

After Vermont

By Wendy Arthur

DISCLAIMERS:

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

All characters depicted, names used, and incidents portrayed in this story are fictitious. No identification with actual persons is intended nor should be inferred. Any resemblance of the characters portrayed to actual persons, living or dead is purely coincidental.

The registered trademarks mentioned in this story are © of their respective owners. No infringement of their rights is intended, and no profit is gained.

This story contains scenes of violence, 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.

* * * * *

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

This is the next installment in a series of stories (After the Storm & After the Honeymoon). While you don't need to read the previous Ubers to enjoy this story, it will help with some character connections and references.

Comments and/or opinions can be sent to stagefreakmusic@hotmail.com

Chapter 1

FBI Agent CJ Carson stepped out of the rental car, stretching her six-foot athletic frame. Putting her hands on her hips and rotating slowly on her heels, she took in the stunning scenery around her. She placed her hand against her forehead to shield her eyes from the sun and whistled in appreciation. The Inn was huge, a bright white mansion with tall pillars proudly guarding the front door. Two rows of large windows gracefully flanked the entrance, maintaining an eye-pleasing balance on each side. The expansive gardens were bright with summer foliage. Pink, purple and yellow flowers were prominent and had been primped and trimmed to within an inch of their lives. It was flamboyant, regal and slightly over the top. *'The perfect place for Eddie and Jeffrey to get married,'* she thought.

They had driven up from New York – having picked up a car full of items Eddie had deemed necessary for the wedding – and finally arrived in Arlington, Vermont. Kate's father and his partner had chosen to have their ceremony the day after tomorrow. They had wanted to make it a kind of double celebration, picking the same day as Kate and CJ's first wedding anniversary, and had booked the two women a luxury suite as

a gift. Eddie and Jeffrey would arrive tomorrow, after they'd organized the staff at their restaurant back in Manhattan.

Turning back to the car, the agent's heart skipped a beat as she watched her wife flipping her cell phone shut. Kate Marshall was a beautiful, petite but powerful woman. Her hair was currently a fiery strawberry blonde due to the actress' current TV role but CJ thought she'd look beautiful with any color of hair. It didn't matter. Kate was her wife, her best friend, her partner in every sense of the word and the special agent practically drooled with love as she went to open the car door for her spouse.

"What d'ya think? Isn't it beautiful?" she asked as she took Kate's hand and pulled her from the seat.

Kate blinked, as if she hadn't really noticed. "Wow, it really is," she gasped, finally scanning their surroundings. "This must have cost them a fortune."

CJ wrapped her arms around her wife and kissed her. "Well, its not every day Dad and Jeffrey celebrate their daughter's first anniversary," she winked.

"That's true. And there's the small matter of their own wedding too," Kate smiled. "Let's unload the car and get checked in."

They headed to the reception desk and a few moments later, an over-eager bellboy came trotting out to the car with them, scooping up all the wedding paraphernalia and putting it on a cart. Telling them he would take care of it and flashing a very big smile at Kate, he disappeared back inside. The actress was still caught off guard sometimes by the attention she got from strangers.

Kate and CJ gathered their bags and went to find their room. Walking through the grand house, they gaped at the décor. It certainly wasn't to their taste but it was incredibly beautiful and almost as ostentatious as the outside. Brightly colored walls seemed to both clash and match with the furnishings. It was Victorian England with a bit of a kick.

The agent opened the door to their suite. Her eyes widened at the size of the room and the stunning view of the balcony, gardens and gazebo. Then she saw the bed. It was huge and she raised an eyebrow at the thought of what she would be doing on it very soon.

"Not yet," Kate said, eyeing her wife's lustful expression and smirking.

CJ just grinned menacingly and went to join her wife at the door of what must be the ensuite.

Kate pointed to the large Jacuzzi bathtub. "I'll be taking you in there first," she leered, slipping her arms around her tall spouse.

CJ shuddered at the thought and licked her lips. "Oh yeah." Resting her chin on Kate's hair, she held her for a few minutes, simply basking in the feeling of having her wife in her arms. "Hey, you looked a little distracted when you came off the phone earlier. Anything wrong?"

Kate sighed pleasantly against the agent's chest. "No, honey. I was talking to Tony. His car broke down so I told him to keep the Mercedes until he could get it fixed. He is taking care of Kamali and everything else for us, so I thought it was the least we could do."

CJ looked down into bright green eyes and ducked her head slightly to capture the full lips in a kiss. Once they had parted, they unpacked their belongings and decided to check the place out. They went to investigate the grounds, strolling leisurely through the gardens hand in hand, before taking a seat on a 'love

swing' hanging from a large oak tree. They watched a small team of decorators, who were busy sprucing up the interior of the large wooden gazebo.

"That must be where Dad and Jeffrey are going to get married. They mentioned a gazebo, didn't they?" CJ said, pushing her foot off the ground.

Kate snuggled into her wife's side and yawned. "Yeah. It's so pretty. I hope you remembered the camera?"

"Of course I did. I want plenty of pictures of you in that dress," the agent teased.

The smaller woman poked her thumb into her wife's ribs. "You won't be in control of the camera the whole time. I want some taken of you too. I'm drooling at the thought of *your* dress."

"Hold that drooling thought and let's go back to our room."

* * * * *

Once back inside, a loud growl from Kate's stomach reminded them that they hadn't eaten since morning. Kneeling on the bed and flipping through the room service menu, the actress pursed her lips in thought.

"I'll have the Arlington Special," she said, licking her lips in anticipation.

"What the hell is that?" CJ shouted from the bathroom.

"It's their house special. Roast chicken, potatoes, veggies and gravy... and everything else it seems. Sounds like a hearty meal. I guess it's supposed to be Old English type food".

"Well, considering the décor, I can see why that would be the special," the agent replied as she bounced onto the bed on her knees.

"They do it for two. Want to join me?"

"Sounds great. You want wine or something?" CJ said, lifting the phone from the nightstand.

"Actually, no. I'll just have grape juice or something like that."

The taller woman nodded and proceeded to order their meal. While they waited, they teased one another with a taste of what would come later. Kate lay on top of her wife and licked the agent's lips and nose, while CJ groped the actress's butt. After lots of heated kisses and touches, they sat up, trying to calm down before the meal arrived.

Face slightly flushed, Kate got up to answer the door and tip their 'waiter'. CJ lifted the lids off the food and inhaled deeply. They feasted on their meal, feeding themselves and each other and sharing the single dessert they'd ordered. Some of it ended up being eaten off various body parts and by the time they drew their bath, they were practically ripping the remaining clothes off one another.

Once in the bubbling water, they seemed to slow the pace but the intensity was just the same. The wide tub made it possible for them to sit facing one another, CJ's long legs wrapped over Kate's thighs and around the outside of her body, her heels resting on the actress' soft buttocks. Kate was trailing both hands down over the taller woman's chest, the touch so feather-light that CJ thought it might be possible to die of anticipation.

Green eyes bore into blue as the agent sensually tickled up and down Kate's thighs and around her waist. She dragged her nails up the actress' back, then down, leaving a trail of very prominent goose bumps on the creamy, smooth skin. CJ gasped when her nipples were gripped gently and the sensation shot straight to her center. They seemed lost in one another as the jets roughly churned the water around them. Hands became more frantic and heart rates increased as the caresses became more specific, more intent in driving each other crazy.

