason have to do with an abduction?” Kate asked, flicking through the photos.

“It’s more about Mick Fisher. His car was spotted outside the diamond broker’s place of business, near the relevant time. The broker is the guy who was abducted. Apparently, he’s a big shot merchant... turnover in the millions.”

CJ suddenly stilled Kate’s hands as she looked at a photo that had been taken inside ‘The Double Take’. Not having recognized the man in the shot before, the agent took the picture, not quite believing her eyes. She pointed to the figure, standing next to Mick Fisher and widened her eyes at Ethan, who eventually mirrored her expression.

“Kate,” she said, turning back to her wife, “do you know this guy here?”

The actress tilted her head to see where CJ was pointing. The man in the crowd sported a bright red jacket and a trimmed, brown mustache. “Yeah. I met him a few times. He was a friend of Mick’s, a business associate, apparently. I figured he ran a club somewhere.”

CJ’s gaze was fixed on her, intent on her next question. “Do you remember his name?”

Kate gripped her tongue between her teeth as she tried to recall the man. The agent could see the concentration in her eyes and couldn’t believe how adorable she looked.

“I think Mick called him Stan. God yeah, he always said, ‘There’s Stan the Man.’ I used to cringe when he said it. His name was Stan Francis.” Kate’s face began to change as she linked the last names. “Oh God”.

“You have an incredible mind, do you know that? You should join the Bureau,” CJ said in admiration.

“You mean to tell me that Stan is your Deputy Director?”

“Not ours,” Ethan broke in, “but yes, he’s the same guy. This picture is kinda old. I didn’t recognize him at all at first.”

The actress frowned. “What would he be doing as a business associate of Mick’s?”

“That’s what I’m wondering now. He’s been with the Bureau for much longer than this,” CJ said, flapping the picture back and forth.

“You know,” the smaller woman said, taking a swig of her wine, “I often wondered how Mick could afford his swanky cars back then. He would have a new one practically every year.”

“On a manager’s salary?” CJ asked.

“Yeah. Expensive sports cars too. That’s why it made me wonder. I bet if you look into it, you’d find that he bought them cash. Maybe even the bar too. I’d say he was probably up to no good.”

CJ was dumbfounded at her wife’s investigative mind. “God, I love you. You’re amazing.” The taller woman suddenly blushed and leaned over to Kate. “Did I say that out loud?”

“I’m afraid so, honey.”

The cool special agent turned with a frown to see Matthews smirking at her.

“You’re just a big softie, aren’t you?” he said, pushing at his boundaries with this tough woman.

CJ growled. “Don’t tell a living soul.”

“On my honor,” he replied, crossing his heart.

The taller woman grinned at him and focused back on the files. “So, let’s see what we have so far. We think that Mick was somehow mixed up in what? Drug dealing?”

“That would make sense, considering Jason’s downward slide with drugs,” Kate said, nodding.

“Good point. And Mick had priors for possession. So, if that’s true, perhaps they were both involved. And if Francis was a ‘business associate’ of Mick’s, then it’s possible that he was involved with that too. I wonder...” CJ trailed off and Kate placed her hand on her knee.

“You wonder?”

“I wonder if they got into big time dealing. Greed can be a powerful lure for these guys. Diamonds might have been their next logical step. Even bigger bucks.”

Ethan nodded. “It certainly seems possible. I can look into Mick’s vehicle and property purchases. Check out his bank accounts too,” he said, emptying his one and only glass of wine.

“I’d appreciate it, Ethan. This could all be linked, somehow. It wouldn’t surprise me one bit.”

Kate grasped CJ wrist. “So... do you think the guy that Francis shot could be the diamond broker?”

CJ’s jaw dropped. “God, it could’ve been. Do you have a photo of him, Ethan? I didn’t see him clearly but we could try and match a description.”

The rookie flipped through the other photos. “Damn. No, there isn’t one yet. I’ll get one though.”

“Fine. And remember, don’t talk to anyone. We still don’t know who deleted the camera footage,” CJ warned.

“Right. Well, I’ll head off. You look kinda tired, CJ.”

“I am, yeah. Will you come by tomorrow... or call me if you have anything else?”

“Of course. Take care, and thanks for a great dinner, Kate.”

“You’re welcome, Ethan,” Kate said, as she walked him to the door.

“Ethan?” the agent shouted from the living room, “be careful.”

“I will. See you later.”

Once Kate returned to the couch, CJ was quick to take her into her arms. She kissed her beautiful wife and moaned as she felt the actress slide a warm tongue into her mouth. They were breathless when they parted, holding themselves only millimeters apart.

“Do you have any idea how incredible you were tonight?” the agent asked, rubbing noses with Kate.

“Me?”

“Yes. You were so quick to connect the dots... and figure out that maybe, just maybe, they were all linked somehow. You’re amazing, Agent Marshall,” she grinned, licking the tip of the pert nose.

“I’m not sure I’m good enough to be a Federal agent...”

“You’re better than most I’ve met. You’re tough, intelligent, have a bucket load of common sense and you have a wonderful investigative mind.”

“Wow, that’s quite a compliment, my dear,” the actress smirked. “Thank you.”

“It’s simply the truth,” CJ replied, initiating another kiss. “Take me to bed.”

“I’ll let Kamali out, then I’ll be right up. You take your time and give me a shout if you need any help.”

Kate got up and took the glasses to the kitchen. “Good to see Ethan only had one glass,” she shouted.

“Yeah, he’s a sensible guy. I never realized he had a family. He’s got his hands full, that’s for sure.”

CJ tidied the files and put out the lights, hearing Kate return with the dog. Kamali went to his bed after receiving his head scratch from the agent and the two women went upstairs, hand in hand. Curled up in bed, CJ held her wife close, listening to the relaxing sounds of Kate’s slumber. The agent’s mind was still spinning and she tried to concentrate on the warm breath that passed over her neck. Her eyes soon drifted shut and she slipped into a fitful sleep.

\* \* \* \* \*

Agent Matthews fidgeted as he stood outside the Assistant Director’s door. Trying to slow his breathing, he smoothed out his shirt and knocked. He had been summoned to provide an update on the shooting and wasn’t sure what to tell his boss. He really wished CJ were here to back him up.

“Come in... ah, Agent Matthews, take a seat.”

“Sir. You wanted to see me?”

“Yes. What do you have so far? Did you get the camera footage?”

“Uh...”

“Agent?”

“Sir, someone deleted it,” he said, clenching his jaws together.

“Deleted it? Who?”

“Honestly Sir, I have no idea. I went to seize it less than two hours after the shooting and someone had gotten to it first.”

Mark leaned forward on the desk, placing his chin on his clasped hands. The silence became slightly uncomfortable for the rookie and he felt he should have more information to offer.

“I’m sorry, Sir. I wish I knew more. But even the forensics team you sent down to the garage turned up nothing. If we could just ID the car, I bet they would find something inside it.”

“I’m sure they would, Agent. This camera system... is it digital?”

“Uh, yes Sir. I think it’s pretty much state of the art.”

“I wonder...”

“Sir?”

“You may not know this, Matthews, but I’m quite the technical whiz. I’m wondering if it would be similar to retrieving deleted files from a computer. I’ll look into it. Leave that with me. Anything else?”

“Not so far, Sir. Agent Carson is doing well. She’s at home with her wife. Miss Marshall took some time off,” Ethan winced slightly, wondering if he was giving too much info to the boss.

“That’s good. Keep me updated, Agent.”

“Yes, Sir.”

Agent Matthews quickly vacated the office, his pulse racing. He was anxious to find out if the AD could indeed recover the camera information. Was that even possible? He didn’t know. But if it was, that would mean Mulroney was on their side, wouldn’t it?

### **Chapter 3**

“Hello?”

*“Oh hi, CJ. I was calling to see how you were doing. Feeling better?”*

CJ immediately recognized the voice. “Hey Dad. Yeah, I’m much better. Katie’s taking good care of me.”

*“Oh that’s wonderful. It’s such a dangerous job you have. I don’t know how you do it,”* Eddie said, blowing out a gust of breath.

“Well, I seem to be pretty good at it... except when I’m catching bullets.”

*“Oh, you and your cop humor. But seriously, take care honey. Katie loves you so much. We all do. Is my lovely daughter there? We have news.”*

“She’s out getting groceries with Tony. What’s the news?” CJ asked, raising a dark eyebrow.

*“Well, I kinda wanted to tell you both together but I know Katie will understand. I’m just bursting to tell everyone.”*

“Dad, tell me already.”

*“Well, Jeffrey and I were talking about how beautiful your little wedding was and well, we’ve decided to tie the knot!”* Eddie was practically shouting in his excitement.

“Wow, congratulations! That’s great news. When?”

*“Oh! I don’t know. Hold on, honey. Oh!”* A long pause. *“Sorry CJ. I get so emotional.”*

“That’s all right. Why don’t you go and pull yourself together, and call us back in about an hour? Katie will be back by then.” CJ suggested gently.

*“Okay, sweetheart. I’ll call back. Bye for now. Oh!”*

“Bye Dad.” CJ shook her head and smiled at Eddie’s antics.

She adored him and completely loved the fact that she could call him Dad. She hadn’t been able to call anyone that since she was little, and even then, it never felt as loving as this. She smiled again and headed for the door, hearing the car pull up outside.

Kate looked at the tall, beautiful figure standing in the doorway. CJ had her light grey sweat pants on, Kate’s oversized UCLA sweater, dark hair tumbling over broad shoulders... and a sparkle in her blue eyes.

“Hey, Miss Carson,” Tony said, as he carried a few bags into the kitchen.

“Hi, Tony. I told you to call me CJ. And you really need a raise for all this extra work you’re doing,” she smirked.

He walked back through the hallway just as Kate came in the door with two more food packages.

“I get a great salary. I’m happy to do what I can,” he replied, flashing a smile at them both.

“Yeah, sweetie, don’t go giving him ideas,” Kate laughed.

“I’ll go pick up your messages at the studio, Miss Kate. Want me to take Kamali?” he said, hopefully.

“Looks like he beat you to it, Tony.”

He turned to see the dog standing by the car, wagging his tail furiously. Tony nodded and left with the dog in the front passenger seat. CJ turned to find a very cute, blonde actress standing toe to toe with her.

“You looked completely gorgeous standing there when I arrived,” Kate purred.

“I did, huh? Could you resist me if I did this?”

The tall woman leaned down and kissed her wife, immediately inserting her hot tongue into the welcoming mouth. A strong hand cupped Kate’s mound and pressed into her center.

“Ohh!” she moaned against CJ’s lips.

Kate led the agent to the stairs with a very sensual look on her face. CJ followed her, feeling a twitch in her groin and the blood rush to all kinds of places in anticipation.

Standing next to their bed, Kate tenderly undressed the agent, taking her time to kiss each piece of skin as it was uncovered, lingering on already hardened nipples. CJ watched her and licked her lips, trying to keep her breathing steady. Kate stood mere inches from her face now, delicate nostrils flaring, eyes green as emeralds.

“Lie down. I want to make love to you but we need to be careful.”

CJ didn’t answer. She sat down and backed herself into the center of the bed, lying back on the pillows. Kate undressed slowly, the agent’s eyes seemingly touching her skin as she removed each item of clothing. The actress couldn’t breathe. Between the unbelievable physical need to be with her wife and the emotion of almost losing her, she thought she might faint before she got on the bed.

Crawling over to CJ, she kissed her lightly on the stomach, just under the small dressing covering the gunshot wound. She looked up to make sure her lover wasn’t in pain. She found a face, flushed with readiness and eyes darkened with desire, staring back at her. CJ reached with her right hand and guided Kate’s hips over to straddle her face. The actress suddenly found herself staring down at a dark thatch of slightly curled hair.

“Oh yeah...” she gasped.

As her wife’s legs fell open, the actress licked her lips and lowered herself down slowly.

“Touch me, Katie. Please.”

Kate used one hand to spread the swollen outer lips wider and covered the hard little nodule with her mouth, trailing her tongue slowly back and forth, tasting CJ’s arousal. She felt a low groan vibrate through her as CJ feasted on her aching center. The agent’s tongue slid over her sensitive bundle of nerves with familiar ease, driving her toward that heavenly release. They both knew one another so well, skillfully applying the pressure needed to gradually build the desire, spending time fueling the burning need within. Kate intensified her caresses, nuzzling CJ’s flesh with her mouth, her nose teasing the agent’s opening as it grazed against it.

“Oh Katie...”

CJ brought her hand up and trailed her two fingers through Kate’s wetness. The actress gasped and sucked on CJ harder, flashing the tip of her tongue over the agent’s clit the way she knew would push CJ over the edge. Almost simultaneously, the taller woman entered her with two fingers, plunging them deep within the wet opening, the agent’s tongue returning to the sensitive ridge to bring Kate to climax with her. She felt the silky inner walls clamp down as she thrust the digits in and out. She concentrated on the sensation and the feel of Kate’s mouth on her. Their orgasms were mere seconds apart, both of them trying not to writhe around, afraid of losing the most delicious of connections. As the powerful waves gradually subsided, Kate

could no longer hold her own body weight and threw herself off to the side in order to avoid her injured spouse. CJ gasped for breath and slapped a nearby buttock.

“You are... so good at that,” the agent gasped. After an incoherent mumble into the mattress, she added, “What was that?”

Kate lifted her head. “I said, you’re not so bad yourself.”

“I love you, Katie.”

Kate could hear the smile in her wife’s voice and wriggled around to lie beside her. “I love you more, my darling.”

“Hmm... not possible,” the agent replied, in a well-known and loved exchange.

“Oh, I beg to differ,” Kate played along.

“Shall we agree to disagree?”

“I believe we shall,” the actress said, nibbling a sweaty collarbone. “You taste great.”

“Let me check...”

CJ kissed her spouse deeply, tasting herself on Kate’s lips. Their combined flavors mingled in a melting kiss, leaving the actress moaning and breathless. The agent took a deep breath and drew her fingers through the blonde hair, staring at her wife, wondering how the hell she got so lucky. Just as they were beginning to relax into the warm afterglow, the phone rang on the nightstand, making Kate jump. Then someone pressed the doorbell and their peace was shattered.

“Damn... uh, you get the phone. It’ll be your Dad. I forgot to tell you he called. I’ll get the door,” CJ said, trying to get up and struggling slightly.

“Here... let me help, honey. Take it easy.”

Once CJ was up and adequately dressed, she straightened out her hair and carefully descended the stairs. Tony handed her the messages and tried to hide his grin at the sheepish look on the agent’s face, before making a quick exit. Kamali headed straight for his water bowl then plopped himself down in his oval-shaped doggy bed.

Heading into the kitchen for painkillers and a drink, CJ noticed that all the groceries were still sitting on the table. Clearly, making love was much more important than putting them away. ‘*Oh yeah,*’ she thought with a contented sigh. A short while later, Kate came through the door and saw CJ leaning against the counter, reading the messages Tony had delivered.

“Hey you. Anything interesting for me?”

“Not really, but apparently you have a big pile of fan mail back at the studio,” CJ grinned.

“Well, I *am* a super hot TV star, you know,” the actress said, slipping her arms around the tall woman’s waist. “How do you feel? We didn’t overdo it, did we?”

“No. I feel fine. Thank God for keyhole surgery, huh?”

“Yeah,” Kate said quietly, resting her head on CJ’s upper chest.

“I’m fine, Katie.”