CJ cupped a perfect breast with one hand and reached up to brush a wet strand of strawberry blonde hair away from Kate's eyes. She could see the lust in those eyes and wanted her wife more than she had ever wanted anyone. Leaning forward, the agent kissed her, sliding her tongue into the hot, welcoming mouth. The smaller woman licked and tasted her spouse, devouring her until they both had to come up for air. She pulled at CJ's lower lip with her teeth, opening her eyes to watch her wife as she entered her. Kate's hand slowly penetrated CJ, drawing a wail of sheer pleasure from the tall agent's mouth. She kissed Kate hungrily, wrapping one arm around her lover's back and using the other to run her long fingers through the hot folds of flesh between her wife's legs. Kate gasped into her mouth.

"In... now, Ciara..."

CJ gladly obliged, pressing her thumb against the swollen bundle of nerves at the same time. Both inside one another, they found a slow sensual rhythm until it became too much to bear. Gasps and moans of pleasure filled the scented air around them, and the occasional breathless instruction between kisses. They quickened their pace, both simultaneously resting their foreheads on the other's shoulder, watching their hands as they made love.

Kate climaxed first, whimpering her lover's name, unable to make much sound as the air left her lungs. CJ felt the silky inner walls clamp down around her fingers and she couldn't hold back anymore. Her orgasm washed over her as she continued to drive Kate through hers. She thrust herself against Kate's hand, milking every ounce of pleasure from her wife's fingers. CJ couldn't feel anything but the sensations flowing through her and her love for Kate surrounding them. They were one being when this perfect moment arrived and CJ would never truly understand their bond. But she didn't have to. It was enough that Kate felt it too and they would never be apart.

As they both recovered, still intimately connected, CJ looked up at her wife and smiled dazedly, as if intoxicated. She kissed tiny, delicate kisses all over Kate's face.

"I love you," Kate whispered, slowly withdrawing her fingers.

CJ smiled again, punctuating each word with a kiss. "I... love... you... too."

The tall agent removed her hand and brought her fingers to her mouth, frowning when she tasted them. "Aww. The water washed them clean," she grumbled.

Kate laughed and stood up in front of CJ with her hands on her hips, giving her lover a fantastic view of her inner thighs, the water trickling in droplets down the smooth skin. The agent gasped and ran her fingers up the inside of Kate's leg, then gently slipped inside her. The actress swallowed hard and used all her strength to remain standing. After swirling her fingers around so very carefully, CJ withdrew them and popped them in her mouth. She closed her eyes and hummed happily.

Kate looked down at her. "Better?"

"Oh, much," the agent nodded, wiggling a dark eyebrow. "Now get back down here and I'll wash you."

* * * * *

Once they were tucked up in bed, Kate lay on her back with CJ's head on her shoulder. She loved it when her taller wife would scoot down so that she could hold *her* for a change. It didn't happen often. It was just more comfortable for the actress to wrap herself around CJ's larger frame. The agent mumbled sleepily from her warm resting-place.

"What was that, honey?"

"I was just thinking." CJ lifted her head. "It's been a year since our wedding and every day I love and want you more. Do you think I'll survive the rest of our lives?"

Kate giggled. "I'm sure you're tough enough, my darling. But I know what you mean. I can't seem to get enough of you. Do you think we'll ever get bored of one another?"

"Nope."

"Me either," Kate said sleepily.

The actress ran her hand through her spouse's hair and CJ turned to her for a kiss. They drifted off to sleep early. It would be a long and no doubt over-dramatic day tomorrow, once Dad and Jeffrey arrived.

* * * * *

CJ leaned her hands on the window ledge, smelling the fragrant flowers of the garden below her, watching the hustle and bustle of people building a marquee. This venue seemed to take care of the whole wedding package. The agent knew Eddie would have left exacting instructions with the staff too.

She sighed and turned to see Kate standing by the bed, dressed in shorts and a striped tee shirt. She held a tiny box in her hand and CJ knew it was the ring Jeffrey would give to Eddie tomorrow.

"What are you thinking, Katie?"

"I... I'm just so glad that Dad has finally found his own happiness," she said, shedding a tear.

CJ crossed the room and gathered her wife in her arms. "Yeah. It's been a long time coming, huh? You okay?"

"Yes, honey. I'm just being emotional."

"Well, that's all right. It is a wedding after all," CJ said, smiling at the actress lovingly. "And remember, I cried at the last wedding we were at."

Kate laughed. "Yeah. You could hardly get your vows out you were shaking so bad. I think those were tears of fear."

"No. Certainly not fear. I just couldn't believe that you were mine. Never thought I'd be so lucky," the agent murmured, kissing Kate's nose.

"You are such a sweet talker."

CJ shook her head. "It's the absolute truth."

* * * * *

Later that day, Eddie and Jeffrey arrived seeming a little too calm. CJ eyed them suspiciously as Kate hugged her father. She was waiting for the emotional outbursts to start but there were only a few tears of joy as they all greeted one another.

As they walked to the Inn, the agent threw her arm over Eddie's shoulder.

"This place is beautiful, Dad. I take it you guys stayed here before?"

"Oh yes, CJ. We came here on our first anniversary as a couple. It was a wild weekend. Oh! You don't want to hear about that. But yes, it's so beautiful and I just love the Victorian feel of the place. Oh, it's so me," he babbled.

By the time they had settled in and checked on all the preparations, it was time for dinner. Eddie and Jeffrey joined CJ and Kate in the dining hall. They enjoyed a delicious main course and sat sipping on wine until the desserts came.

"How many guests are coming, Jeffrey?" Kate asked.

"Just thirty or so. Your brother will be here tomorrow morning. And it's just close friends and family and a few of the staff from the restaurant. We couldn't invite them all or we'd have to shut it down. Can you imagine? Oh!" he laughed, rolling his eyes.

"Nice and intimate. I prefer that... like our wedding." The actress turned to CJ and covered her hand on top of the table.

"Aww, you two are so friggin' sweet. Isn't it just beautiful? And I love that we all have this special day to share. I hope you didn't mind us choosing it?"

"No. Don't be silly. We love that you did this. And thank you for the wonderful room!" Kate said, hugging Jeffrey.

"Oh, you're so welcome, babycakes. We wanted you two to have a romantic weekend as well. Love... is a many splendored thing," he finished in a melodious voice.

CJ shook her head as they all laughed and continued their easy conversation. When the desserts arrived, Kate raised an eyebrow at hers. She had ordered the same thing as last night and she blushed furiously as an image of her, eating it off CJ's abs, flashed through her mind.

"Oh my! What's that all about?" Eddie said, wiggling his finger in front of his daughter's face.

"She's just remembering last night," CJ said smugly.

Kate didn't know whom to chastise first. She glared at CJ, then her father and both culprits laughed simultaneously. She flushed even hotter and thought her head just might explode this time.

"Oh honey. It's not like you can't have fun with your wife. I think it's great. Fantastic, even," Eddie gushed.

CJ nudged her spouse with her elbow. "See?"

"Co-conspirators." Kate growled at them and began to eat, ignoring the giggling all around her.

When she looked up again, they were all smiling at her and she gave in, chuckling quietly as CJ kissed the side of her head. The rest of the evening passed pleasantly and it was a very well fed actress who stumbled into their room at 10pm.

“We should exchange gifts tonight, CJ. It’ll be a busy day tomorrow and we might not get a chance,” Kate suggested.

“Yeah. Come here,” the agent said, sitting on the edge of the bed and patting the duvet with her hand.

They had agreed that anniversaries were going to be a small affair, gift-wise. With a simple ‘Forever C’ and ‘Forever K’, inscribed on the inside of each, the silver bracelets were exchanged accompanied by a loving embrace and a few tears.

When Kate crawled into bed, she was lost in thought of how perfect life was right now but when CJ leaned into her and whispered in her ear, telling her exactly what was going to happen next, she decided it could get better than perfect.

* * * * *

The next morning, Kate leaned out of the open window, observing a well co-ordinated group of caterers and staff putting the final touches to the venue. CJ walked out of the bathroom, freshly showered and dressed only in her underwear. Seeing the perfect backside of her wife just begging to be touched, she smirked and narrowed her eyes.

The tall raven-haired agent stealthily walked over to Kate and ground her crotch into the beautiful butt cheeks. The actress gasped and CJ felt two small hands come around to grip the back of her thighs.

“Oh yeah...”

“Don’t get all worked up,” Kate said, trying not to succumb to the delicious jolts of arousal flowing through her.

CJ stopped grinding but didn’t remove her body, leaning over her wife’s back to see outside. She spotted Eddie, finally flailing his arms around and chattering wildly at some guy who was carrying a stack of boxed wedding gifts. She giggled and wrapped her arms around Kate’s waist.

“I knew he couldn’t stay calm,” she said smugly.

“Not much chance of that with Dad at the best of times, never mind his own wedding day. C’mon, we need to help him so he can get ready.”

Kate moved away from window with a special agent still attached to her back. The taller woman didn’t want to give up the warm contact she had and followed her spouse into the bathroom. Kate spotted her semi-naked wife in the mirror and almost had a heart attack. CJ never really wore make-up, so when Kate saw her with it on she usually stared slack-jawed at the difference it made. CJ was stunningly beautiful every day, but the make up accentuated her blue eyes, framing them and making them seem even bigger and bluer.

“Like what you see?” the agent asked, raising a dark eyebrow seductively.

“Uh... yeah. Oh God, honey, we don’t have time,” Kate moaned, as a hand slid to her crotch.

“You sure?”

“Unngg...”

“I’m sorry, what was that?” CJ panted into Kate’s ear, tracing her fingertips over the blonde’s pajama pants.

“No time,” the smaller woman groaned.

CJ flicked her tongue into the delicate ear. “Oh, but you haven’t showered yet. Let me see how quick I can be.”

She turned them both so that they were facing the large mirror above the sink. She saw Kate watching their reflection and couldn’t see any resistance in the darkened green eyes. She slipped her hand inside her wife’s pants and lightly scratched over the thatch of dark blonde hair, feeling how moist it was.

“You’re so wet already.”

“Your... fault...” Kate sobbed, her voice heavy with need.

CJ lifted the actress’s vest top and held a full breast in the palm of her hand. The other hand was driving Kate insane as it slid lower, touching the burning flesh between her legs so lightly it almost didn’t register.

“Oh, Ciara. Don’t tease me. Please...”

Hearing the name her wife only used when they made love, CJ complied and pressed her finger onto the sensitive flesh, manipulating the hard little nodule with familiar skill until Kate was gasping audibly with every breath. Continuing her caress on her wife’s breast and keeping her eyes on Kate’s reflection, CJ bit down on her shoulder. The smaller woman’s eyes popped open as her orgasm instantly swallowed her whole. She held her eyes on CJ as she let the waves of pleasure crash over her. Those blue eyes were smoldering and glazed, and she knew that CJ had been riding that wave with her. She felt herself get weak as the agent guided her through the aftershocks. The hand left her breast and firmly wrapped around her waist at the exact moment her legs gave way.

Swallowing hard and licking her lips to moisten her dry mouth, she turned around in CJ’s strong embrace.

“That... was incredible.”

“I’m glad you enjoyed it. I sure did,” CJ drawled.

“Did you come?” Kate teased.

“A little bit, yeah,” the agent said bashfully.

They both giggled and held onto one another for a few moments. Kate finally sighed and pulled away.

“You want to shower with me since you, uh... made a mess again?”

CJ laughed out loud. “Maybe I should. But no fooling around in the shower,” she replied sternly.

It was Kate's turn to laugh as she dragged a giggling CJ into the shower. They managed to wash each other without too much teasing and CJ wondered when the honeymoon period of this relationship would end. She hoped it never would.

They threw on some comfortable clothes that would do until they had to put their dresses on, and headed downstairs to make sure Eddie got ready in time.

* * * * *

CJ casually strode over to her wildly gesticulating father-in-law and gently grasped his hands.

"Relaaaaax... go get ready. Katie will help you and I'll take care of this," she said, giving him her best calm-down look.

"Oh! CJ, thanks. Did they send you from the heavens? Oh! But wait, those flowers should go over there and..."

A long arm around his shoulders silenced him and ushered him toward the Inn. Kate followed them and once they were at the door, CJ leaned forward and kissed him on the cheek.

"Dad, this is your day. I'll make sure everything looks perfect. Now take your daughter and go upstairs."

Eddie's eyes had filled with tears. "Oh CJ. I love you so much... both of you. Katie, you have no idea what you mean to me and how happy I am that you found someone like her," he gushed, pointing to the agent. "Oh! Okay, let's go beautify me, sweetheart," he bawled, hooking Kate's arm with his own.

CJ shook her head and went back to the hoards of people bustling around the gazebo. It was time for some good old FBI organization.

* * * * *

Somehow, Kate managed to get her Dad ready. Leaving him with his son, she checked on Jeffrey who seemed to have far too much help already. His sisters bustled around him and the actress gave him a quick wave and thumbs up from the door before retreating to a safe distance. She went back to her room and was surprised to find CJ already there.

"Everything all fixed up down there?"

CJ grinned. "Yes dear."

Kate laughed and gave her wife a hug, then disappeared into the bathroom to put the finishing touches to her makeup and pull her dress on. When she emerged from the bathroom, a tall, raven-haired agent in her underwear greeted her. CJ's mouth was hanging open, eyes bulging from their sockets and her hands stilled mid-motion.

"You okay, CJ?" Kate asked bashfully as she twirled around on the spot, making the dress fly feather-light around her hips.

The taller woman couldn't speak and she was sure her heart must be somewhere in her throat. '*Yeah, that's why I'm speechless,*' she thought sarcastically. Kate was unbelievably beautiful – and looked way too sexy – wearing her subtly floral, emerald silken dress. The above-the-knee skirt flowed freely but the bodice was so fitted that CJ wondered if it was painted on. It gathered into a halter-neck, accentuating Kate's firm

shoulders and graceful collarbone. CJ's blue eyes darkened as she ran her gaze over the voluptuous breasts that were pushed up to a perfect height... not too much cleavage, just the right amount. A warm, molten heat spread through the tall woman and settled at her groin. Wow, she was gonna have a hard time keeping her hands off her wife all day.