“I know.”

“Great news about Dad and Jeffrey, huh?” the agent said, lightening the mood.

“It’s fabulous news. Oh no, I’m starting to sound like my father,” Kate giggled.

“Well, I’ll still love you. Just don’t start flailing your arms around and we’ll be fine.”

Kate smiled and leaned into her wife again, hearing the soothing beat of her heart. They stood for a while, before realizing that they hadn’t eaten dinner. Kate decided to make a simple meal and they talked easily while CJ sat at the dining table, admiring the small body standing by the stove.

\* \* \* \* \*

As the sun was setting, the two women sat on the porch swing at the back of the house. Kamali lay on the grass nearby, chewing on a rather large bone, his tail occasionally batting on the ground when one of his mistresses looked his way. CJ pushed her foot off the deck again to restart the motion of the seat and Kate sighed at her shoulder.

“What are you thinking?” the actress asked sleepily.

“Hmmm... just running around some work stuff in my head. Sorry. I’m just trying to figure it all out.”

“Don’t apologize. I’ve been wondering about it too. I really want to help you any way I can, CJ.”

“You are. You always do. Whether it’s your brilliant deductive reasoning... or one of your amazing distractions,” the agent said, cupping a nearby breast, “I welcome it all.”

Kate grinned. “Well, I do love to distract you. But I’m serious, honey. I’m worried about you... and this,” she said, covering CJ’s injury.

“I know. But we’re in this together and I won’t keep anything from you. Promise.”

Kamali suddenly jumped to his feet, ears pricked forward. He started to bark loudly and ran around to the front of the house. Kate got up and quickly followed him. CJ cursed and tried to keep up.

The dark car coming up the driveway was moving pretty fast and the tall agent got a bad feeling in her gut. Never before had she felt so uncertain about seeing a Bureau sedan heading toward her. As CJ lingered directly behind Kate, holding her arm, Kamali stood guard in front of them but had stopped barking. The Assistant Director got out the vehicle and the tall woman’s stomach flipped. She vaguely wondered why she was so unsure about Mark, before realizing that she had been shot by a *Deputy* Director. She was conflicted in her feelings toward her friend now, not knowing if he was involved in the whole thing or not. It really pissed her off.

She took one look in his worried, dark eyes and knew somehow, that he was not here to harm her. Agent Matthews getting out of the passenger seat seemed to confirm that.

“What’s going on?” she asked warily. “Ethan?”

“It’s okay, CJ. The Assistant Director managed to recover the camera footage. He’s here to help.”

CJ looked at Mark and was slightly surprised to see him smile at her.

“Can we go inside?” he asked.

The taller woman was stunned into silence. She wasn’t sure why exactly, but the end result was the same – she couldn’t speak.

Kate came to the rescue. “Yes, of course. This way, Mark.”

The slim man was warmed by her easy manner and walked into the house, belatedly followed by CJ and Ethan. Kate eased the tension by offering coffees and they all sat around the dining table in the kitchen.

“I wish you had come to me, CJ. But I understand why you felt you couldn’t,” Mark said plainly.

“What do you mean?” she asked, still not wanting to give in to him just yet.

“I retrieved some footage from the camera system. Whoever tried to delete it obviously wasn’t aware of any data recovery techniques. Anyway, it wasn’t all that difficult to get. Seems our system created a hidden backup. I have it here,” Mark said, placing a disk on the table. “The Deputy Director is clearly visible, but he’s the only thing that is.”

“So it *was* him?” CJ asked, her eyes dropping in defeat.

“Yes. You weren’t sure?”

“Not a hundred percent, Sir. I kept doubting myself.”

“That’s not like you, Agent. Anyway, you were right and we really need to keep this between us for now.”

CJ looked up at him uncomfortably, suddenly very aware that there was a non-FBI agent at the table. Mark grinned half-heartedly.

“Ethan filled me in, CJ. I wouldn’t expect anything less.” He turned to Kate. “I heard from my rookie that you’d make a good Agent. Want to join my team?”

Kate held back a laugh. “Not officially, but I’m grateful that you’re allowing me to be here now.”

“I doubt I could stop you. Or her,” he replied, nodding to CJ. “I think between the four of us, we’ll figure this out. I assume I can trust you?”

Kate nodded, aware of how much CJ was struggling with that concept right now.

Ethan cleared his throat. “Can we watch the footage, Sir?”

“Yes. Are you okay with that, Miss Marshall?”

Kate looked to her wife, who nodded slightly.

“Yes.”

“Am I clearly visible, Sir?” CJ asked uncertainly.

“It only catches you from behind and only while you’re standing. Before you...”

“Okay.” She cut him off. “I’ll get my laptop.”

CJ was struck dumb once more as she watched the Deputy Director shoot her. Once he had dumped the man into the trunk of his car, he started walking towards her prone body. A quick glance in the direction of the fire exit stairwell and Francis immediately darted back to his car and high-tailed it out of the garage. Ethan arrived a few seconds later and really had saved her. The rookie looked at her now and swallowed hard, realizing how much luck and timing had played a part in CJ’s close brush with death.

After they had viewed the footage for the second time, the agent gave the disk to Mark and slumped back in her chair. They had gathered behind her to watch it and Kate remained with her hands on her wife’s shoulders. The two men sat down, Mark rubbing his head fretfully and Ethan leaning stiffly on the table. They had all agreed that it was the Deputy Director who held the gun.

Mark explained to CJ that Ethan had told him about the MacPherson case, and how it might be linked. He had agreed that it was a definite possibility and they began to discuss the abduction.

“Have we managed to get Mick Fisher in for questioning?” CJ finally broke the silence.

“I sent Powell and that female agent who transferred in... what’s her name again, Matthews?”

“Uh, Jamie Green?”

“Yes. I sent Powell and Green out again this morning. Seems he’s AWOL. The manager at The Double Take says he hasn’t been in for a while, which apparently is not unusual, but I have a feeling he’s disappeared. When Ethan told me about your suspicions, I checked up on Francis briefly. He knew MacPherson, so it’s more possible than you might think that all this is linked. And before you ask, Francis is on leave... for another week. I haven’t tracked him down yet.”

CJ nodded while she absorbed that. “Do you know anything about Francis that might be useful, Sir? Anything about his character?”

“I’ll need to get a hold of his records but the only negative thing I know about him is that he was uh... caught with a prostitute once... a few years back. It was covered up quite efficiently by his peers.”

“Nice,” CJ said sarcastically. “Anything more on getting a photo of the diamond broker, Ethan? That footage is not so clear.”

“I contacted his wife. She’s looking through some photos. I said I’d pick them up in the morning. She’s so worried about him that she wasn’t much use at first. But she’s very co-operative now.”

“Good. What else?” the tall agent said, getting a little edgy.

Kate lightly massaged her shoulders and CJ instantly relaxed her posture. The Assistant Director flipped through the file.

“We still have a Federal agent to identify. It’s someone who knows how to get to the cameras and somehow avoid the staff down there. It’s got to be one of ours... someone from our office,” Mark said,

stifling his irritation. "I'll start on that trail tomorrow. They won't be suspicious of an Assistant Director asking questions."

"Should I be worried about my safety?"

"I don't think so, CJ. Francis must have been pretty damn sure he'd killed you, or that you would have succumbed, otherwise he would have followed up on it. And he didn't send anyone to the hospital to ID you, did he?"

Kate's face had suddenly become pale and CJ had tensed again at the directness of Mark's words.

"Sorry, Kate. That was a bit much," he offered.

"No. It's okay. It's just the truth, I suppose. I never saw anyone interested in CJ's room, other than the doctors and nurses," she said, wrapping her fingers around the larger hand that had settled over hers on the agent's shoulder.

"Okay, good," Mark said, exhaling slowly. "I think that's enough for now. We'll let you get to bed. I'll call you in the morning, CJ."

"Yes, Sir."

"I think, considering this situation, Mark will suffice. You too, Ethan," he said to the rookie. "But only between us. If I hear that name in the office, I'll wipe the floor with you. Understand?"

CJ was amused by his interaction with Ethan and pursed her lips to cover her smile. Ethan's eyes were wide with... fear? Then he saw the AD wink at him.

"Yes, Sir. I mean, Mark," Matthews replied, nodding.

After they left, the two women were exhausted and went to bed. Kate lay awake, drinking in the sight of the agent's profile in the moonlight. Her eyes were closed, lips slightly parted, her right arm draped above her head, over the pillow. The actress thought she looked like a Greek goddess and leaned her arm between CJ's breasts to clasp a hand around her neck.

"Can't you sleep, honey?" the taller woman asked drowsily.

"I will, soon. I'm just admiring the view."

A half-grin curled the dark lips. "Are you worried about what was said tonight?"

"Of course. But I feel they're both in your corner, CJ. I'm not worried about that."

"You felt that too, huh? That's good. Makes me more sure of my trust in them."

"I think you can trust them, honey. I just worry about you getting well. How are you feeling? You looked uncomfortable at the table earlier."

"I feel fine actually. More likely, I was just squirming down there because of the case."

"Yeah. It would be different if there weren't Feds on the other side of this."

“Exactly,” the agent said, turning to her wife. “How about you turn around and we try to get some sleep?”

Kate kissed her and turned, pressing her body as far back into CJ as she could without putting too much pressure on the agent’s wound.

“I love you, CJ.”

“Love you too, Katie.”

\* \* \* \* \*

The young agent sat in the driver’s seat of the dark sedan, aware of the tension in the air, most of it emanating from the older man in the back seat. The car was parked outside Pearson’s warehouse, an abandoned storage facility on the outskirts of LA.

“Why isn’t he here yet?” Francis spat from the back seat.

“I don’t know, Sir. He said eleven o’clock. Do you think he’s backing out?”

“I doubt it. He’s cut in for twenty-five percent.”

“He’ll be here... but we did say we’d meet him inside,” the young man reminded.

“Do you have your gun?”

“Yeah. Ready?”

“Let’s do it,” the Deputy Director growled.

The two men walked into the darkened warehouse, scanning around for their contact, the man who could break into the diamond broker’s store and crack the safe if the codes were false. Francis had coerced the combination out of Miles MacPherson before he killed him but he didn’t take it for granted that they were correct. This would be a relatively quick four million dollars to make. He already had a buyer lined up for the diamonds. ‘*Easy pickings*’, he thought.

They headed deeper into the building, finally coming across the man they were looking for. He wasn’t what Francis had imagined when he spoke to the guy on the phone. Still, Fisher had recommended the thief, saying he was the ‘best damn safe breaker in the business.’

“You the boss man?” the thief muttered.

“Yes. Do you still want in on the deal?” Francis asked warily.

“Sure I do. I might not have to work again after this job. One thing though...”

“What?”

“Me and my pal here... we want half each,” the man said, pointing between himself and the younger agent.

“That leaves me and my buddy with jack shit. No deal. It’s twenty-five percent or nothing...” the Deputy Director stated.

“That’s too bad.”

Francis turned to his colleague and found himself staring down the barrel of the agent’s gun. The end of the Deputy Director’s life came quickly as the bullet hit directly between his eyebrows.

“I’m guessin’ you got the damn combination and buyer info before you did that?”

“You think I’m an idiot? Of course I got them. So, half each it is then,” the agent said, re-holstering the weapon. “Fisher’s already taken care of. We’re home free.”

“Just don’t be thinkin’ of doing me next. I’m always armed. Will they be able to trace that?” the thief said, kicking Francis on the forehead.

“Nah. I took the gun out of evidence... its not registered. So fucking simple, huh?”

“I guess. Let’s get goin’. MacPherson’s place isn’t far from here. You got a key?”

“Yep. They had one at the office. Like I said... so fucking simple.”

The two criminals walked out of the building, leaving the body for the cops – or whoever – to find. They didn’t really give a damn.

#### **Chapter 4**

The next morning, Kate fiddled with her ‘visitor’ badge. It just wouldn’t sit right on her lapel. CJ led her down the corridor towards her office and opened the door, finding Agents Matthews and Green looking over a case file and muttering wildly at one another.

“Morning, Ethan,” the tall woman said, eyeing the other tall woman with interest. “Morning. You must be Jamie.”

“That, I am. Are you Agent Carson?” the tall blonde purred, looking CJ up and down languidly – and somewhat dangerously – with her dark brown eyes.

CJ knew that look, but she didn’t welcome it. *‘Quit eye-fucking me and act like a professional,’* she cursed internally.

“Please call me CJ. This is Kate Marshall, my *wife*,” CJ said, maintaining her aloof exterior but leaning heavily on the last word.

Ethan watched with wide eyes as the two beauties marked out their territory. He could just imagine them in a duel. It would have been slightly amusing if he didn’t know CJ so well. She could get quite aggressive if she was provoked. Although, he suspected Green would give as good as she got.

Kate stepped forward and shook Jamie’s hand. “Nice to meet you, Agent Green.”

“Well, it seems we’re all on a first name basis here, so, call me Jamie.”

“Okay, Jamie. Where did you transfer in from?” Kate said, making polite conversation to give CJ a chance to calm down.

Jamie frowned, noticing the visitor badge and wondering how this little cutie knew her history.

“They brought me in from violent crimes in Washington. I always wanted a transfer to the West Coast, so here I am,” Green said, placing her hands briefly on her own chest as she smiled sensually at Kate, batting her eyelashes.

CJ ground her teeth together and stood behind her wife, placing both hands on the actress’ shoulders. “We just came in to pick up a couple of things and see the boss. Is he around, Ethan?”

“Uh, yeah. He’s in his office.”

“Did you get the photos of the broker?” CJ said, reeling at the fact that Green was still leering – and practically drooling – at her wife.

“Yep, right here. Miles MacPherson, circa ten months ago,” Matthews said, passing her a file. “And apparently, he was the only one with the safe codes, so the staff have closed his place up temporarily. The cash and books are in the safe, so they couldn’t trade.”

“Right, thanks.” CJ took it and turned to Kate, taking her hand possessively. “Good to meet you, Jamie,” she said, trying to hide the sarcasm dripping from her voice.

“And you, CJ,” Green purred.

Once they were in the corridor, the actress walked in silence with a definite smirk on her face. CJ eyed her suspiciously.

“Wanna tell me what you find so funny?”

“Not funny. I just liked how you were in full protection mode in there. I suppose she did look kinda dangerous...” Kate grinned.

“She seems like a bit of an animal. And remember, I’m gonna have to work with her every day,” CJ said, watching Kate’s reaction.

“Yes, but I trust you.”

The taller woman’s heart melted. She stopped walking and cupped Kate’s face in her hands. “I’m sorry, honey. I’m acting like a jerk. I guess she just rubbed me the wrong way.”

“She’d better not rub you *any* way or I’ll kick her ass,” the actress said playfully.

CJ sighed deeply. “I love you, Katie Marshall.”

“Ditto, Agent Carson.”

\* \* \* \* \*

After checking in with Mark, they both headed back to the car. Tony took them home and gleefully offered to walk Kamali. He headed out the door with a tennis ball in his hand and a bouncing dog trailing after him. Kate smiled and returned to her love, who was sitting on the couch looking over the photos.

“You stay right there, honey and I’ll go make coffee.”

“Thanks,” CJ said absently, “You’re the best, Katie.”

“I know.”

That got the agent’s attention and she laughed. Shaking her head and smiling, she focused back on the pictures of MacPherson. Taking her mind back to the parking garage, she tried to remember every detail about the man who had been shot. She dropped the photos down on the table in frustration and leaned back on the couch, covering her eyes with her crossed arms. Kate, seeing this, came over with the two mugs and sat next to her spouse.