By this point, Kate had started to giggle and was walking toward CJ swaying her hips.

"No!" the agent shouted. "Don't come near me. You look... I... I need to get ready now."

Kate watched with astonishment and amusement as her spouse deliberately looked down at the floor and headed for the bathroom, closing the door firmly behind her. Kate bit her lips to stop herself from laughing out loud. She knew that the speechless, bewildered look was a better response than she could have hoped for.

"And don't think I didn't notice what necklace you're wearing," shouted a shaky voice from behind the bathroom door.

"Are you okay, baby?"

"Don't call me baby. I'm having a hard enough time calming down."

Kate fiddled with the necklace. It was the one her wife had given her for her birthday. CJ's mother had given it to her very young daughter before she died, and it meant so much to Kate that her spouse wanted her to have it. She squashed those thoughts before she became too emotional and sat down on the bed to put her shoes on. The bathroom door opened and a fully dressed FBI agent strolled out. But she didn't look like an FBI agent today.

Kate looked up from her task, one shoe on, the other in her hand. Her breath caught in her throat and she felt tears sting the back of her eyes. *'This is my wife! Wow.'*

"Payback's a bitch, huh," CJ purred.

Kate stood up and held a hand up to CJ, silencing her. She then slowly studied every part of the beautiful woman. CJ's dress was fitted snugly around her hips – and her waist and her breasts. It was strapless but a band of material hung gently around the top of her arms, leaving her broad shoulders completely uncovered, save for the shiny black hair tumbling over the tanned skin. And those legs... those longer than long legs were covered from the knee up but Kate knew exactly what the material hid. The deep, deep blue wrapped around CJ like a glove and Kate had to swallow hard when she met the gaze of almost the same color.

"You are so beautiful!" she gasped.

CJ's expression immediately changed from smug to one of pure love and gratitude. She walked over to stand in front of Kate, pushing her carefully back into her sitting position. She took the shoe from the actress' hand and knelt, somewhat awkwardly, before her.

"Katie, I hope you know why I couldn't speak when I saw you. Too many emotions ran through me, I couldn't describe how stunning you look. I mean, I love you every second of every day but it just took my breath away."

"Ditto." As CJ finished placing the shoe on her foot, Kate took her wife's chin in her hand so that their eyes met. "Thank you for loving me."

“Oh God, don’t make me cry. We have a whole wedding day to get through.” The agent took the hand from her chin and kissed the knuckles tenderly. “Thank you for loving me too.” She paused. “Okay. Deep breath... and let’s go.”

* * * * *

The little ceremony went off without a hitch, but not without a bucket-load of tears. CJ, Kate and Eddie Junior stood together behind Dad and Jeffrey as they said their vows. Kate noted her brother’s very sharp black tuxedo and nodded admiringly. Jeffrey wore a rich blue tuxedo and Dad had a black one, with a green waistcoat peeking out of his jacket. When they all got together later for family photos, they looked like a rainbow of sorts but that’s just the way Dad wanted it – bright and happy.

As the party got underway after dinner, CJ and Kate were standing by the bar inside the giant marquee when Eddie walked over to them. He stopped about ten feet away and spread his arms in front of him.

“I don’t think I could imagine a more beautiful sight,” he said, covering his mouth with a hand and waving the other one in front of his teary eyes. “You two are stunning!”

Both women smiled and Kate waved her father over. “Come here, Dad.”

She enveloped him in a powerful hug and whispered in his ear. “I love you, Dad. I’m glad you’re happy.”

“Oh darling. And the same to you... both of you,” he sobbed, grabbing CJ and pulling her in.

Jeffrey – seeing this and not one to miss out on a hug – came rushing over. “I don’t know why you’re hugging but I want in!”

They stood in a huddle, group-hugging until Eddie stopped sobbing.

“Oh! Oh my! I’ll need to re-apply my make-up,” he fussed, dabbing his cheeks with a tissue.

“You look great, Dad,” Kate reassured him.

“Yep. Very handsome,” said Eddie Junior, who had come up behind his father.

Suddenly sobering, Eddie reached out to his son. “You know, I can’t believe how lucky I am. I have two... no, three children,” he looked to CJ, “who accept me for what and who I am. Sometimes it just pounces on me and I pinch myself to make sure I’m awake. Oh, here I go again.”

As Eddie sobbed, his son put an arm around his shoulder. “C’mon Dad, Jeffrey, let’s get you two a drink. Stop crying and let’s celebrate your wedding.” He put the other arm around Jeffrey and led them away.

CJ turned to Kate. “He’s not the only lucky one.”

Kate melted into the love in her wife’s eyes. They kissed so sweetly, but didn’t escalate the encounter since they knew where that would lead. Instead, they walked hand in hand out into the early evening sunshine to enjoy the rest of the party.

* * * * *

By the time they got into bed that night, they were completely exhausted. They had danced with everyone it seemed, and finally fell into each other's arms for the last few songs. They had done their duty, keeping Dad and Jeffrey on a relatively even keel emotionally, until the men had left to go to the honeymoon suite.

And now, both special agent and actress lay in bed on their stomachs, barely able to talk, Kate's arm flopped limply around CJ's back, the agent's hand keeping a contact with Kate's thigh.

"CJ?"

"Yes, Katie?"

"Do you want to make love?"

"Yes, Katie."

CJ wiggled her finger weakly against Kate's skin.

Kate sighed. "Was it good for you, honey?"

"Yes, Katie."

They both giggled quietly and Kate kissed her wife's shoulder before they were lured into an irresistible sleep.

Chapter 2

The next day, after some happy tearful goodbyes, CJ and Kate left for the airport. Eddie and Jeffrey were staying at the Inn for a few more days for a honeymoon of sorts before they returned to New York to run their business.

As CJ drove to the airport humming along to a tune on the radio, Kate checked her phone. She had a voicemail message that had been left during the night. She frowned and reached forward to turn the music down.

"Hold on, honey. I have a message."

"Okie dokie."

Kate listened to the message and her face contorted as if she'd tasted something incredibly disgusting.

"What's up, Katie?" the agent asked, noting her wife's displeasure.

"It's a message from Jack. I think he was a little drunk. But what I want to know is, how the hell did he get my number? I sure didn't give it to him," the actress grumbled.

"I'm pretty sure it's easy to get. I mean, he *is* your co-star."

Jack Bannerman had been a real pain in Kate's ass since he'd joined her TV show, *Deadline*, seven months ago. He was an over-grown, egotistical, muscle-bound slime-ball who had women practically falling at his

feet with a twitch of his perfectly groomed goatee. Kate had rejected all his advances but he never gave up trying. And boy, was he trying.

Kate tapped a couple of instructions onto the keypad and pressed the phone against CJ's ear. She watched as a myriad of expressions crossed the strong features, finally ending with the agent clenching her jaws together in anger.

Jack had basically described to Kate, in some detail, what he would like to do to her after they go to dinner together and ended his lewd conversation slurring the phrase, "Once you've had Jack, you always come back." It made CJ's skin crawl and quite frankly, she wanted to punch his lights out.

"I think it's time for me to meet this Jack Bannerman," CJ glowered, keeping her eyes fixed firmly on the road.

"I don't think we need to kill him just yet. I mean, I've told you everything that's happened with him so far, including the tongue thing during that kiss," Kate shivered in horror at the memory, "and I've managed to deflect his advances without causing a scene... so far."

"I know, Katie. But what he said in that message was just... ewwww!"

"I agree."

"Okay, here's what I propose. I'll come with you to the studio tomorrow and I'll meet him. You aren't working until the next day so he'll have time to uh... process my words," CJ said calmly, if unconvincingly.

"I'll get back to you on that," Kate replied, glancing at her wife while she thought about it for a few moments. "You won't hurt him?" she asked finally.

"No." Then CJ whispered, "Not permanently."

"Oh God."

"Honey, I won't hurt him. I just want to show him who you're married to. I mean, he still doesn't know you're married to a woman, does he?"

"No. He assumed I was married to a guy. I never want to prolong any conversation with him, so I didn't correct it."

"Okay. So, it's time for him to find out. Maybe he'll back off."

Kate pursed her lips. "Okay. But I'm trusting you not to inflict pain." A small cough. "Too much". Another cough.

CJ laughed and shook her head. "Tomorrow it is then."

* * * * *

They got home late that night and decided to ask Tony to bring Kamali back the next day. After hanging up the call to her driver, Kate crawled into bed and into CJ's arms.

"Hey you. How's our dog doing?"

“He’s fine. Probably won’t want to come home. Tony says his five year-old nephew was over to visit and Kamali has been perfect with him, very respectful,” Kate murmured.

“Well, that’s good. Means he should be good with our kids too.”

Kate lifted her head. “You keep surprising me with how much you want kids.”

“Why? CJ frowned.

“I don’t mean to sound negative. That’s not what I meant. I just didn’t expect you to want kids. I don’t know why exactly.”

The agent gently placed her hand on the back of Kate’s head and pulled her down for a soft kiss. “I didn’t really want kids. In fact, I never thought about them at all. But then, I was never in love before, was I? And since I’m very much in love now, it’s definitely something I want to share with you. Only you.”

“God, you’re perfect. You’re actually perfect!” Kate said in wonder.

“Not perfect, Katie. Maybe we’re just perfect for one another?” CJ asked hopefully.

Kate smiled the most beautiful smile. “That must be it.”

They spent some time kissing lovingly before falling into a warm, tangled heap of arms and legs in the middle of the bed, too tired from travelling for anything more.

* * * * *

Picking up some messages from the studio office, Kate asked around to find out where Jack was. She strolled across the lot to where her tall wife was standing admiring a huge poster. CJ saw her approach and nodded toward the billboard.

“She’s really hot,” she winked.

“Oh yeah?” Kate played along, looking up at the giant picture of herself.

“Yeah. Maybe I should marry her, huh?”

“Nah. She’s seeing this horrible hunk of a guy. Not your type, honey.”

CJ groaned and rolled her eyes as they started walking. “So, where is he?”

“In here,” Kate replied, motioning toward the cafeteria doors.

They walked into the large eatery and Kate spotted Jack at a table in the corner, arm flung casually over the back of his chair, one ankle resting on a supporting knee. He had a smugger than smug look on his face. *‘Nothing new there,’* she thought. He wore gray sweat pants and a ridiculously tight vest tee that did nothing to cover his dark, hairy, bulging chest. Clearly, he had just finished working out – or was he just posing? Kate could never be sure.

As they approached, his eyes fell upon the actress and he got to his feet, extending his arms with a slimy grin on his face.

“Couldn’t keep away from me, could ya, bab…”

He faltered as his gaze landed on CJ and his arms flopped to his sides limply. He gaped at the raven-haired beauty with very wide eyes. He seemed to have lost the ability to speak. Kate studied him for a second and thought if he’d been a cartoon character, his eyes would have just popped completely out of his head and swirled around in mid-air, while his tongue would have rolled out of his mouth like an unraveling red carpet, and hit the floor. She came back from her weirdly imaginative thoughts when Jack snapped back to his old self. He composed himself, squaring his shoulders and puffing out his chest. But was he breathing a little too quickly?

“Well, what do I have here?” he drawled.

Kate put on her best polite face. “Oh, I’m sorry. Jack, this is CJ Carson. CJ, Jack Bannerman.”

“Oh, the pleasure is all yours,” Jack said, wiggling a black eyebrow. “And maybe a little mine. You are just a sight for my sore eyes. What say we have dinner tonight, a few drinks, then I’ll show you my head shots?”

CJ barely hid her growl. “I don’t think so. But thanks for the tempting offer.”

“No? Really? But look at us. Same height… almost. Same stunningly dark good looks. And those eyes! Oh baby, those eyes were made for me to get lost in… not to mention that tall, powerful, slim body… just begging for me to fu-”

He was silenced by CJ’s abrupt step forward. They were practically nose to nose now. Kate watched with fiery eyes. She knew what was coming next but she’d never really seen her wife in action before. Well, not this way.

Jack wet his lips, thinking CJ was about to submit to his irresistible charms. But the agent’s eyes had turned a dangerously dark gray-blue and she suddenly grabbed a large handful of the actor’s crotch through his sweat pants, her actions hidden from public view by her body – and Kate’s. The grip was strong and not at all what Jack was expecting. His whole body tensed, his eyes widened in fear of more pain and the muscles on his neck visibly strained.

CJ stood a whisper away from him and spoke in a deliberate, menacingly low voice, clipping every over-enunciated word with utter disdain and a very definite warning.

“Don’t talk like that in front of Kate… my *wife*!”

Jack’s eyes opened even wider and he squeaked.

“Oh yes. She’s my wife,” CJ sneered, tightening her grip a little more for emphasis. “She tells me everything, you know. The inappropriate touches on set, the lewd diatribe you subject her to every day, the sticking your tongue down her throat during a scene just to get a taste of what you can’t have. I also listened to that message you left on her cell phone.”

The agent’s voice got even deeper and huskier – and not in a good way.

“I *suggest* you treat her with a little more respect and consideration from now on. Oh, I know she can take care of herself. I’ve seen her do that. But this job is important to her and that makes it *very* important to me. So, here I am, talking to you. And I don’t like you, Jack. So take my advice and be a good little boy or the next time I come see you, I won’t just grab this pathetic brain between your legs, I’ll rip it off and hit you over the head with it,” she concluded with a sickly smile.

Another slight twist to his crotch – another strangled squeak from Jack.

“Do I make myself clear?” the agent hissed, so close to the actor that he could feel her breath on his face.

“Crystal,” he croaked.

“Good. I’m so glad we understand each other. Now, Kate and I are going to leave and you can go back to your meal. Have a nice day, Jack.”

She let him go and stepped back, curling her mouth into a snarling grimace as she swiped her hands together as if getting rid of something dirty. The agent turned to Kate to find an unreadable expression on the actress’ face. Jack just stared at them, slowly feeling the blood start to pump around his veins again.