“Want to talk about it?”

CJ moved her arms away from her face and gratefully took the offered mug. “With you? Of course I do. I just can’t really remember the guy who was shot and the video footage was no help because of the shadows. It’s just frustrating, that’s all.”

“I know. It would give you guys something to go on if there were ransom demands or something. At least then, you would know the motive for the kidnapping. But so far, there hasn’t been anything like that, has there?”

“No honey, there hasn’t. You know, you really *are* good at this kinda thing,” CJ said, taking a gulp of the hot sweet fluid.

“I’m surprised to find that I’m enjoying the whole puzzle-solving part of investigation. Your job’s intriguing... dead people notwithstanding, of course.”

“Of course,” CJ smirked.

She turned to kiss her wife, tasting the sweet coffee flavor, combined with Kate’s delicious mouth. She sighed pleasantly when they parted.

“When I used to feel this way... all wound up, I mean... I used to go thump something in the gym or run for miles. Now, you just take it all away with a kiss. Saves me a lot of exercise.”

Kate laughed. “Well, we still need to work out, so maybe I shouldn’t kiss you so much.”

“Oh no. Don’t take that away from me. I don’t think I’d survive,” CJ teased, thinking that perhaps it was closer to the truth that she’d like to admit.

“I won’t. It’s too good. Do you need some distraction right now?” she asked, hopefully.

The tall agent swallowed the last of her coffee and set the mug on the table. Taking Kate’s hand, she got up to go to the bedroom, then suddenly remembered that Tony hadn’t come back yet.

“Damn. We can’t yet... I’m not being disturbed again. I want to curl up with you afterwards,” she said, kissing the tip of a pert little nose.

While they waited for the driver to return, Kate looked at the photos. When CJ came back from the bathroom, she sat next to the actress and ruffled the blonde hair slightly.

“What you looking at, honey?”

“This MacPherson guy. He has a mustache and glasses... so did the guy in the video,” Kate said thoughtfully.

“No he didn’t,” CJ said, looking strangely at her wife. “And anyway, how could you tell? His face was obscured.”

“He definitely had a dark area around his mouth, CJ. And I didn’t see the glasses on his face.”

“What do you mean?”

“Didn’t you see them fall to the floor when he was shot?”

“Jesus, Katie. No, I didn’t.” The agent was dumbfounded, first by the fact that she had possibly missed that – and it would appear that Ethan and Mark had too – and second, that her incredible wife had been watching the footage so intently. “Are you sure?”

“Yes. Didn’t you see Francis pick them up?”

“I thought he just bent down to check the guy was dead. Oh my God.”

Kate got up and retrieved CJ’s cell phone. “Here... Mark might still be at the office. Maybe he could look at it again and check?”

“Thanks, but it will still be there in the morning. I intend to spend the rest of this evening paying very close attention to you.” She shook her head in disbelief. “I don’t know why I’m so surprised by all this. You’re the most intelligent person I’ve ever met!”

The actress straddled her wife’s lap and kissed her gently. Leaning her hands on the back of the couch, she purred quietly into CJ’s ear. “I could say the exact same thing to you. But you know, compliments like that will get you everywhere.”

CJ found it very hard to breathe. “Everywhere, huh? How about here?” she said, grasping two firm buttocks with her hands.

“Oh yes... there.”

“How about here?” she whispered, burying her face between two incredible breasts and kissing the warm skin.

“Yeah... there, too.”

“I’ll keep that in mind for later then,” the agent panted into her lover’s mouth.

“God, you drive me crazy, do you know that?”

“Uh huh. You inspire me,” the taller woman whispered.

CJ grinned deviously when the doorbell rang. After settling Kamali for the night, they went upstairs.

“So, where were we?” the agent asked, following her wife onto the bed.

Kate moaned blissfully as the weight of CJ's body covered her, thinking that crazy was definitely all right in this instance. Sobering suddenly, she efficiently switched their places, still worried about her wife's condition. It didn't dull the flame inside and she trailed a hand over warm breasts.

"Right here..."

\* \* \* \* \*

Outside MacPherson's Gems, two figures in black clothing and balaclavas sat in a dark van.

"Jesus. Why the fuck is it boarded up?" the agent barked.

"How the hell should I know? Seems you didn't get all the damn information from the boss man after all. And you're the fucking Fed."

"Shut up. It wasn't like that last week. Damn it!"

"We need to go for tools. I don't have anything to get through that kinda crap in here," the thief said angrily.

"No shit, Sherlock. Okay, let's move."

The agent was not amused by the delay. He wanted his four million. Once he had used the idiot next to him – then disposed of him – he'd be rich. Of course, this guy was only a fail-safe. They had the combination but he wasn't taking any chances. He didn't underestimate the broker. And he didn't want to overestimate the brainpower of his superior. Damn FBI bosses.

*'But who needs the FBI when you've got four million?'* his greedy mind thought fervently. He leaned back into his chair, dollar signs flashing before his eyes.

\* \* \* \* \*

The next day, CJ, Kate and Tony were stuck in LA rush hour traffic on their way to the hospital for the agent's follow-up appointment. She couldn't believe how good she felt and silently praised her surgeon as she scratched around her wound area.

"You okay, hon?"

"Yeah. It's just healing, I think. Itches like hell."

"I'm amazed at how mobile you are," Tony said from the front seat.

"I'll be honest, Tony, I am too. They've definitely perfected that keyhole technique," CJ replied, smirking at the driver.

He nodded thoughtfully and concentrated on the traffic. Kate slipped her fingers through the agent's longer ones and sighed. They finally made their destination and the two women went inside while Tony found a parking spot to wait for them.

After a short exam, the curtain went back and Kate saw her wife smiling at her. She was always caught off guard by her spouse's beauty and this moment was no different. The fact that CJ was wearing a deep blue sweater that seemed to intensify the color in those incredible eyes, did nothing to lessen the impact on the

actress. Once the doctor had passed a package of pills to the agent and left, Kate raised her eyebrows in question.

"I'm fine," CJ said, slipping her arm around her wife. "Doc says everything looks great. No strenuous exercise for three more weeks though."

"I guess I'll have to keep it gentle then," Kate chuckled.

A wide grin crossed the agent's features. "Gentle. Ohhh yeah."

Kate bit her bottom lip, trying not to think about being gentle with her beloved. Shaking her head and blinking away the amorous thoughts, she focused on the pills. "What meds did he give you?"

"Just painkillers... anti-inflammatory. Not as strong as the last ones but they'll still pack a punch," CJ said, reading the box. "Good we have Tony. I'm not supposed to drive with these."

"I can drive you anywhere you need to go, but yeah, I love that Tony is here to help."

"You know, maybe he does deserve a little raise. He's more like a PA than a driver," CJ smirked, as they walked outside.

The actress laughed as Tony came into view, the Mercedes squeezed into an impossibly tiny parking spot. "Maybe you're right, honey."

\* \* \* \* \*

Next stop on the agenda was the field office. CJ wanted to check on the progress of the case while they were in the city. Kate wouldn't let her go in alone and CJ figured it was probably a combination of her concern for her injured wife and an unwarranted concern about Agent Green. The taller woman thought she'd ask her feisty little spouse about that later.

Regaining her cool, work demeanor, she walked into the office and tensed when she saw that only Green was present.

"Hi, CJ," the stunning blonde greeted. "Oh hi, Kate. How are you both?"

"Hello, Jamie. We're fine, thanks," Kate responded.

"Where's Matthews?" CJ barked, trying not to shoot daggers from her eyes.

Green held up her hands, sensing the animosity. "Listen, we didn't get off on the right foot. I'm sorry. Can we start again?"

"Sounds like a good idea," Kate said, standing between them in the line of fire.

CJ paused to watch this tall agent, whom she had to admit, was very pretty. And was she the same height as CJ? *'Nah, I got a couple of inches on her,'* the dark-haired agent decided.

"Okay, Green."

"Truce?" Jamie offered, holding out a slender hand, brown eyes wide with what seemed to be sincerity.

“Truce,” CJ agreed, shaking the hand.

“Okay, now that we’ve cleared that up, Ethan has gone out on a call... a body found by some homeless guy on the outskirts of town. I have some stuff here that he left for you.” She searched around in her desk drawer. “Here it is.”

“What’s this?” CJ asked, flipping open the file.

“Mick Fisher was found this morning, floating in the river,” Green said plainly. “Uh...”

“What?” CJ quirked an eyebrow, as Green looked at Kate. “No, it’s okay. Kate knows all about this. Mulrone cleared it.”

“Oh. Yeah, seems Fisher was shot, assassin-style, before he was dumped.”

CJ looked at Kate. “He had pre-cons. He *was* drug dealing, although the stuff he was caught for in the beginning was pretty small-time. You were right about the bar too. He bought it cash.”

“Maybe he *was* mixed up with Francis then. Suddenly having that kind of money, seems unusual, doesn’t it?”

Kate rubbed her chin, totally immersed her wife’s train of thought. Jamie watched with intrigue, wondering how a civilian could be so involved in all this FBI talk.

“If you guys need help with this, I’m available anytime,” Green offered, not picking up on who Francis was.

Both women looked up suddenly from the file, but saw only a genuine offer of help in the dark eyes.

“Thanks,” CJ said, half-smiling.

She still felt a little wary of the new agent, but was willing to give her a chance... as long as she kept her hands off Kate. “*Stop it, Ciara. Katie trusts you and you trust Katie. Quit being such an idiot.*”

Just then, Ethan came through the door, his shoulders slumped and a grim look on his face. He sighed and dumped his butt in a chair.

“Francis is dead.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Jamie came back into the room, having offered to buy some decent drinks at a nearby café.

“Latte?”

“That’s me,” said Kate, taking the cup.

Green handed out the rest and sat down to try and catch up with the conversation.

“So, how exactly was he killed?” CJ asked.

Ethan sighed. "Shot. One entry wound on the forehead. Could have been point blank, too."

"Same as Fisher," Kate murmured.

"Are we still thinking that the guy the Deputy Director shot, is MacPherson?" CJ threw the idea out there once again.

"What? Wait... can someone catch me up a little? Sorry, I feel like I'm no help here. The Deputy Director?" Jamie repeated.

"Yeah... okay. It's kind of all over the place right now, but some of it's coming together. Ready?" At Jamie's nod, CJ continued. "Short version is, I walked in on a shooting. DD Francis killed a guy then shot me because I witnessed it. At the same time, we had a file for the kidnapping of a diamond broker, and AD Mulroney has now told us that Francis knew him too. This Fisher guy was a small time drug dealer and a long-time friend of Francis. We have an, as yet, unknown agent who was helping Francis in this – deleted camera footage – and I'll be damned if I can figure out who that is yet, so I want all eyes and ears open. I'm assuming it's not you, because you just got here..."

Green shot her a look, trying to take it all in.

CJ gave her a brief shrug. "I've gotta look at every angle," she said, as gently as she could.

"I get that. And no, it's not me. Okay, so how come Kate's here?"

The actress raised an eyebrow. She hadn't figured that one out either. She understood her connection to Fisher, but still wondered how she came to be sitting in an FBI office with three agents, discussing a case that was classified.

"I know it's unorthodox, but this case isn't exactly filed under normal," CJ said, somewhat defensively. "And the AD has cleared her involvement and somehow managed to fudge over her presence here. To be honest, you'd have to know our history to see how Kate is connected to all this, and quite frankly, she's progressed the case immeasurably in the last few days."

CJ turned to give a brief smile to her wife and found green eyes watching her with complete devotion. Jamie seemed to notice it too and relented.

"I agree that this is an unusual case. Maybe it calls for an unusual approach, with as much trusted help as we can find," she offered, amicably.

"Just don't pass it around that she's here... please," CJ said, quietly.

Jamie nodded and they focused their attention back on the files. CJ explained that she had spoken briefly with Mark and he had looked into Francis' past, including his accounts. The Deputy Director had used MacPherson's Gems on a few occasions and, according to a MacPherson employee, had become quite friendly with the man. All in all, it looked more and more like he was the one shot in the garage. And Fisher, Francis and an unknown agent were involved in the whole thing. CJ suspected that this unknown agent was responsible for the two recent killings but didn't voice her thoughts yet. She just hoped it didn't go further into the Bureau. Eventually, she decided to wrap it up for the day.

"We'd better go. If you find anything else, just call me or drop by the house."

"No problem, CJ. I'll drop by with everything I find, tomorrow," Ethan said.

“Will you be wanting fed again, Ethan?” Kate asked with a smile.

He smirked. “Not this time, Kate, but I’ll take a rain check on that. You’re a great cook.”

Kate smiled and the two women left. Ethan began to tidy the papers and noticed Jamie sitting deep in thought, staring at the tabletop.

“What’s with you?”

“Hmm, oh nothing. They seem really nice. I just wish I hadn’t blown it when I first met them,” Green said sullenly.

“Well, Kate seems to like you and CJ will come around. But they’re really protective of one another... probably why you came to blows with Carson when you were ogling her wife,” he said, grinning.

“I wasn’t ogling her. Okay, I was. But my God, they are a stunning couple, don’t you think?”

“They are. And they’re very happy... I mean, VERY happy together. If you remember that, you’ll get on just fine with CJ.”

“Thanks for the advice, man,” Jamie said sarcastically.

Ethan laughed and went to his desk to get back to work.

\* \* \* \* \*

Tony perked up when he saw the two women approach. He had thought they would only be in the office for a minute or two. He didn’t mind waiting but thought he could have been doing something more useful while they were gone.

“Sorry, Tony,” CJ said once she got comfy in the back. “Things got complicated.”

“I’d imagine things always get complicated in the FBI, CJ,” he grinned. “That’s why I like my simple job.”

“Simple?” Kate asked, eyeing him in the rear view. “I’ll have to think of more things for you to do.”

He smiled. “Actually, I just got a call about a job offer. Big rock star, too.”

Kate’s face fell, showing a little panic. She trusted Tony and didn’t want to lose him. “Are you going to take it?” she queried.

“Well, it’s a little more money. But no ma’am, I’m not gonna take it. I love working for you and I’m happy right now. No need for a change. And no need for a raise either, Miss Kate,” he said, correctly assessing her thoughts.

“That’s good to know, Tony. I like having you as a driver and dog walker,” she grinned, giving him a wink.

He laughed and shook his head. CJ smiled at her lover and slipped her arm around Kate’s shoulder. The actress leaned into her wife and relaxed in the surrounding warmth until they arrived home. Tony left and Kate decided to take Kamali out for a walk.

“Want to come with us?”

“Yeah. It’s been a while since we all went out together. Hold on, I need painkillers first.”

“Is it worse today, honey?” Kate said with concern.

“No, Katie. We’ve just been out for hours. I’m supposed to take them four times a day.”

“God, we did take forever at the office, huh?”

“Yep,” the agent said, gulping down some water. “Let’s go.”

Walking around the farmland, CJ took in the setting sun, the smell of warm bark on the nearby trees, the dust swirling from the track as the dog ran around, and the sound of birds swarming above them. The house and barn came into view as they turned for home and she spotted the horses having a mad five minutes of galloping and bucking in their field. She smiled and turned to her stunning wife, who was throwing a stick for Kamali. He would bounce happily after it and run back to drop it at her feet every time. The tall woman was happy, and realized she had a goofy grin on her face when Kate raised a curious eyebrow at her.