CJ turned her back on him and waved over her shoulder. “It was a pleasure, Mr. Bannerman,” she said, taking Kate’s hand.

“Bye, Jack. See you tomorrow.”

“Uh yes, tomorrow, Kate. Heh.” Jack cleared his throat and sat down *very* carefully, rubbing his brow in confusion. He’d never experienced anything like that before. Women fell at his feet all the time. They didn’t reject him and they certainly didn’t do... whatever that six-foot stunner had just done.

“Yeah, lesbians. I knew there had to be a reason Kate didn’t want me,” he muttered to himself.

And with that, his cocky, self-loving ego was back. But he’d be a lot more careful around Kate Marshall in the future. In fact, maybe he should try to make amends. Then he’d have better chance of seeing her Goddess of a wife again. Rubbing his chin and narrowing his eyes, he went back to his meal with many, many images of CJ dancing across his mind.

* * * * *

On the car ride home, CJ drove silently, wondering what was going through her spouse’s mind. Had she disappointed her? Had she made Kate angry? Did she do good? She wasn’t sure because Kate hadn’t said a word since they left the studios.

They arrived home and CJ dropped the car keys onto the coffee table. She was suddenly thrown, full force onto the couch and found a tight little fireball of an actress straddling her hips, green eyes bursting with... something. CJ raised her hands in surrender, not sure what was coming next.

Kate leaned her body down to push her breasts against her wife’s. She wrapped both arms over CJ’s head, framing her face and bent down to kiss her hotly. Kate was hungry, CJ could tell and they kissed until the agent thought she might pass out. Tongues twisted and explored around one another, lips and teeth mashed together in a desperate attempt to taste everything at once and gasps and moans filled the air. Finally, Kate rose up slightly above her wife and looked down with a gaze of such intense fire, CJ thought she was going to burn a hole right through the couch cushions.

“I... I take it you’re not angry with me?” CJ ventured, trying to catch her breath.

“Angry? Are you crazy? Honey, you were incredible,” the actress said, falling back down onto her wife. “You truly got your point across without doing anything that he could complain about.”

“What do you mean?” CJ asked, while depositing little kisses on the nearby chin and lips.

“Jack has groped my ass and made sure to rub up against me when nobody was around. Those inappropriate touches you talked about... he did them all. And you managed to scare the crap out of him by doing the exact same thing. It was genius!”

“Well, I’m glad you think so. I didn’t really like doing it but I hated the way he was treating you.”

“You didn’t like doing it? Really?” Kate raised a disbelieving eyebrow.

“Hmmm... maybe a little,” CJ chuckled.

“There’s my tough special agent,” the actress husked. “And now for your reward.”

CJ didn’t get a chance to reply as her wife ripped the clothes from her body. She found herself very naked, very quickly and she really didn’t mind at all. Seems she did good after all – very good.

* * * * *

Later that day, Tony arrived at the house and reluctantly gave Kamali back to his owners. Kate told him to keep the Mercedes -since he was still car-less – and come pick her up the next morning to go to the studios. CJ called her office and got some news she didn’t like much. She was deep in thought when she walked out onto the rear deck. Kate was playing with the dog and looked up from her position on the steps.

“You okay, honey?”

“Hmm? Oh, yeah. I called work. Seems I have to go to San Francisco this week to give a lecture,” CJ said pensively.

Kate got up and joined the taller woman on the bench. “You don’t want to do it?” she asked, trying to read her spouse.

“Hell, I don’t know. I guess it’s something different but I’ve never taught anyone before, never mind a bunch of cadets.”

“What’s the topic for your lecture?”

“An intro to psychological profiling.”

“Sounds right up your street. You’ll do great,” Kate said firmly.

“Ya think?”

“Absolutely. And remember, it doesn’t have to be a boring slide-show lecture. Use what you know. And use your unbelievable charm and wit. They’ll remember more if they remember you. And boy, will they remember you,” Kate smirked.

“Oh God. I don’t think I want them to remember me too much... just the material. But you’re right, I’ll find a way to make it interesting.”

Kate leaned into her wife and sighed. “When do you have to go?”

“Thursday. I guess that gives me a couple of days to prepare something,” CJ said, stroking the reddish blonde head at her shoulder.

“Hmmm, that’s nice,” Kate murmured, enjoying the caress.

They sat there in peaceful conversation for a half-hour before Kate’s stomach – regular as clockwork – rumbled that it was time for dinner. They went to check on the horses then headed indoors to feed themselves and Kamali.

* * * * *

The actress chewed on her food as she thought about the conversation she had with Tony earlier. They had discussed the fact that Tony had taken care of things when they were away. He wanted to learn more about caring for the horses and Kate decided they should give him a raise. He was definitely more of a personal assistant of sorts. And since Kate and CJ employed him and not the studios, it was their decision.

“CJ?”

“Yes, Katie?”

“I was talking to Tony earlier. He wasn’t too sure about caring for the horses. He said Nevada threw a shoe and she seemed a little lame and he didn’t know who to call. I told him it wasn’t an urgent thing but he wants to learn more. I was thinking I’d teach him all he needs to know. Do you think we should give him a raise?”

“Yeah. I always thought he deserved one,” CJ mumbled around her bread.

“He really does. I mean, he’s my driver, but he also takes care of our dog, our house, our horses and just about everything else when we’re not here. He picks up my messages, keeps a friggin’ diary for me and reminds me of appointments. And he’s never late to pick me up. He really is a treasure, isn’t he?”

“I’m not disagreeing with you, Katie. I think he’s a diamond. And what’s more, we trust him. That’s very important to me. Makes me feel better when the famous actress I have for a wife is away from me,” CJ winked.

Kate threw a napkin at her. “Yeah okay. I’ll tell him tomorrow.”

“How much of a raise?”

“Good question. How about three hundred dollars a month for now? He’s on a pretty good wage for a driver but he does a ton more than that.”

“Sounds fine. We can afford that, so… go for it. I’m sure it can only help since he’s romancing his new girlfriend,” CJ winked.

“Great. I’ll draw up a new contract for him.” Kate shoveled some food into her mouth, then paused. “New girlfriend?”

“Yeah. Someone from the studios, apparently.”

“Ooh, I must find out who it is.”

CJ laughed. “I’m sure you will, honey.”

* * * * *

They finished their meal and took Kamali for a long walk. Once they returned, they both headed upstairs to get organized for the next day. CJ headed into the ensuite and began disrobing to take a shower. She looked into the mirror above their twin sinks.

“We need a bigger mirror in here,” she purred to Kate, who was coming through the door.

The actress smirked. “Whatever for, my darling?” she teased.

“Uh...”

Kate slipped her arms around the agent’s waist and bit the back of her shoulder. “I think it’s my turn.”

“I may not survive it. And you can’t hold me up when my legs give way, which they’re pretty much guaranteed to do,” CJ pointed out as she tried to breathe.

Her hungry little wife was now tracing a line down her arm with her teeth, driving the agent beyond crazy.

“I uh, Katie...”

“Wait here. I have an idea.”

CJ did as she was told, curious to see what Kate was going to do. When the smaller woman disappeared into the bedroom, the agent frowned but she did have an amused glint in her eye. A few moments later, she heard a quiet ‘Come here’ from the bedroom and slowly walked through the door.