“I just love you so much,” CJ said in explanation.

Kate approached her and planted a soft yet passionate kiss on her lips.

“Let’s head back and I’ll feed you. But after that, I’ll show you how much I love you too,” the actress purred.

\* \* \* \* \*

CJ basked in the wealth of emotion and sensation that this petite woman invoked in her. She had never felt so much in her life, never allowed herself to feel. But Kate took her heart with such ease that the actress’ power over her never ceased to amaze the tall agent. She felt that power now, as Kate brought her unceasingly to another intense orgasm. She knew CJ’s body so well, knew how to hold her at the crest of that wave, making the resulting climax almost too much to bear... almost. After two of those blessed crescendos, the agent tried to reciprocate but her wife was relentless, not letting her off the bed, hovering over her as she teased CJ, gradually arousing her to a state of pure bliss once again.

Kate couldn’t believe her hunger. All she wanted to do tonight was love her spouse, consume her. It was overwhelming. She covered every single millimeter of CJ’s skin with her mouth, with her fingers, wanting the agent to feel how much she wanted her, needed her. Settling between her wife’s thighs, she groaned at the heady scent and taste that was uniquely CJ. She had brought her to orgasm twice already, the first one, simply by running her hands over the agent’s torso and breasts. Kate was always astounded at her effect on this woman, seemingly able to arouse her from a simple look or fleeting touch. The actress couldn’t get enough of her spouse and sometimes, showing that need was more important than anything else. She heard the familiar sound of her lover, gasping out breaths of sheer delight and knew CJ was getting close. Kate wrapped both her arms over the taller woman’s thighs to hold her in place. As the long fingers settled in her blonde locks, holding her firmer against the agent’s center, Kate knew it was time and moaned into the warm, throbbing flesh, manipulating the swollen nodule with much-practised skill. As CJ climaxed, the smaller woman drank greedily, keeping her caresses steady to guide her wife through the aftermath. A few moments later, she tenderly kissed the burning skin, before carefully moving back up the boneless, sated body.

“I... you...” CJ gave up trying to speak and waved her hand in front of her face, shaking her head.

Kate delicately kissed the tears on her wife's cheeks and smiled lovingly at her. "That last one getcha?"

"All... got me... God."

"I love watching you come. You're so beautiful," the actress said, eyes intent on her defeated prey.

CJ's groin twitched again, although how that was possible, she didn't know. "And I love watching you too... but you didn't... give me that chance tonight," CJ said, pouting her best 'poor soul' face.

"And if I don't, you'll continue with *that*?" Kate queried, pointing to the luscious lips.

"Uh huh. I'm hungry," the agent growled quietly.

Kate had to admit she desperately needed release. Pleasuring CJ had set her on fire, so much so, she thought she might spontaneously combust soon. She thought about it for a few seconds then straddled her wife's stomach, keeping her weight supported on her knees. CJ's eyes widened and she licked her lips.

"Well?" Kate asked, eyebrow raised.

The agent knew exactly what she wanted. She placed her hands on Kate's shoulders, sliding them down slowly to cover her breasts, paying close attention to the full mounds and pert nipples before continuing south. The smaller woman panted as she felt the wonderful fingers grasp her buttocks, kneading the soft flesh there. Then green eyes opened to meet deep blue ones as the agent guided her forward. Kate gripped the headboard and looked down at her spouse whose eyes were dark and sparkling with desire. CJ, holding the contact, licked her lips with exaggerated intent, feeling the body she was holding shiver with anticipation. Kate knew she had never experienced anything so intense in her life. Being with CJ was the best thing she had ever known and when her wife's tongue reached its destination, all thought melted into an incoherent haze of pleasure.

\* \* \* \* \*

Kneeling in front of the safe in a darkened back office, the soon-to-be ex-special agent examined the sparkling pile of stones on the floor. They were large, crystal clear and there had to be about a hundred of them. The money and power was practically drooling from his mouth as he started pushing them back into the velvet sack.

"My God, these are uncut!" the thief said in disbelief.

"Yeah, but the buyer knows that. Apparently, they're pure white and he knows his stuff... cuts them himself. That's why he's payin' so much. Pure as the driven snow."

They quickly stashed all the diamonds inside a rucksack and got to their feet. A sudden crash when the street door slammed open startled them both. "*This is the LAPD. Drop any weapons and come out with your hands where we can see them. No sudden moves!*"

The agent's stomach dropped to the floor. "Fuck! I thought you disabled the alarm?" he grunted.

"Must have tripped a silent backup..." the thief shrugged.

"Shit! Shit! Shit!" the agent headed for the fire exit, using his full body weight to barge through the door, quickly followed by his accomplice. Flashing lights were coming around the building and they ran for

cover through a nearby alleyway. A few minutes later, they broke into a blue Chrysler, hot-wired it and disappeared into the night.

## Chapter 5

Agent Jamie Green sat at her desk, looking slightly disheveled. She had felt a little humiliated being so clueless about things yesterday. She wanted to help CJ with the case and had stayed very late last night to read up on everything. She hoped it might go some way to smoothing things out between them. She regretted being her usual, lustful and brash self but both Agent Carson and her wife had really caught her off guard. They were both beautiful women and the fact that they were a couple, didn't really register with her at first. She wanted a new start here. And that meant changing her ways. No more conquer them and leave them... no more breaking hearts for the fun of it. It was time to grow up.

She looked at her watch as Matthews shuffled through the door, closing it tightly behind him. It was 10:30am but she knew he had been up most of the night with the AD, going over the information from Francis' priority autopsy and forensic examination. She was also aware that a burnt out car had been found with traces of human remains in the trunk. They suspected it was MacPherson but had to wait for more info on that. With at least one FBI agent that still had to be identified, they were working hard to solve the puzzle. But it made for a tense atmosphere at times, especially when other agents came in, showing an interest in certain aspects of the investigation or delivering reports. Trying to answer their questions without *answering* their questions, was an art in itself. '*LA sure is different,*' she thought, pinching the bridge of her nose. She'd only just got here and was already mixed up in one hell of a case.

"Morning, Jamie," Matthews sighed.

"Hey, Ethan. What's new?"

"Not much. Francis' cause of death, gunshot wound to the head... no surprise there. They didn't find anything else. The car is still being examined by forensics. What have you been up to?"

"Just paperwork and catching myself up on all this stuff." She wiggled the case file in front of her. "I felt so out of my depth yesterday but I'm all caught up now. And I read the file on Kate's abduction too. That must have been pretty damn scary for her."

"Yeah. She's a tough woman to take a beating like that for a week, and still manage to escape."

Jamie nodded and ran her tongue over her teeth. "She is indeed."

"Where's Powell?" Ethan said, noticing for the first time that they were still alone.

The tall blonde blinked. "Who?"

"Sorry. Agent Powell. He had a couple of days off but he should've been back this morning."

"Oh, the guy I went to The Double Take with? Maybe he's out sick?" Jamie offered.

"I'll check with the AD. Maybe he called in."

"How long have you known him?"

“The AD?”

“No, Powell.”

“He arrived about a year ago. I don’t know him that well. He’s pretty by the book, keeps to himself. Why?”

Jamie shook her head. “Just wondered. He seemed... I dunno... I can’t put my finger on it. I was only with him an hour or so, but he was real sharp with me when we were looking for Fisher.”

“How so?” Ethan said, tilting his head to watch her.

“Like I said, I’m not sure. I was questioning an employee and he seemed to cut me off, like I was some rookie who didn’t have a clue.” She met Ethan’s eyes. “Don’t look at me like that. I don’t consider you a rookie, Ethan.”

He bit his lip. “Thanks. I’ll go check with Mulroney... see if he knows anything.”

He left and Jamie mentally kicked herself for putting her pretty large foot into her even bigger mouth. She was good at her job. But, relationships... friendships? She sucked at those. She cradled her head in her hands and sighed deeply in frustration.

\* \* \* \* \*

“He called in sick. Didn’t sound too good either.”

“Yes, Sir. Just wanted to check.” Matthews relaxed his shoulders. “Anything new?”

The AD looked up from his desk, seeming a little confused. “Oh, with the case? Yes. They identified MacPherson.” He paused. “From his dental records. This is turning out to be pretty horrific and motivated by greed, it seems.”

“I found something too, Sir.”

“Sit down, Ethan. Tell me what you’ve got,” Mark said, gesturing to the chair.

The rookie sat and leaned his elbows on the desk. “I found one of Francis’ ex-girlfriends. She told me he had a gambling problem. Apparently, he took her to Vegas a couple of times – and had bought her some rocks from MacPherson – and she said he went on Bureau business to New York once, but didn’t return before a blow-out visit to Atlantic City. Seems it was quite a serious addiction, Sir.”

Mark raised both eyebrows and nodded slowly. “It certainly makes a lot of sense. Could be possible then, that the DD got involved in this for the money to pay off loan sharks or something like that.”

“My thoughts exactly, Sir. This Courtney woman thought he was in some trouble but she couldn’t say what.”

“Good work, Ethan. This certainly helps. Looks like Francis just got in way over his head. Damn shame. Keep on it.”

“Yes, Sir. I’ll update CJ when I call her later.”

“Thanks, Agent.”

\* \* \* \* \*

CJ fidgeted on the front porch. Kate was still asleep and the agent didn't want the doorbell to wake her. She had been waiting out front for half an hour, when she saw the Mercedes gliding up the drive. Standing up and brushing off her denim-clad butt cheeks, she strolled over to Tony, avoiding a bouncing Kamali on her way.

"Did you get it?"

"Sure did. It's a cracker, CJ. I bought you a hatbox too... wasn't sure if you had any wrap," Tony said, offering her the flat-packed box.

"You're amazing, Tony. I was wondering how I was gonna wrap the damn thing."

"How's the pain today?" he asked, as he followed her into the house.

"I don't have any but I'm not gonna go wrestling just yet," CJ grinned.

"So, what you got planned for the birthday dinner?" he asked cheerfully, leaning on the kitchen counter.

The agent hid the gift with the other one, stashed inside the window seat. "Well, considering the kind of week we've had, it'll be pretty simple. I'll need your help getting the boat out of the barn before you go." When he nodded, she continued. "I'm gonna take her out for a picnic lunch on the lake, then she has to go to the studios around three, then home for a nice romantic dinner."

"Sounds great. I'll head off just now. I have a few things to do before my big date tonight. But I'll be back in plenty time for your visit to the studios," Tony said, snagging a banana from the fruit bowl and raising an eyebrow in question.

CJ smirked and nodded. "You gonna tell me about this new girl?"

"She works at the studios. Not my usual type but there's something special about her."

"Good. I hope it goes well."

"Thanks, CJ. Okay, I'll get going... and let you get wrapping," he said, smiling. "I'll pull the boat out and tie it to the mooring for you before I leave."

"Thank you so much. See ya, Tony."

After he had gone, she grabbed the gifts from the window seat and slipped into the study. She knew Kate had wanted a Stetson and quite frankly, CJ couldn't wait to see her in it. Her heart rate increased a little at the thought. Once she had boxed the hat and wrapped the ribbon to her satisfaction, she took the other small gift and opened the casing to look at the necklace. This was a special gift that she wanted her wife to have. She hoped Kate would love it as much as she did. And of course, there was also the little rowing boat. She recalled the night they sat on the front porch and sleepily gazed out over the lake. Kate had spoken about using it for something and joked about water-skiing. CJ figured they'd start small and go for a more relaxing row instead.

When she returned to the kitchen, she looked at the clock. "It's gonna be lunch time before she even gets up," she chuckled. "Okay, just some toast and tea to keep her going."

The agent prepared the little brunch and headed upstairs. Seeing her spouse sprawled across the bed, completely unconscious, with her hair in disarray and her mouth hanging open, CJ had to swallow back her giggle. She remembered the conversation they had back in Montana, when they had first met. Kate described her usual state in the morning and even though CJ had witnessed it many times now, she still thought it was absolutely adorable. She mentally shrugged and decided that Kate in any state was adorable to her. She bent down to kiss the bare skin on the actress's belly. With a small moan of protest, Kate reached down to scratch the tingling area. The taller woman couldn't hold back her chuckle this time and Kate opened her eyes.

"I don't have a bomb, but would tea and toast suffice?" she asked, quirked a dark eyebrow.

Kate blinked. "You made me breakfast in bed?"

"Well, I made you birthday brunch in bed."

The actress stopped, mid-thigh-scratch, and stared at CJ. "Oh my God, I forgot. We've been so pre-occupied..." Her eyes softened and she smiled lovingly at her wife. "Oh honey..."

CJ lowered herself down to kiss her spouse. "Happy birthday beautiful," she purred.

"Thank you. Do you know how much I love you?"

"Yep. I'm a lucky, lucky lady."

"No, I'm the lucky one. Thank you for this," she gushed, reaching for the card on the tray. She read the message inside and looked at CJ with tear-filled eyes. "You're just a big softie, hon."

"Yep. Here... your first present," the agent said, handing a little gift to her wife.

Kate looked positively bashful as she unwrapped the paper. She opened the delicate casing and gasped when she saw the necklace. "Oh CJ. It's beautiful. I love it!" She flung her arms around the agent's neck and then looked at the necklace again.

"It was my Mom's," CJ said, quietly. "I want you to have it now."

Kate realized how important this was and tried to hold back her tears as she looked at it again. It was a white gold chain with a circular pendant, created in the image of a dream-catcher. The outer ring was also white gold and the incredibly intricate web was some kind of red gold. In the center was a tiny emerald, nesting in its invisible cradle. Kate thought it was exquisite.

"May I?" CJ asked, clasping the casing in her hand.

The smaller woman let it go and CJ took the necklace out, undoing the fastening and wriggling over to Kate. The actress was speechless and simply lifted her hair so that her wife could put the necklace on her.

"This is so..." Kate couldn't find a word powerful enough to explain what the gift meant to her, so she gave up trying.

CJ settled the pendant on her wife's upper chest and stared into her eyes. "I love you."

Kate burst into tears and hugged the agent tightly. "I love you too. So much."

Once they'd eventually parted, CJ lifted a piece of toast and put it in Kate's mouth, letting go when the teeth came together to grab it. "Just a tiny brunch. I have lunch all planned."

"You do? I'm intrigued," the smaller woman mumbled around her food.

"Yep. And Tony will be here at two thirty to take us to the studio. Then when we come back, I'm making dinner," CJ said, taking a slurp of her tea.

"Should I be worried?" Kate teased.

"Smart ass. I'm not *that* bad in the kitchen."

A vision of CJ making love to her on the dining table flashed across Kate's mind and she blushed hotly. "Hmm, I guess not."

"Oh, you are incorrigible," CJ growled, seeing the bright red face.

Kate laughed and they finished their snack with some much-needed light-hearted conversation. After clearing up the tray, the agent ran a luxurious bath, adding the oils and bubbles she knew Kate liked. Once the actress was settled in the water, CJ dropped a cushion on the floor and sat beside the tub. She was sticking with showers right now, to let her stitches heal properly.

"This reminds me of the first time you did this for me," Kate said, looking at her fondly.

"Seems forever ago, huh?"

"Yeah. I've been thinking about the strange ways that our lives were connected even before Montana. I wonder, if I hadn't met you that way, would we still have gotten together somehow?" the actress said, thoughtfully.

"I can't imagine life without you, Katie. So yeah, I believe we would've met someday. Must be fate."

Kate nodded. "I know I keep saying it, but I love you so much, CJ."

"You can say it as many times as you want, honey. I love hearing it from you. You hold my heart."

A tear trailed down the smaller woman's cheek and CJ reached up to kiss her.

A couple of hours later, they were sitting in the boat – the sight of which had Kate in floods of happy tears again – floating in the middle of the lake. CJ had brought the tartan blanket and a full picnic basket. Kate was on the little bench seat, sitting cross-legged, sipping some refreshing grape juice with a blissful smile on her face. She loved how thoughtful her wife had been with her gifts. And how thoughtful she was being right now. The agent occasionally split a cherry, taking the stone out before popping it into Kate's mouth. They seemed to lose track of time and both turned in surprise when Tony arrived back in his car. Kate grabbed the oars and paddled back to shore.

While the actress got changed into something more suitable for the studios, CJ called Ethan back after finding a message from him on her cell. He updated her on everything they had discovered and she told him she'd come in tomorrow and check in with him again. She passed on his birthday wishes to Kate as the actress walked with her to the car. CJ gave the keys to Tony and they headed for the studios.

Kate was given an extra day off since the scenes that didn't involve her were not completed. As she stood with her wife on the lot, a frustrated Samantha Morris came trudging over to them. Sam had been Kate's executive producer on her last show and was a good friend.

"Hi Kate, hi CJ," she said, hugging the actress.

Kate looked sympathetically at her friend. "Hey Sam. You look a little flustered."

"No kidding. The Phoenix has had re-takes on its re-takes this week. Will you hurry up and come back please. I've been looking for you in my off moments. You are the only thing that keeps me sane!"

Kate laughed. "I'll be back in two days. They gave me an extra one off. How's it going with my replacement?"

Sam shrugged. "It's not the same for me, but she's filling the role okay, I guess." She noticed Kate's necklace. "Wow, that's unusual. It's beautiful."

"CJ gave it to me for my birthday," the actress said, shyly.

"Aw, that is so sweet. You have good taste, CJ. It's nice. Very nice."

"Thanks, Sam. I have to agree that I have good taste," she said, eyeing her wife.

Sam laughed and after a quick chat and a birthday peck on the cheek, she left. Kate picked up another bundle of messages and they headed for home.

\* \* \* \* \*

Tony waved as he left. Kamali flopped onto the floor after his regular romp with the driver and CJ went to find her beloved. Kate stood behind the kitchen counter, her eyes barely visible over the large, bright box wrapped in ribbon. The agent could tell from the partial view that her spouse was smiling menacingly.

"You're not opening that one yet. After dinner," she ordered.

"Aw pleeeeeease..." Kate pouted.

"Nuh uh. After dinner."

"God, you're strict."

CJ enveloped her in strong arms and kissed her senseless, leaving the actress staggering slightly and groping for the edge of the counter. She then snagged the utensils she needed and Kate sighed, taking her seat on the stool next to the counter.

"What we having?"

"Grilled sea bass. I know you love that and I can't ruin it... too much," the taller woman winked.

Kate giggled and leaned her chin on her hands, watching her spouse dreamily. "Ooh, Dad called to wish me a happy birthday. He was asking for you... again."

“Sweet. What did you tell him?”

“I told him you were tough as nails and he should stop worrying because I’m doing enough of that for everyone,” Kate grinned.

CJ nodded. “I really feel good, honey, but I won’t tell you to stop worrying. I know that would be pointless.”

“Uh huh. Anyway, Dad sent a gift, but it won’t get here ‘til tomorrow. I dread to think what he got.”

“Something highly embarrassing perhaps?”

Kate laughed. “Yeah, more than likely,” she said, sipping on her wine.

The agent set the table while they talked, lighting a few candles and putting the warm bread from the oven into the basket. She kissed her wife before returning to the stove to finish her meal preparation.

CJ did not disappoint. The meal was delicious and Kate cleaned her plate... after having seconds. Once they’d cleared the dishes, the actress eyed the box again and CJ told her to start opening it. Kate frowned when her wife disappeared as she pulled at the ribbon. She gasped when she saw the Stetson. She had always wanted one. Then her mouth fell open when CJ returned wearing an identical hat, her thumbs jammed in the pockets of her jeans while she pretended to chew on a piece of tobacco. She lifted one hand and tipped the brim of her hat.

“Howdy, ma’am. New in town?”

Kate’s nostrils flared at the sight of her incredibly hot wife and drew a few breaths before replying in the same imitation Western cowboy accent. “Why, yes I am. And who might you be?”

“Well, I’m a thinkin’ you’ll soon find out, a fine lady like yourself,” CJ drawled, sliding her tongue round her teeth.

“Good Sir, I’m not that kinda girl. You presume too much.”

“Not sure I like the sounda that, little lady. I usually gets what I want. I’m the stud in these here parts.”

Kate couldn’t hold back her snort anymore and burst into a fit of giggles. She got up and walked with a definite swagger across the kitchen to her wife, who was propping up the doorframe with her shoulder, legs crossed at the ankles.

“You make an incredible cowboy, honey. Thank you for the gift. It’s so great. We’ll have to go riding wearing our Stetsons, huh?”

CJ grinned widely. “Oh yeah, but we better make it a quick one. I can’t guarantee you’ll keep it on for long,” she purred, wiggling an eyebrow.

“Hmmm, so what else am I getting for my birthday?” Kate whispered, tilting her head to lick the agent’s ear.

“Uh... oh... uh... anything you want, honey. Anything.”

“That’ll be *you*, then. Let’s go... stud.”

## Chapter 6

The next day, the agent had his best suit on and a black briefcase that concealed the treasures within. Walking into the swanky office of the buyer, he fiddled with his tie, trying to stop his hands from shaking. After talking with the receptionist, he sat down and focused on his rather erratic breathing. His stomach twisted almost painfully when the man came out to greet him. The buyer was a tall man and equally as wide. He clearly never wanted for anything, including food. The agent swallowed convulsively as he stood to shake his hand.

“Come in and sit down,” the buyer said as he closed the office door. “Have there been problems?”

“No. No problems.”

“Then where is Francis?” the large man enquired.

“He sent me to make the transaction, Sir,” the agent replied, trying to keep his voice calm and confident.

“Now, why would he do that? He knew I would only deal with him.”

Feeling his heart jump into his throat, the agent suddenly realized that he didn’t have *every* base covered after all. He thought furiously for a few seconds, while faking a cough to give him time to think.

The buyer poured him a glass of water and handed it over the desk with a suspicious look on his face. The agent finally spoke up.

“He had a few family issues and asked me to fill in for him. I suppose you could call him to confirm this arrangement,” he said, praying that the man wouldn’t take him up on the suggestion.

“I’m sure I can wait until after the family problems. You tell him to get back to me then. No deal unless I speak with him personally. He knows that.”

“But...”

“Now, if you’ll excuse me, I have work to do,” the buyer said, pointing to the door.

“Now, hold on a minute...”

“No! *You* hold on a minute, sonny. You’re wasting my time. Leave now. This office is crawling with security guards. Would you like me to call them?”

The agent got up stiffly and left, before the buyer had a chance to figure out that he actually had the diamonds in his case, and just killed him and took them anyway. Although, he didn’t think that was this guy’s style. He didn’t look as if he got blood on his own hands.

The agent stormed down the corridor towards the thief, who was sitting waiting for him.

“Out... now. We’ll talk in the car,” the agent barked.

Once they were in the vehicle, the thief looked over from the driver seat. After he had been told what happened, he got pretty mad and swerved the car off the street and into an alleyway. He brought it to a stop and clenched his fists.

“Are you telling me, we went through all that fucking crap and he won’t even deal with us? You fucking idiot!”

“Calm the hell down, man. I’ll think of something.”

“You’d better think fast.”

The agent’s mind was reeling as the thief pulled back out onto the street. *‘Could I go back to work... just for a few days until I think of something else?’* he thought. *‘I need to put the gun back in evidence before they realize it’s gone and start snooping around. Then what? Sell the rocks on fucking eBay?’* He had to think of something. This was not going well.

“Hey man, go back to the warehouse. There a lock-up at the side where we can put these babies until I figure out our next move.”

“Oh yeah? And who gets the key for that?”

The agent sighed. “Listen, I’ll get the money. I guarantee it. But the deal is for the whole lot together. How about we split the haul and put them in two places? Would that make you feel better? Or do you wanna just carry the damn things around and stick together with our guns at the fucking ready?”

“All right, all right. Jesus, man, split ‘em... half each. And gimme one of the keys,” the thief said, turning to head for the warehouse.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mark Mulroney sat at his desk, pinching the bridge of his nose between thumb and forefinger. He couldn’t relax, knowing that someone in the field office was mixed up on the wrong side of this case. He had gone through the Deputy Director’s rolodex and found the telephone number for MacPherson, scored through three times, leading Mark to believe that Francis had known the man for a long time. It was all making more sense but he was still feeling edgy. The ringing phone made him jump.

“Mulroney.”

“AD Mulroney. It’s Smith from downstairs. Sir, I needed to get a hold of one of your agents but there’s nobody picking up in their office.”

“What do you need, Agent?”

“Well, Sir. I have a court date coming up that was brought forward, and one of your agents has signed out some evidence I need. It’s left me puzzled, I’ve got to say.”

That got Mark’s attention and he sat up stiffly in his chair. “Go on...”

“I wouldn’t have troubled you, Sir, but it was an unregistered weapon and the main piece of evidence in my case. I can’t decipher the signature on the book, but I believe it was Powell because Bessie saw him a few days ago, leaving the basement with the gun in his hand. She never thought anything of it at the time. Could you look into it for me?”

“Oh, I will... immediately, Smith. Sorry about this,” the AD said carefully.

He hung up and began pacing the floor. An unregistered gun? It was all coming together now but he had to make sure Powell came into the office, otherwise they'd never find him. He had called in sick so that could mean he didn't think they were onto him. Of course, the agent could have a very good explanation for taking the gun, but Mark certainly couldn't come up with one. Smith wasn't involved with their department – Powell hadn't been involved with any of Smith's cases. Mark's mind raced around furiously. He needed to speak with his agents... tell them what he suspected. But they couldn't do anything yet, not without more proof.

\* \* \* \* \*

CJ came back into the house and wandered through the hallway, dropping her keys on the coffee table in the living room. She entered the kitchen looking for Kate, and found a man with dark hair, standing at the open fridge. Her initial reaction was to launch herself at him and pin him to the floor but he seemed too relaxed to be an intruder and there was no sign of any disturbance. She stealthily walked up behind him and spoke harshly, close to his ear.

“May I help you?”

Eddie Marshall Jr. threw the carton of juice he was holding up in the air in fright. It came crashing down at their feet, splattering over shoes and pant legs.

“Jesus! Why the hell did you do that?” he blurted.

“Who the hell are...” The tall agent slapped her hand to her forehead. “Damn it. You're Eddie, aren't you?”

“Uh yeah, nice to meet you, Sis,” he smirked.

She blew out a breath and smiled. “Nice to meet you too. You don't look anything like your pictures.”

“Well, you do. And they did *not* do you justice.”

They hugged briefly until a little blonde actress interrupted. Hearing Eddie's last comment, she approached in full big sister mode.

“Eddie, please don't embarrass me or...” Kate stopped in her tracks. “Uh, what happened?”

CJ bit her lips while Eddie pointed at her with his thumb.

“Figures,” Kate said, resuming her walk. She kissed her wife on the cheek and looked to Eddie. “What did she do? Clout you on the back of the head?”

“Something like that,” CJ said sheepishly.

“Well, since I'm not having juice now, shall I make the coffee?” Eddie muttered.

The tall agent shot him a glance and he quickly moved away to grab some paper towels. Kate intercepted him and took them from his hands.

“You get the coffee. I'll clear up. And Legs there, can grab the remainder of the cake from the cupboard,” Kate said, sticking her tongue out at her wife.

Kamali came to escort them to the living room, obviously spotting the plate of cake and lay down on the floor within crumb grabbing distance. The three humans flopped down on the couch and sipped the hot coffee.

“Sorry I couldn’t make it to your wedding, CJ. My company chose that week to send me overseas. Timing sucked,” Eddie said, taking a hearty bite of his cake.

“Yeah, Katie said you were in Ireland. You’re in IT, right?”

“Yep... for my sins. My company sent me here today, too. I have a job to do tomorrow, then its back to North Carolina. Still, I wanted to be at your wedding. Kate rants about you on the phone, so I was desperate to meet the woman who makes my sister gush.”

That earned him a sharp nudge from a powerful little elbow and he winced. They talked for a while longer, discussing their wedding and the upcoming nuptials of Dad and Jeffrey. Eddie had also brought Kate a birthday gift, a painting he had done of the Rocky Mountains. CJ loved his thoughtfulness and decided she liked her brother-in-law. He had an easy manner, similar to Kate. He clearly had his mother’s coloring though, with those almost black eyes and dark brown hair. And he was taller than Kate. The two siblings looked like night and day and yet there was a familiarity in his manner, no doubt coming from their father.

Dad’s birthday gift for Kate had arrived that morning. She was overwhelmed to find it was a beautiful framed photo of CJ, obviously taken when she was singing to Kate, on stage at Prescilla’s restaurant the previous year. The actress had very quickly found a prominent spot for it in the living room. He’d also sent her two first edition books that she had wanted for a while, one signed by the author, who happened to be related to Jeffrey. She had called them in tears, to thank them for the gifts.

Kamali headed out the open back door, sensing a distinct lack of cake coming his way and went to dig up his bone in the yard. Later, two women and one dog took Eddie around the property, showing him their home. He was impressed and surprised at how ‘un-Hollywood’ it was, but didn’t say anything to that effect. He could see how happy his sister was and it warmed his heart. He couldn’t remember ever seeing that sparkle in her eyes, which seemed to become even brighter every time she looked at CJ. *‘I’ll find something like that one day,’* he thought as they walked back.

They ordered pizza for dinner to save on cooking and dishes. After a few more hours of pleasant conversation, he left, hugging them both tightly before driving off in his rental car.

Kate and CJ were closing up the house for the night when the actress saw headlights coming up the drive. She watched from the window, seeing Mark and Jamie get out of the car before shouting to CJ. The tall agent met them at the front door.

“Sorry to disturb you so late, CJ,” Mark apologized.

“It’s all right. Come on in, Sir. Hi Jamie.”

“Hey CJ. I hope you don’t mind me coming here?”

“Not at all.”

They went into the living room and Kate sat on the arm of the couch, next to her spouse. CJ slipped her arm comfortingly around the actress’s waist.

“I’m assuming you have more info?” the agent asked.

Mark sighed. "Yes. Our unknown agent seems to be Powell." At CJ's shocked expression, he went on. "It appears Agent Powell signed out a piece of evidence without good reason. A gun, from a case Agent Smith was working on. He called looking for it today."

"My God. He works right there with us, Sir."

"Oh, I know. Right under our noses, although he hasn't been in much since the whole thing kicked off. I guess he planned that. Anyway, I checked up on Smith's case. It had ballistic information in it. I had them run a comparison and it matches up with the bullet found in Francis."

CJ rubbed her forehead. "Where is Powell now?"

"He called in sick today. I think we need to let him come in to work. It's our best chance of ending this somewhat peacefully... act like we don't know yet and let him come to us."