She was greeted by the sight of her ridiculously cute – and very naked – wife sitting on the bed, facing the tall floor-to-ceiling mirror that hung on the bedroom wall. Kate had lit a few candles and put on the mood lighting throughout the room. She curled her finger in front of her mischievous face, calling CJ to her.

The agent didn’t hesitate. She immediately crossed the bedroom and stood directly in front of her wife.

Kate breathed deeply. “Undress for me.”

CJ began to slip out of her bra, moving painfully slowly so that Kate got what she wanted. She knew her wife loved to watch the play of muscles as the agent’s arms moved, loved to cast a burning glance over every piece of uncovered skin as it came into view. It made the taller woman shiver, her nipples standing hard to attention as Kate licked her lips and leaned back with her hands on the bed to watch CJ remove her pants. A bare foot came up and rested on the mattress between Kate’s thighs, the agent nodding to it. The actress grabbed the bottom of the pant leg and pulled. She did the same with the second offered leg and CJ soon stood before her in nothing but black, lacy panties.

Kate gasped and leaned forward to inhale the scent of her lover. She moaned her exhale and grabbed CJ’s buttocks. Pulling her wife to her, she kissed the dark material, feeling it already wet beneath her lips. She wrapped her fingers around the two little straps that held the panties and pulled them down slowly, keeping her lips in contact with the delicious thatch of hair that was revealed. She felt CJ shudder and weaken as she continued to kiss the mound, then trail over to each hip bone, then slide her tongue into the agent’s navel. CJ’s legs buckled and the actress could hear her breaths coming short and fast.

She grabbed CJ’s buttocks again and thrust her tongue through the dark hair and into the drenched flesh beneath. The taller woman leaned her knees on the edge of the mattress, unable to stay completely upright.

“Katie! Oh Jesus, Katie...”

After teasing the agent to a state of delirious madness, the blonde eventually stopped her oral ministrations and turned a very aroused CJ to face the mirror, scooting back on the bed and pulling the agent into a sitting position between her widely spread legs. CJ leaned her back against her lover's breasts, curving her pelvis to slide down a little and give her wife a better view.

Kate's fingernails scratched gently around CJ's waist and swirled around the tall woman's abdomen. Blue eyes met green in the reflection and the agent almost climaxed at the sheer intensity of her desire. Kate sensed it – and felt it too – so she decided not to tease anymore. CJ's thighs were at the edge of the bed and the petite actress could see exactly what she was doing, which meant CJ could too.

Kate slid round a little so that her center rested on CJ's side, giving her a much better angle for what came next. She grazed her fingertips down dampened inner thighs, prompting CJ to open her legs wide, inviting her lover in. Kate then brushed over her wife's aching clit and immediately began slow, languid strokes over the swollen ridge.

“Yesss...” CJ's eyes rolled shut as she threw her head back.

“Watch me,” Kate demanded.

Those words were enough to bring the agent to the edge of reason and she forced her eyes open to look at their reflection in the mirror. She swallowed hard, trying to moisten her very dry mouth and lips. It didn't work. She was panting too hard and too fast.

“Katie... I'm gonna...”

“I know. Come for me, Ciara,” the actress purred.

She thrust two fingers inside the wet opening, keeping a delicious pressure on the hard nodule with the heel of her hand.

CJ's body tightened, her muscles taut with the pleasure she was experiencing. Her orgasm exploded within her, every piece of skin touching Kate feeling like flames burning her nerve endings. She *had* to close her eyes now, as a host of bright colors seemed to dance across her field of vision.

Kate watched her, watched the perfect heaving breasts and the agent's face, so beautiful in her release. She watched her own hand as it gently carried CJ through her orgasm. She watched her wife coming back to herself, the Goddess-like features relaxing in the aftermath. The actress slowly withdrew and raised her hand to her mouth. CJ seemed to sense what her spouse was going to do and opened her eyes to see Kate sucking on her fingers.

Suddenly, the agent growled deep in her throat and flipped herself onto her knees on the floor. She grabbed Kate's ass and slid her forward roughly, sinking her mouth between her lover's thighs. Kate squeaked but quickly offered herself freely to her spouse. CJ feasted, flicking her tongue back and forth quickly over the incredibly sensitive bundle of nerves. Literally twenty seconds later, Kate climaxed so hard that she felt herself scatter into a million pieces. The orgasm tore through her like liquid fire, searing every molecule of her being.

“Ciara! Ciara!” she screamed over and over.

But CJ wouldn't stop and the actress opened her eyes in disbelief as she came again... and again and again. She barely had time to recover before the next wave of release crashed over her. She could see CJ in the mirror, devouring her. It was incredible. She'd never experienced anything like this before. The pleasure was endless and she wondered if she would survive it.

Finally... finally, she just couldn't respond anymore and she slumped back on the bed, flat out in her exhaustion. The agent rose up from her heavenly feast and looked up the length of sweat-covered body, glancing past the heaving breasts at her wife's face. She curled a dark eyebrow and assumed a smug half-grin as she crawled up her sated lover's body.

"You okay?" CJ whispered. Kate slapped her playfully on the shoulder, unable to speak. The agent slid over on the bed and wrapped her body around Kate's side. She kissed the actress on the cheek and sighed happily. "That was beyond amazing, baby."

"Completely," Kate murmured. "What you did to me... I lost count."

The agent smiled and nuzzled her face under Kate's chin. They lay for long moments before CJ remembered that they had been headed for the shower, but she just didn't want to move. She wrapped herself tighter around the smaller, firm body that was somehow so soft at the same time. After a while, Kate stirred.

"Mmmm, let's shower and get into bed, honey."

"I don't wanna move," the agent muttered.

"C'mon, if you get up now, I'll wash you," Kate said, knowing that it would get her wife into the bathroom.

"Aww, now you've gone and done it," CJ moaned, trying to hide her smile.

After a lengthy and somewhat arousing shower, two very sated women crawled into bed. Lying there in the dark, CJ fleetingly thought about how she didn't sleep separately from Kate, wanting her own space like she'd done with others in the past. She always wanted to be enveloped around her wife as they fell asleep and that surprised her sometimes. It had surprised Kate too, but they'd discussed it and the actress wanted the same thing, thankfully. *'True love,'* CJ thought drowsily, as she fell blissfully into sleep.

Chapter 3

The next couple of days passed quickly. Kate went back to work to find a rather polite Jack Bannerman being all gentlemanly to her. He held doors open, complimented her on her scenes and even bought her a coffee. It was so fake and uncomfortable but the actress thought she'd just have to grin and bear it. She supposed it was better than his lewd remarks and sexually explicit gestures. But this way, he could still pay attention to her and if she got all irritated about it, *she'd* look like a bitch. *'Gawd, you want to kill him, dontcha?'* her little voice goaded.

She sighed heavily as she sat down in her trailer on Thursday morning, waiting for Cyn. CJ had left for San Francisco the night before and the smaller woman missed her already. *'How pathetic am I?'* she thought to herself.

Just then, a cheerful, whistling make-up artist came through the door and stood behind her, tilting her head to observe the long face.