"You expect him back tomorrow?" CJ said, doubtfully.

"I won't know that until he calls in tomorrow. But he said he would be in. He obviously thinks we don't have a clue," Mark said, trying to hide his anger.

"Wow."

"Yeah," Green said. "I never knew him, CJ, but he was very sharp with me that day we went to talk to Fisher's staff."

CJ nodded. "Guess that could've been kinda uncomfortable for him. He wouldn't want the Bureau poking around in his criminal activities."

Mark sighed. "How do you feel, CJ? Will you be able to come in early and go through a few things with Ethan and Jamie? It shouldn't take long," the AD asked.

"Sure. What time?"

Kate thought about tomorrow. She had to go into work for a while. "I could come with you and get Tony to wait. Then you guys can drop me at the studios afterwards. How's 6.30am?"

"Sounds fine," CJ said, giving Kate's hip a gentle squeeze.

"Okay, good. See you tomorrow then. We'll head off. Sorry to disturb you both," Mark said as he got up.

Soon after they had gone, Kate was curled up under CJ's chin, their bodies tangled together in a loving embrace between the sheets. The agent could smell the fresh fragrance of her wife's hair and breathed deeply, turning to kiss the nearby forehead.

"You okay, CJ?"

"Yep."

"You will talk to me if you need me, right?"

"Always. I'm just thinking about stuff but I'm okay. Honest, honey."

She squeezed the actress tighter and felt a kiss on her neck. She turned to seek out the soft lips and was greeted eagerly. The desire rose steadily and they soon found themselves caressing familiar paths over smooth skin. CJ still felt distracted and her conflicted feelings suddenly halted her motion.

“What?”

“Sorry, Katie. As much as I want you, my head keeps flying back to all this crap from work. God...” she groaned, slapping her forehead.

“Hey, it’s okay. I understand, honey. Here... turn on your side and I’ll rub your back,” the actress offered.

CJ groaned and did as she was told, feeling the warm hands soothing her body as well as her mind. She began to breathe deeply and her muscles seemed to sink down toward the mattress. Kate spooned herself around the agent’s back and kissed the smooth skin between CJ’s shoulder blades. The taller woman moaned sleepily before they both drifted off.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was around 4am. Powell sat on the floor next to the lock-up at Pearson’s warehouse. He had decided to come back here, knowing that they had found Francis’s body. They’d never think a perp would be stupid enough to come back. *‘Double bluff,’* he thought.

He was splitting the diamond haul in two, trying to act casually, while the thief paced the floor. *‘This guy was completely useless. I’ll be damned if I’m giving him any of this shit. Can’t trace the gun... what have I got to lose? I just go back to work for a little while... let things settle... find another buyer,’* the agent thought, as he discreetly watched the other man.

He’d have to do it now. He wanted to go back into work in the morning. He had just been off ‘sick’ so far, so surely he could lay low at work without arousing any suspicion. He could get a look at the case file too... see if MacPherson had any other big time contacts. *“God, I’m smart. That’s my best bet right now,”* he mused, rubbing his chin.

The disillusioned agent finished separating the diamonds and turned to the thief. He had stopped pacing and was looking out a nearby door, most likely watching for trouble. Powell took his gun from inside his jacket and pulled the trigger, just as the thief turned back to check on him. Powell’s aim was a little off from this distance but the bullet still got the guy on the face, straight into his cheek.

“Damn,” he said, as he headed for the squirming man lying on the floor.

The coldness in Powell’s eyes, born of greed and frustration, was the last thing the thief saw before he succumbed to a second gunshot wound. The agent dragged the body over to the small lock-up and dumped it inside. His face took on a grimacing smirk as he looked at the blood pulsing out from two holes in the gaunt face.

“Such a mess.”

He grabbed the two bags of diamonds and put them into his rucksack. Once Powell got home, he stashed the bag in the toilet tank before showering and changing into his work suit. It wouldn’t be long now. He just had to keep his cool.

## Chapter 7

It was very early the next morning when CJ and Jamie were standing over the desk, trying to fit together the final pieces of the puzzle. Kate was waiting in the car with Tony, since they were headed to the studios next.

CJ knew this might take longer than anticipated and flipped open her cell.

“Hey honey. Listen, this might take a little longer. You could just head off without me if you want.”

*“Nah, we’ll wait. I have plenty of time. Don’t you want to give me a proper kiss goodbye before I have to go to this stupid meeting?”* the actress purred.

The agent shivered. “Uh, yeah. I’ll be as quick as I can. Bye.”

She went back to concentrating on the file, ignoring the smirk from Jamie, who was standing next to her, arms crossed over her chest. CJ put her cell back in her pocket; her hand still wrapped around it as they went back to their conversation. When Powell walked in, CJ glanced up, not expecting her stomach to lurch quite so hard. She tried to act cool and prayed that Green would too.

She was about to say hello to him casually, when he stopped just inside the doorway and stared at them. One of them must have given something away – although CJ couldn’t work out what – because once he had sized them up, a sweat broke out on his forehead. He obviously didn’t expect anyone to be in yet. His suit was creased, his hair unkempt, eyes strained and exhausted. All three were locked in an intense glare, then Powell put his hand behind his back and pulled the weapon out, pointing it directly at them. CJ could practically feel the tension coming off Green, and frantically thought of how to negotiate with this man, who had a penchant for shooting people between the eyes. They needed help... and fast. She moved her thumb carefully over the keypad in her pocket, knowing her last number dialed, and hoped if Kate heard the conversation, she would send that help.

“You don’t have to do this, Powell. There’s a way out.”

“How the hell am I going to get out of this, Carson?”

“You must have some pocket change. If you give us that, you can walk outta here right now. We never saw you.” CJ knew she had to get inside his head and wanted to give him another option. She was rather fond of her forehead and didn’t really want a hole in it... or Green’s.

“Or I could just shoot you and still keep all my ‘pocket change’. What do you think, Blondie? What should I do?”

“You know you’ll never get out of here if you do that.”

Powell scoffed. “There’s nobody else here. Looks like the early birds get the bullet, huh,” he said, coldly.

\* \* \* \* \*

Kate was giggling at Tony’s lame attempt at a joke when her cell rang. Seeing CJ’s name, she put on her most provocative voice.

“Hello sexy... I...”

The actress froze.

*“...don't have to do this, Powell. There's a way out.”*

Kate could hear the fear in her spouse's voice and she held her breath, swallowing convulsively.

*“How the hell am I going to get out of this, Agent Carson?”*

*“You must have pocket change. If you give us that, you can walk outta here right now. We never saw you”.*

*“Or I could just shoot you and still keep all my 'pocket change'...”*

“Oh my God. Tony, I'll be right back” Kate jumped out of the car before her driver could answer, and ran into the building.

The guard at the front desk knew her and after utilizing her acting skills to calmly tell him that she was just popping in quickly to see Agent Carson, he gave her a visitor badge as per Mulroney's orders. Kate headed for CJ's office, padding her way silently along the empty corridor when she heard the voices. She glanced part way around the door frame and saw Powell's back, his arm stretched in front of him, holding a gun.

CJ's heart stopped when she saw her wife come into view. *‘Oh God, no. Please go away and get help, Katie. Please,’* she prayed silently.

When she saw Kate immediately approach Powell's back in silence, she reflexively ducked and pulled Green with her. In the same second, she watched as her spouse bounced on the balls of her feet and kicked out, slamming her foot into the back of Powell's legs, sending him crashing to his knees. The gun went off, the bullet burying itself harmlessly in the ceiling.

Before he had time to turn to his attacker, the feisty little actress had bounced round to jump on the gun-wielding hand that had landed on the floor to support him. A loud yelp and the faint sound of crushing bones followed, and Powell used his other hand to grab Kate's leg. She swiftly brought her knee up to crack against the side of his face, knocking him off balance and loosening his grip on her. Then she bounced back on the balls of her feet again and, perfectly balancing on her right, brought her left up in a precision aim, the sole of her foot impacting powerfully on the side of Powell's head, sending him careening across the floor to collide with the photocopier.

This all happened in the space of a few seconds and CJ was astounded. She leapt forward and pinned Powell to the floor, closely followed by Green, who put her full weight down on the legs that were trying to kick CJ off. With adrenaline rushing through her veins, Kate grabbed a pair of handcuffs from a nearby desk and threw them at her wife, who – with an expression of complete bafflement on her face – caught them, clicking them onto Powell's wrists behind his back. CJ's mouth was opening and closing silently, her eyes still wide, wondering who this little warrior was, and what the hell she had done with Kate Marshall.

Three more agents came running through the door, having heard the gunshot, and helped the women get Powell to his feet. CJ read him his rights, while the other agents took hold of him. Green snapped on some latex gloves and retrieved the gun. She started barking instructions at the other agents and they all left the room with the prisoner, leaving Kate and CJ staring at one another.

The taller woman took a step towards her wife but stopped again, still completely in shock at what she had just witnessed. Those were martial arts moves... and good ones. She wondered why Kate had kept this from her but she had to admit, she had been mightily impressed – and, now that the danger was over, pretty aroused – by her powerful little spouse.

Seeing the uncertainty in the actress's eyes, she closed the distance between them and took Kate into her arms, gripping her in an intense hug. The actress returned it and tried to slow her racing pulse.

"I was so afraid."

CJ pushed the smaller woman back and held her at arms-length, still gripping her shoulders.

"You sure didn't look it. You left me speechless... and so very proud of you," the tall agent said quietly.

"I don't mean for me. I mean for you. I can't lose you, CJ. That's why I had to do something."

"And what you did... how the hell..."

"I'm a black belt," the actress said, suddenly studying the floor intently.

"In what?" the agent asked, her mind spinning.

"Taekwondo."

CJ lifted Kate's chin with her fingers and looked into dark green eyes, filled with something she couldn't quite identify. Was it embarrassment?

"Why are you so sad? And why didn't you ever tell me?"

Kate's eyes filled with moisture, her lips trembling. "I... I... guess I was ashamed. You know... about Jason."

It took a few seconds for CJ to work out what she meant. "Oh my God, Katie. Are you serious? You didn't tell me because... because you feel you should have stopped him?"

The actress nodded mutely.

"Oh honey. Don't do this to yourself. He took you in your sleep. How could you have stopped that?"

"I know it doesn't make sense, CJ, but that's why I felt so violated and frustrated by the whole thing. Well, it's one of the reasons. If he had just come straight at me, I could've defended myself. I just..." Kate sniffed.

"Oh Jesus. I love you so much, Kate Marshall. Please don't beat yourself up over this anymore."

"I'll try. I just felt so helpless and weak. I'm not used to that," the actress said into CJ's blouse.

"You are anything but helpless or weak. And thank you for saving my life... and Jamie's," CJ said, kissing the blonde hair.

"You're welcome. I guess we're even, huh," Kate whispered.

"I guess so," the tall woman said, squeezing her wife.

CJ's mouth curled into a small smile when she felt Kate relaxing a little. Mark came through the door a few moments later, his dark eyes wide with relief and a little pride. CJ let the actress go and they both turned to him. He looked seriously at Kate.

"You *sure* you don't want to join the FBI?"

Kate wiped her eyes and grinned at him. "I think one Federal agent in the family is enough for us, Mark."

"I'm not so sure. You know I won't give up trying?"

"I'll bet," CJ said, nudging her spouse.

"Do you need a statement from me?" Kate asked.

"Not right now. Maybe I'll pop over to the studios and get it," he grinned.

"That would be fine."

To Kate's surprise, the AD hugged her. Then shocked the hell out of CJ when he hugged her too.

"I know that, technically, you're not supposed to be on duty, CJ, but I'd appreciate if, when you finish up here, you'd come and see me. When Powell is interviewed, I'd like for you to observe with me. I'll get James Wilson to do the uh... interrogation though. He's the best."

"That's fine. I'd like to know Powell's story. That is, if he decides to talk."

"Great. Good work... *agents*," he winked at Kate as he left.

The actress shook her head. "He's certainly determined."

"He knows as well as I do that you'd be an incredible agent. Maybe when you get sick of acting, you'll finally give in," CJ suggested.

Kate just laughed, which served to lessen some of the tension in her beautiful face. CJ cupped her cheek and kissed her.

Kate gently pushed back. "Okay, I have that silly meeting. Then Tony and I will come back and see if you're done. It'll be this afternoon sometime. Call me if you need me."

"Well, that could be kinda inconvenient... I'd be calling every few minutes," the agent grinned.

Kate slapped her butt just as Green came back into the office and approached them.

"Kate... may I?" she said, reaching her arms out.

"You may," the actress replied, hugging her warmly.

When they parted, Jamie lifted her hands in surrender to CJ, who smirked and rolled her eyes.

"Thank you for... well, all of that," the tall blonde said, spreading her hands out around them.

“You’re welcome. But thank my wife too. She called me.”

Jamie looked to CJ. “Good thinking. It all happened so fast. We never had a chance to get to our guns. He would’ve just…” Green grimaced, putting her hand on her stomach.

“He would’ve,” CJ agreed. “Just as well I have a black belt with impeccable timing for a wife.”

“Black belt? Well, remind me never to get on the wrong side of you,” Jamie joked.

Kate slid her arm around CJ’s waist. “Uh huh,” she nodded.

“Okay, Okay. I’m never gonna live it down, am I. First impressions and all that. Give a girl a break, will ya?”

“I’m sure we’ll forgive you… eventually,” CJ grinned.

Jamie laughed. “I’ll get the report started. Thanks again, Kate. I owe you one.”

After a brief hug and kiss, Kate left and CJ went to start on the mountain of paperwork that faced them. She sighed and tried to concentrate, attempting to delete the images of her strong, beautiful wife, kicking the crap out of a homicidal FBI agent.

\* \* \* \* \*

Kate sat at the large table, waiting for her very late Director. The floor manager, Tina Piper, was next to her tapping a pencil rapidly on the surface, which soon stopped when the actress slammed her hand down on top of it.

“Sorry, Kate.” Tina brought her voice down to a whisper. “It just pisses me off when he calls an ‘important meeting’ and then doesn’t turn up on time.”

“I know. And I can’t think what could be so damn important. Unless he’s killing someone off and wants to make a big deal about it.” Kate looked at Tina in question. “Is he killing someone off?”

The manager shook her head. “I don’t think so. But it must be something pretty big.”

At that moment, Phil Romaine walked in the door. The director took a seat at the head of the table, where his main cast and crew waited not so patiently.

“Okay,” he boomed, “I’ll get right to it. We potentially have a movie giant joining the show. He hasn’t signed up yet but we’re working on him. It’ll do great things for our ratings and even though we’re in the top five right now, this could put us up there on the number one prime time slot.”

“Who is it, Phil?” Tina asked, receiving nods from the rest of the team.

“Jack Bannerman,” he announced, like it was some big exciting revelation.

A few murmurs were heard around the room but Kate just winced internally. Jack Bannerman was a muscle-bound movie actor whose unrelenting vanity and arrogance was very well known. He commanded a ridiculous salary and most people metaphorically fell at his feet. Kate didn’t think this was particularly good news and donned a fake smile. It seemed that half the room did the exact same thing.

Phil droned on for another half-hour, raving about what would happen next and throwing a few more 'important' pieces of info at them. Apparently Bannerman would be a love interest for one of the leading ladies. Kate prayed that it wouldn't be her because then she'd have to pucker up and kiss his sorry self-loving ass. '*Ugh. The FBI doesn't look so bad now,*' she thought, making herself giggle silently. Phil got up and left, with a few of the crew following him out, and the cast members all seemed to exhale in unison.

"Wanna let me in on the joke?" Tina said, seeing Kate's smirk.

"Me? Oh, I was just so incredibly happy about our possible new addition," she replied, sarcastically.

"Yeah, right. I bet you're hoping Nicole gets him as her love interest."

Kate just stared at her and pursed her lips.

"Hah! I'm right on the money. Well, one can only hope."

"I *hope* he turns the deal down. Do you know how condescending that man is? I met him once and wanted to slap him in the face within two minutes," Kate grumbled.

"Two minutes? Wow, you lasted well."

Kate glared at her and they both broke into fits of laughter, along with a few other cast members who were listening in.

Later, she went out into the lot and stood at the set that was done up to imitate a quiet suburban street, where they were filming an outdoor scene. Kate stood in the sun, watching 'cops' chasing down the ubiquitous bad guy. She checked her watch and wondered if CJ would be done soon. She didn't want to call, in case the agent was in the middle of something. A quick text message told her that CJ was going to be a while longer. Kate decided to go grab a coffee then head home. She was sure there would be a lot of talking being done when her spouse arrived at the ranch house.

\* \* \* \* \*

CJ left for home after finding out that James Wilson was out of town and would do the interview tomorrow. Mark seemed adamant that he wanted Wilson, reiterating that he was the best and he wanted to get everything out of Powell that he could.

Driving towards the house, she could see Kate coming back from a walk with Kamali and smiled as she pulled up in front of the porch. A large, black German Shepherd head appeared at her driver window and she sighed, getting that "thank-God-I'm-home" feeling that she got every time she arrived here.

Kate pulled her into a hug as soon as she was standing upright and she returned it happily.

"Hi," the actress said, pulling back to look at her wife, "I missed you."

"I missed you too. Sorry, it took so long. I wanted to spend your last day off with you."

"I know, but it didn't turn out to be a regular day off, did it?"

"When do they ever with us?" CJ grinned.

They went indoors, arm in arm, and settled down to a light dinner. The dog was snoring after his own meal and the women headed up the stairs to have a long soak in their large bathtub, since CJ was healed enough to submerge her body again. After convincing Kate that she wasn't in any pain, the agent pulled her wife back to lean against her chest in the warm water.

"So, can I ask you some questions now?" CJ said, cocking an eyebrow.

Kate turned her head to kiss the agent's cheek and sighed as she turned back to sip her wine. "Of course."

"Tell me about the Taekwondo thing?"

The smaller woman took a deep breath. "I started it at UCLA... did pretty well back then. I seemed to have a knack for it. Got quite far in the ranks."

"I'll say," CJ muttered.

"And when we started filming Rise of the Phoenix, I progressed it even more. I really enjoyed it and I felt it was needed to make the role look real. I became a first 'dan' black belt. I guess I'm at a kind of junior instructor level now, but I haven't really done it in a while."

"I'm impressed. You just continue to surprise me, honey," the agent said, kissing the blonde hair. "I am so proud to be your wife. You were unbelievable today."

She felt the smaller body tremble, and held her tighter. Kate tried to contain her emotions, but she failed and they both cried a few tears after another stressful day. When was their life together going to calm into something resembling normality? It was a part of being an FBI agent that CJ didn't like.

After the tears subsided, they sat in silence, breathing together, feeling the warmth of one another and the bubbly water around them.

"I love you," Kate whispered.

"I love you too. More than anything."

Kate turned to her. "More than anything," she repeated, smiling.

"So, will you teach me some moves sometime?" CJ asked with a smirk.

"Yes. Although, it may get a little intense."

"Intense?"

"Yeah, well... I've never sparred with anyone as hot as you before," the actress joked.

"I might not learn much then, because what you did this morning keeps running around in my head and it... uh..."

"You liked it, huh?" Kate teased.

"Well, not the reason you had to do it but yeah, you were incredible," CJ murmured shyly.

Kate giggled and lifted her glass. "To me and you," she said, clinking it against CJ's.

"Me and you."

The taller woman put her glass down on the nearby stool and slipped her hand over her wife's abdomen. Kate's muscles rippled under her palm as she continued the caress. The actress hung her hand over the side of the tub, her wineglass hanging limply from it, immersing herself in the sensation. CJ leaned her chin on Kate's shoulder and watched her own hand as it wandered a sensual trail over creamy smooth flesh. She could see Kate's breasts rise and fall a little faster with each move of her fingers and she decided to escalate this encounter, enjoying the fact that it was all for Kate. Well, mostly. CJ's heart was pounding, no doubt due to her usual empathic response to her wife's pleasure. Her hand traveled lower and she lightly scratched the blonde curls. Kate gasped but remained silent.

CJ slid a long index finger down into the hot flesh and found viscose-like moisture that was absolutely nothing to do with the bath water. Kate turned her head and bit CJ's neck, enflaming the agent's desire. The finger began a slow rhythm, moving up and down the length of the suddenly swollen protrusion. Kate seemed to be very aroused, very quickly and CJ entered her with two slender digits, sensing that her wife wanted to be taken tonight.

Kate moaned, dropped her glass on the floor, and sucked harder on CJ's neck. The tall agent quickened her pace and felt the soft walls clamp down erratically around her fingers. She curled her hand to cup Kate's center, still thrusting in and out of her and putting pressure on the sensitive bundle of nerves with the heel of her hand. Kate screamed quietly in her ear as she came, grasping CJ's neck with both hands raised above her. That pose, combined with her wife's release, the view of the supple, writhing body and the fact that Kate was rubbing her back against two aching nipples, brought CJ to orgasm right after her. As Kate gradually came down from her heavenly plateau, she licked the agent's neck languidly. After a few moments of catching their breath, the actress stopped kissing the warm flesh next to her mouth and swallowed.

"Thank you."

"Don't thank me. I came right there with you," the agent purred.

"Don't you always?" Kate teased. "I didn't hurt you, did I?"

"No, honey. I wouldn't have done it if I thought it would hurt."

"Oh really?" Kate said, hitching an eyebrow.

"Well..."

Kate laughed and kissed her wife. "I guess I'll have to clear up the floor."

"Yeah. Let's get out and we can make more mess in the bedroom," the agent said enthusiastically.

After drying one another off with large, fluffy towels, Kate mopped up the spill and picked up the glass, happy to find it in one piece. They crawled into bed a short time later. CJ kneeled in front of her wife and grinned menacingly.

"Now that I feel much better, I can do this right." She eyed the naked body and nudged Kate's legs open, lowering herself on top of the smaller woman. "I get to be on top tonight," the agent whispered.

“I have no problem with that,” Kate hummed, as she felt her wife nibble her collarbone.

It was a time to re-affirm their bond with one another; to make sure they both knew how much they desired one another... and how much they never took any moment together for granted. It turned out to be a very long night.

\* \* \* \* \*

They both started their working days with a yawn the next morning.

Kate sat in make-up with tired eyes and a silly smile on her face... even with the news that Bannerman had signed up and would indeed be joining the show. She was in too good a mood for something like that to dampen her spirits. Cynthia, her make-up artist, came in and frowned at the actress.

“What’s all this?” she said, pointing to the glaring hickey on the actress’s neck.

“Uh... CJ’s feeling better,” Kate offered.

“Tell that wife of yours to keep it below the collar,” Cynthia joked.

“I’ll be sure to remind her while we’re in the throes of...”

“Too much information!” the artist said, holding her hands up in defeat. “Let’s get you all covered up.”

“Did you hear about Jack Bannerman?” Kate asked.

“Oh yes. Joy, joy, joy. Nothing like a hulk-sized prima donna to make my life complete,” she replied dramatically. “He is handsome, though.”

Kate laughed and examined the woman in the mirror. She had made quite a few friends on this show, mostly crew. She still missed Samantha, though. Her executive producer friend was still working on Rise of the Phoenix but they got together for a quick coffee when they could. It wasn’t too hard as they were both still at the Olympian Studios.

She looked again to the person who was now puffing powder of some description onto her face. Cynthia was twenty-four years old. A small, wiry woman, dyed jet-black short hair, a ring pierced through her eyebrow and Goth-style clothing covered a petite, young body. She was nothing like you might expect of someone named Cynthia. She had insisted that Kate call her Cyn, though, and that seemed to fit a little better. Kate sighed and endured the fake layers of her on-screen persona being applied liberally, before heading out to studio nine in full actress mode.

\* \* \* \* \*

CJ sat at her desk, catching up on the latest news. James Wilson was on his way and would arrive within the hour. A team of agents had gone out to Powell’s house and searched the place. They found the diamonds stashed in the toilet tank and apparently had bagged some clothing with blood staining on it. The garments were down in forensics, being analyzed. CJ briefly wondered if the blood was Powell’s, Francis’, Fisher’s or some other poor bastard. She broke out of her reverie when Green walked in, closely followed by Matthews. After the good mornings, they all sat with a coffee and caught up.

“I heard what Kate did. Unbelievable, CJ,” Ethan gushed.

“She is that. I told her she needs to join the Bureau, but she’s not having any of it,” she smirked.

“I hear she’s a black belt?”

“Well, yeah. She’s pretty much an expert in Taekwondo. She could probably teach us all a few things.”

“I’m in,” Jamie quipped.

“Me too,” Ethan said, eagerly.

“Uh, I wasn’t offering up her services, but I’m sure you could ask her,” she replied, yawning again.

“Long night?” Jamie grinned.

“Uh, yeah. You could say that.”

Green nodded knowingly and didn’t notice the narrowing of CJ’s eyes. The dark-haired agent still hadn’t decided if she really liked this blonde. She felt the need to help her somehow, but at the same time, she was very wary of her manner and intentions. *‘She is a puzzle,’* CJ pondered.

When Mark came to get her, they headed down to watch the interview. Agent White was sitting in with Wilson. CJ and Mark went inside the darkened observation room to view the interrogation through the two-way mirror. Of course, Powell, being an agent, would know there were people watching but he wouldn’t be able to identify anyone.

Not long after the interview started, CJ was standing, leaning her elbow on a filing cabinet, with her head in her hand. Powell wasn’t giving anything away and it seemed like a waste of time. She could hear Wilson starting a line of questioning she didn’t like and stood up straight to listen.

*“So, the gun. We know you shot Deputy Director Stanley Francis. You killed Mick Fisher... Miles MacPherson too...”* Wilson said, staring intently at Powell, who glared back at him.

CJ was livid. They all knew Francis killed MacPherson. This Wilson guy was trying to rattle Powell into spilling his story. She turned abruptly to Mark.

“You’ve got to be kidding me. He’s trying to bluff?”

“Seems that’s his strategy right now,” Mark responded with a shrug.

“It’s a Federal interrogation, not a fucking poker game,” she growled, staring through the window.

“I agree with you CJ, but this guy is supposed to be the best at sizing up the situation and using what he knows.”

“I don’t think it’ll work. Powell’s not an idiot.” She watched again as Powell leaned forward on the table.

*“I have a feeling you know who shot MacPherson and it sure as hell wasn’t me. Ask Agent Carson. She knows it,”* Powell spat.

CJ winced.

*“So who else is involved in this?”*

*“No comment.”*

*“We searched your house.”*

Powell’s face looked slightly strained. CJ could see the tiny lines around his eyes and his lips tightening.

*“So?”*

*“We found the stash in the toilet tank. But we also found bloodstained clothing. Want to tell me about that?”*

*“Not mine.”*

*“Really? You have a housemate who just happened to have blood spatter on their clothes?”*

*“No comment.”*

*“What about these diamonds? What were you going to do with them?”*

*“No comment. And to the rest of your questions, no fucking comment. I changed my mind. I want my attorney.”*

CJ groaned. “He’s not gonna give anything up.”

“Considering his prints on the gun that killed Francis and Fisher, and the incident with you and Green, he’s going down for a lifetime anyway. Not to mention that clothing and possession of stolen diamonds worth an estimated four point two million dollars,” Mark said in consolation.

CJ whistled at the amount then rubbed her chin in thought. “He had the diamonds in his house. Francis shot the diamond broker. He shot Francis, Fisher too, judging by the MO and firearm. He seems to like popping a bullet between the eyes.” Mark watched her running the facts around her head. “Seems they had quite the little crime ring going at first, but Powell got greedy.”

“Seems like it. Damn shame. He was a pretty good agent,” the Assistant Director muttered.

Wilson had wrapped up the interview and once they took Powell away, he came into the observation room. He gave them a run down of the interview, such as it was, but CJ wanted to know how Powell came to be involved in the first place. It was irritating her that an agent with a spotless career record would change so quickly into a major criminal.

“We missed the beginning of the interview. Did he tell you why he got mixed up in this?”

“Yes. He started out quite talkative, then as I got further into it he clammed up. He said that he walked in on Francis, talking on the phone with Fisher, apparently. Having heard too much, Francis threatened him right there in his FBI office and Powell said he’d help him if he cut him in.”

“Opportunist. Victim of circumstance and a very greedy mind,” CJ said, with a slight hint of sarcasm in her voice.

The special agent went back to her office and filled Green and Matthews in on the details. Much later that day, the results came back for the blood staining analysis. Seems there was a fourth party involved after all.

\* \* \* \* \*

She drove home that night, wanting nothing more than to crawl into Kate's arms and never leave them again. But when she walked through the door, the actress was pacing the floorboards in exasperation. Throwing her suit jacket over a nearby chair, CJ went over to her wife.

"Hey, what's got you so wound up?" she said, taking the smaller form into her arms.

"Hi. Just work stuff. How did your day go?"

"I'll tell you about it after some dinner. But I want to know why you're tied up in knots. Speak to me, honey."

"Kiss me first. Maybe that'll calm me down a little," Kate requested.

CJ covered the full lips with her own and sank into her wife's delicious sweet flavor. Kate grabbed the back of the agent's head and kissed her back, feeling her anger dissipate, bringing her back to herself.

"Better?" CJ murmured against her mouth.

"Much. Go change and we'll chat while we're making dinner."

The taller woman grabbed her jacket and headed upstairs to change. Picking out a similar outfit to her wife, she trotted back to the kitchen with her sweats and a tee shirt on. She found Kate slicing some chicken pieces for a stir-fry and nodded in agreement of her wife's choice.

"Good idea. Comfort food drenched in soy sauce. Can we have melted cheese on top?" CJ asked hopefully.

"*You* can," Kate said, scrunching her nose at the idea.

"So... talk to me honey. What happened at work?"

The actress sighed heavily. "We have this big shot movie actor joining the show. He signed up today and then stopped by later to mark his territory," Kate said, raising an eyebrow as CJ stifled a chuckle. "Hey, it's not funny. They're planning on making this asshole Mischa's love interest!"

CJ knew that Mischa was Kate's character and abruptly stopped smiling. "How bad is he?"

"It's Jack Bannerman. You know, that muscle-bound ego-driven, tall, dark and slimy-kinda-handsome idiot?"

"I take it you don't find him attractive then?"

"Well, duh."

"Sorry, honey," CJ groveled. "I'm just not seeing the problem. I mean, I know how talented an actress you are... can't you pretend to like him?"

“It’s not so much the character thing... it’s how he acts the rest of the time. I mean, take today, he saunters in there like he owns the place already. He hits on every woman he sees and puffs his chest out at every guy. I thought he might start pissing in the corners,” Kate said, shoving the chicken off the chopping board a little too forcefully.

CJ desperately tried to hold back her laugh, but Kate saw her struggle.

“Don’t...” the actress warned. But it was too late.

CJ burst into fits of hysterics and after a long, evil glare from her wife, Kate shook her head and started to laugh too. It took them a few minutes to regain some control and CJ lifted the bottle of wine and poured two glasses.

Kate pouted. “Okay, you cheered me up. Congratulations. Thank you for laughing at me.”

“Oh, honey. I wasn’t laughing *at* you. I was laughing at the idea of you uh, dealing with this guy the way you dealt with Powell. I’m sorry, it just flashed across my mind when you were talking.”

“Hmm... that’s an idea. I’ll keep that in mind. Thank you, darling,” Kate said, kissing CJ on the nose.

“Or, you could just threaten to set your Federal Agent wife on him?” CJ offered helpfully, a glint of humor in her eyes.

“I’ll use that as a last resort. If you kill him, I’d get fired. And that would never do.”

That set CJ off again and Kate knew they were just responding to stressful days at work. They tended to do this for one another when they came home all tense and on edge. ‘*My other half in so many ways,*’ she thought. She giggled as she added the vegetables to the wok and CJ got up to set the table.

While they ate, CJ told Kate all about her day, including the interview.

“Seems like such a waste of a good agent. Was he just a victim of circumstance then?” the actress asked around a mouthful of food.

CJ took a sip of wine. “Well, that, and the fact that his greed got the better of him. I doubt that I would’ve reacted the same way, had it been me. It must have been in his nature already.”

“True. It takes a certain type of person to go around shooting people between the eyes.”

“You’re right there.”

They finished their meal and took a leisurely stroll with the dog, before curling up on the couch together. CJ clung onto Kate, not really wanting to ever let go. The actress sensed her spouse’s need and turned herself around to lie facing her. Wrapping her arms around the agent, she buried her face under the dark hair where she dozed off listening to the taller woman’s breath as it passed her ear. A few hours later, a sleepy, grumbling CJ was pulled upstairs and into bed where the two women replicated their earlier pose and fell together into a deep sleep.

## Chapter 8

Kate finished shooting her scenes for the day. And boy, had it been a long day. Her co-star, Nicole, had been overly cheerful, no doubt at the news that Kate would be stuck with Bannerman as her love interest, and they'd had so many re-takes, she had lost count.

She sat down in her trailer and massaged her temples, incredibly disappointed to hear someone immediately rapping on the door. She stretched out her shoulders and got up, opening the door to find Jack Bannerman, grinning at her. '*Someone gimme a gun,*' she fleetingly thought.

"Jack, can I help you?" she said, wondering how she managed to be so polite.

"Well, hello Kate. Actually I was wondering if I could help you. May I come in?" he said, as he sidled past her anyway.

"I think you already are. I'm really tired and would like to go home. What is it you want?"

"Aren't you going to offer me a seat?"

"No. Like I said, I'm kind of in a hurry."

"I'm sensing some hostility here. Did I do something to you in a previous life?" he said, smirking that sickly grin of his.

"I certainly hope not. Seriously, Jack, why are you here?"

"I just wondered if you'd like to go to dinner, maybe drinks afterward? Practice our future love scenes?"

She couldn't believe her ears. Didn't she just say about fifty times that she was in a hurry to go home? She tried to keep the acid-laced-deflection from her voice.

"I'm afraid I'll have to pass. But thanks for asking."

"Really? Wow. So, this is what it feels like to be turned down. Interesting," he said, scratching his fingers through his black goatee in thought.

'*Such a conceited bastard,*' she mused. "Well, I don't want to damage your spotless reputation, so I'll tell you that I'm married."

At his 'so what?' expression and the following shrug, she rolled her eyes and added, "*Happily* married."

"Lucky guy."

She didn't correct his gender assumption because, quite frankly, she couldn't be bothered dealing with his irritating attitude any longer.

"Thanks for stopping by," she muttered, ushering him out the door.

"Strong little thing, aren't you?"

"Thanks, Jack. Bye now." Kate slammed the trailer door shut, balling her fists and growling in frustration.

She couldn't put her finger on it, but by God, he made her blood boil. She sat down at the dressing table to remove the mask of make-up before heading home.

\* \* \* \* \*

CJ slammed the handset down on the phone. "Well, that's that then," she said to Ethan.

"What?" he asked, setting a coffee cup down next to her.

"The blood belonged to a Tom Corbin. Apparently, Tom worked with Mick Fisher... and Kate, at The Double Take. He has a list of priors as long as my arm, mostly for theft. Powell was questioned about him after being told the results, but he never said a word... no surprise there. So, we're going to search every relevant place again, see if they can turn up anything else. Want to come with me? We've been tagged with Pearson's warehouse and Corbin's apartment."

"I wanted to finish this up," he said, showing her his paperwork. "I have two days off coming up."

"I'll go," Green offered from across the room.

"Great," CJ said, getting to her feet. "Hey Ethan, why don't you and the family come for lunch tomorrow then? I have a half day... hospital appointment."

"Will do. I'll speak with Alice. Shall we aim for 1.30?"

"Sounds good. You're welcome to join us, Jamie."

"I'll be in here, slogging my guts out, but you guys enjoy yourselves," Green replied, with a pout and a grin.

"Poor soul. Okay, let's go."

As they headed for the warehouse, CJ occasionally eyed the blonde driver. She still wanted to know more about her, but didn't want to seem too keen. Always one for the direct approach, she decided to give it a go.

"Can I ask you something?"

"Fire away," Jamie replied.

"I noticed the way you are around Mulronee and, uh, the way you were when we first met. Are you bi?"

Jamie let out a bark of laughter. "You don't mess around, do you CJ?"

"Not really. Sorry if I offended you."

"You didn't. It's quite refreshing actually. Yes, I guess you could say I'm bi. I like who I like. It's not so much about gender for me. It's just who I am, I guess." She paused. "I'm not after the AD, if that's what you're thinking. He is a nice guy though."

"He is. And I wasn't thinking anything in particular. I was just curious."

“Well, I want to take this opportunity to apologize again for how I acted when I met you and Kate. I guess it’s hard for a leopard to change her spots.”

“I knew you were an animal,” CJ grinned.

“Hah. Yeah, well... I plan on putting that behind me. I want a fresh start here. If I end up with something half as good as what you have with your wife, I’ll thank my lucky stars.”

The raven-haired agent nodded thoughtfully. She knew how lucky she was, how unique her relationship was with Kate.

They were quiet until they arrived at the warehouse. After walking around the perimeter, they went inside. There was nothing obvious at first, but then they both spotted a dark pool on the floor.

“Blood?” CJ asked, as Jamie crouched down to get a better look.

“Looks like it. Have you got a...”

“What?”

“... sample kit. But never mind. Look. There’s a trail heading over there,” Green said, pointing to the nearby lock-up.

They followed the smeared blotches of blood toward two metal doors, fastened only by a rusty padlock. Jamie looked around for a bar or brick to break the lock. At the other side of the vast space, she found a large piece of metal and took it back to her colleague. CJ started to take it from her but she hugged it to her body.

“Let me. I don’t want you to bust anything,” she said, raising an eyebrow.

“I’m fine, Jamie.”

“Yeah, but I don’t want to give Kate a reason to kick my ass. I wouldn’t survive.”

Despite the situation, they laughed briefly.

“Be my guest,” CJ said, gesturing to the padlock and drawing her gun.

Green stood to the right of the doors and CJ stood back slightly on the left, aiming at the lock-up. After a single blow to the old lock, it gave way. Jamie signaled to CJ that she would open the doors in 3, 2, 1...

The raven-haired agent dropped her arms slightly when she saw the crumpled body, slouched in the corner, his face completely covered with dark dried blood... well, what was left of his face.

“I’ll take a guess and say this is Tom Corbin,” Jamie said, showing her disgust at the state of the body.

“More than likely, but I can’t even see his face to ID him with his file picture.”

“I’ll call it in.”

They both re-traced their footsteps to the door, avoiding the pools of blood. CJ went to get cordoning tape from the car to preserve the scene. They both waited until all the various departments arrived, updating them as they entered the warehouse. It was a few hours before they arrived back at the office and updated Mulroney. A little later, Jamie walked CJ down to the parking garage.

“Well, good night, CJ. Say hi to Kate for me.”

“I will. And Jamie?”

“Yeah.”

“We make a good team. I’m glad you’re on board,” CJ said, trying to help with Green’s fresh start.

“Thanks, CJ.”

“I mean it. Here’s hoping we get a decent replacement for Powell.”

“Yeah. Well, bye for now. See you in the morning.”

“Bye.”

CJ drove home listening to some corny radio channel, but it seemed to relax her and by the time she drove up to the house, she felt much better. Throwing off her jacket and putting her harness and weapon on the table, she headed into the kitchen, following the smell of pizza.

“You got take out?” she said, seeing her wife at the dining table reading the paper.

“I did. You’re right on time. I was gonna throw it in the oven to keep warm for you,” Kate replied, getting up to hug the agent.

Once released, CJ sat down next to her and grabbed a slice. “I’m starving.”

“Busy day, honey?”

“You could say that. We found the last part of the puzzle. Well, at least, I hope it’s the last part.”

CJ filled her in with the days events, watching as Kate’s expression changed several times as she spoke.

“So it appears that this could all have started way back with Jason and Tom, dealing drugs for Fisher. And Francis was his buddy, even back then. Amazing, huh?”

“That disturbs me a little,” Kate said, quietly.

“How so?”

“Well, I knew them pretty well back then, even dated one of them. I never had a clue what they were involved in.”

“Of course you didn’t. People in that kind of business are good actors. Most of the time, they lead double lives,” CJ said, pushing a few stray bangs from Kate’s forehead.

“I just can’t reconcile the fact that four people I once knew in some way, are now dead. Am I some kind of bad omen?” Kate said sadly.

“Hey!” CJ took her chin firmly in her hand. “That’s ridiculous. This could have been any four people, any bar in LA and any woman who just happened to know them. I can’t explain why our lives were connected before we even met, Katie, but these deaths have nothing to do with you. The way I see it, you were one of many people at that bar who knew them. But for me... in this whole situation... you are the light that overpowers all the darkness. That’s the way I choose to see it. And that’s the way it is for me. You came into my life in the strangest set of circumstances. And for that, I will be eternally grateful. I love you.”

Kate looked at her wife in wonder. “That was kinda poetic. I know it’s silly to think this way, wondering about all the ‘what ifs’ but I knew them all in some way. I guess it’s all about choices. The choices they made were bad ones. Maybe the best choice I ever made was leaving Jason when I did. He might have taken me down with him.”

“That would never have happened,” CJ said, adamantly. “You’re too smart for that.” When Kate began to speak, the agent held her fingers to the full lips. “Ah-ah! No more. The drug dealing, the diamonds, even Jason’s infatuation and vengeful actions... they were *nothing* to do with anything you did. Nothing.”

Kate hugged her tightly. “I love you, CJ.”

“Ditto, honey. You know, I think you over-powered the darkness in me too.”

“What do you mean?”

“I always used to worry about the way my mind worked, about the dark places I would go to when I had to get inside the mind of a killer or hostage-taker. I had to think like them and I would worry that it would have a permanent effect.”

“I’m sure it has some effect on your mood, CJ, but you would never have succumbed to it. You’re way too intelligent and I know you... you possess more light than you think,” Kate said, taking another bite of pizza.

“Maybe. But before I met you, I would let those things get to me. For instance, there was this serial killer a few years back. The murders were so gruesome and he would leave the pieces of each victim in a different town... Uh, you know what? This isn’t dinner talk.”

“Not so much,” Kate agreed. “Are you saying that you would get inside the killer’s head and try to imagine his motives and thoughts while he killed, to predict his next move or his next victim?”

“Exactly. And it would stay with me for way too long after it was solved. I guess I kinda tortured myself with it. But since I met you, it’s easy to get back to the light because it’s right in front of me,” CJ said, leaning over to kiss the actress.

“You underestimate yourself, but thank you for saying that. Maybe once we finish our pizza, I’ll surround you with my uh... light,” Kate grinned.

“Perfect.”

\* \* \* \* \*

The next day, CJ got home around noon, just after her appointment and found Kate out playing with the dog in the back yard. They headed out for a long walk before the Matthews family appeared for lunch.

“Anything new at work this morning?” the actress enquired.

“No. I thought we might get the results back on Corbin’s body but nothing yet. The office seemed pretty quiet when I left.”

“Calm before the storm?”

“God, I hope not. Would be nice to just have some regular boring FBI work for a couple of weeks,” CJ said, throwing her arm around Kate’s shoulder as they walked.

“I think that’s a contradiction in terms, honey.”

“Yeah. I guess the unpredictable aspect of the job is a constant.”

“And you love it.”

“I guess.” CJ squeezed Kate’s shoulders. “Now let’s go back to the house and I’ll help with lunch. Ethan and family will be here in an hour. Are you ready for this?”

“I’m ready. Are you good with kids?”

“Uh, I’m not sure. Not had the opportunity to be around them much,” the agent replied, uncertainly.

“Well, we’ll just have to work it out as we go along.”

Kate took her wife’s hand and realized that her words applied to their whole life. But it didn’t matter, as long as they were together.

## **Epilogue**

The late afternoon sun cast a golden glow over the porch. Kate relaxed on the bench, talking with Ethan and Alice. But her eyes were fixed on her wife, who sat cross-legged on the picnic blanket that was spread out over the wooden boards, completely engrossed in the two tiny people who gurgled and played beside her.

CJ would pile the building blocks up and one of the twins would knock it down, then six hands went up in the air in some unspoken expression of joy. Kate’s heart was bursting. She loved that her wife could show her playful side here at home. And it seemed she was comfortable enough around Ethan to do it.

Alice got up to go to the bathroom to change Melissa’s diaper, and Ethan took over the play for a few minutes. Kate had just come back to the porch after clearing some dishes and the agent met her at the door.

“So, you ever wanna make one of those?” CJ said, gesturing towards little Sarah.

“That would be some trick, *Miss Carson*.”

CJ blew out an exasperated sigh. "I meant, do you ever want to have kids?"

"I always thought I would, someday. Do you?"

"With you, yeah. Maybe when our lives calm down a bit, huh?"

"Sounds sensible to me. Could take a while though." Kate paused. "You're serious, aren't you?"

"Yep. I'll never stop planning my life with you, Katie. Get used to it," the agent said, leaning her forehead against Kate's.

"Wow. I'd better start thinking of names."

"Uh..."

Kate laughed and CJ belatedly realized she was being teased mercilessly.

"You'll pay for that," the agent promised.

"I'll pay after they've left."

CJ's nostrils flared and she decided to delicately get rid of their guests. It turned out that the twins were getting cranky and Ethan and Alice made their farewell's soon after.

Once CJ had tidied the porch, she went indoors to find the house silent, except for quiet music wafting down from upstairs. She ascended gracefully and entered the bedroom, finding the unbearably cute sight of her wife, sitting cross-legged on the bed... gloriously naked. The taller woman had no words and simply walked towards her, shedding items of clothing as she went.

Taking Kate into her arms, she gazed into the green eyes that were locked on her face. Kate was entranced by the love she felt from her wife and suddenly saw their entire future play out in her mind. There was no question that they would be together, she just wondered what obstacles they would encounter on the way and how big their family would get. Someday.

The End...