“What’s up with you, Kate? Missing that supermodel of a wife already? Or trying to figure out what the hell Bannerman is up to? Actually now that I think about it, he’s only being polite to you. Did you threaten to castrate him or something?”

Kate looked thoughtful for a moment before answering. She knew Cyn wouldn’t go spreading any gossip. They’d already established their friendship and that wouldn’t happen.

“All of the above, I’d say.”

Cyn laughed. “Elaborate while I apply the fake pretty onto the natural pretty.”

“Aww, you are such a sweetie,” Kate drawled sarcastically.

“Uh huh. C’mon, spill.”

“Well, yes, I am missing my supermodel of a wife. That can’t be helped. I know what Bannerman’s up to... or at least, I know why he’s being polite. CJ met him a few days ago.”

“Oh?” Cyn’s interest peaked. “And?”

“He seemed floored by her. But then she grabbed and twisted his crotch *so* hard and told him to play nice with me or else. So I guess he took it pretty seriously.”

The young artist stood static, staring in the mirror at Kate. “She really did that?”

“Yep. It was amazing to watch.”

“Go, CJ! Go, CJ!” Cyn said, pretending to be a cheerleader.

Kate laughed and continued her easy banter with her friend until it was time to go act. At least she only had two scenes with Jack today. Hopefully they would be over quickly and she could head up to San Francisco to surprise CJ for a pre-birthday treat. Kate figured they could have a nice dinner down at the Wharf and have a trawl through the seasonal bohemian-style market stalls. It was the only place she’d ever seen the agent enjoy shopping.

* * * * *

When CJ walked into the large classroom, silence descended quickly, a few low whispers hesitantly breaking the quiet. She strolled confidently to the desk in front of a large projector screen and turned to face her group of about fifty rookies and cadets. It seemed to be a mixed class and after having talked with SAC Douglas, CJ found out that these people had shown special aptitude in psychological studies and had been brought in for a more focused lecture.

“Hello everyone. I’m Special Agent CJ Carson from the FBI’s Los Angeles field office. I’m one of a small experimental group of agents who deal with specific violent crimes, serial killer profiling and some high profile kidnappings. We deal with a lot of other stuff too but that’s our specialty, so...”

A cadet raised his hand.

“A question already? Go ahead,” CJ said, smiling at the young man who seemed very nervous.

“Hi. I’m Agent Garrison. Could you tell me what CJ stands for?”

CJ held back her laugh but the others did not. The room erupted and even the nervous cadet laughed too.

The tall woman waited for the room to calm. “Well, Agent Garrison, you certainly broke the ice. And here I thought you had an FBI-related question for me. My name is Ciara Jane, but CJ will do for the duration of the class.”

He nodded sheepishly and blushed. CJ rested her buttocks on the desk to address her attentive audience once again.

“Okay. Here’s what we’ll do. I’m gonna give you some information and each time I’m done, I want hands in the air. I want sensible questions and I want to hear your opinion on what I’ve told you. Ready?”

After many nodding heads and murmurs in the affirmative, the tall special agent began.

“There have been many debates about psychological profiling and serial killers, most of them in my office,” she said, raising an eyebrow at the few giggles in the audience. “There have also been many theories formed and databases compiled, full of statistics and opinions on these theories. So, first of all I’ll tell you that, according to criminologist Eric Hickey – who has assembled the most extensive database on demography of serial murder – 88% of serial killers are male, 85% are Caucasian and the average age when they claim their first victim is usually around twenty-eight and a half years. In terms of victim selection, 62% of the killers target strangers exclusively and another 22% kill at least one stranger. Finally, 71% of the killers operate in a specific location or area, rather than traveling wide distances to commit their crimes.”

CJ raised her finger in the air to stop the cadets who were shooting their hands in the air already. She slid back until she was fully sitting on the desk and pursed her lips in thought, then nodded to herself.

“Another thing I want you to think about is, the FBI claims that to be classified as a serial killer, the person must first complete three separate murders that are spaced by a duration they call ‘the cooling off period’ which can vary from a few days to years.”

A sudden seriousness had fallen on the room and CJ was more satisfied that they had calmed down and she could now enjoy taking this class.

She spread her hands to show she was finished for the moment and a barrage of arms flailed about in front of her. She smiled at their exuberance and began picking cadets to answer, finally feeling quite comfortable in her teaching style. Kate was right. She could do it.

* * * * *

The day was passing so slowly for Kate. All they had achieved this morning were multiple re-takes and a few classic moments for a blooper reel. They’d finally got the scene, but Jack was certainly off his game and the actress was surprised to find she was missing the confident asshole who was so full of himself that he never really needed a re-take. She was sitting in her trailer, pondering that dilemma when Cyn bounced in and leaned her hip against the desk. She was the only person who never knocked on the door but for some reason, it never bothered the actress.

“I was just over beautifying Jack. He’s not quite right today, huh?” she prodded, looking for some insight.

Kate broke from her musings. “I was just thinking about that. He looks like he is constantly being punched in the gut.”

“Is your wife here?” Cyn joked, pretending to search under the desk.

“No,” Kate laughed.

“Well, he hasn’t been the same since CJ, uh, had a chat with him,” the artist pointed out.

“I don’t think Jack is easily intimidated. Unless... oh God, you don’t think he *likes* her, do you?”

“You mean ‘*likes her*’ likes her? Well, who wouldn’t? Your wife’s a Goddess, remember?”

Kate narrowed her eyes playfully at Cyn. “Hmmm...”

“Oh my God. He doesn’t know she’s an FBI agent either. Can you imagine?” Cyn turned her back to the mirror and groped and hugged herself. “Oh CJ, yeah, cuff me baby. Whatever you want. Oh yeah.”

Kate slapped the artist’s ass and she turned back around.

“I can say for certain that CJ would rather kick the crap out of him. She’d use the cuffs as a weapon instead,” the blonde giggled.

“He might enjoy that,” Cyn replied, wiggling her eyebrow ring and sticking her tongue out.

They both burst into hysterics at how accurate that actually was. Once they had calmed themselves, Cyn complained that Kate had now messed up her eye makeup and they got back to business, but not without a few random comments about what CJ could do to Jack, given the correct motivation. Back out on set, Kate had one more scene to complete and she silently thanked the powers that be that Jack wasn’t in it.

Two hours later, she was running to her car, where Tony waited to take her to the airport.

* * * * *

They had gone over all the basics of profiling before lunch, including the most common personality and background traits of most serial killers. The afternoon had consisted of answering more targeted questions and she was impressed with her class full of new agents.

CJ took a sip of her water and turned back to the students to finish up the lesson.

“So, we’ve gone over everything I can think of for this particular class. We covered pre-crime stressers, so I wanted to finish with a specific example. David Berkowitz, is a typical example of an average serial killer... although the word ‘average’ is debatable at any time when referring to a serial killer. Berkowitz was quite normal in comparison to his counterparts, some of whom have been known to eat their victims. During the years 1976 and 1977, he set out on his reign of terror in New York City, shooting more than ten lovers who were parked in secluded areas. After Berkowitz was caught, Special Agent John Douglas, one of the first ever criminal profilers, interviewed him at Attica State Prison. He discovered that Berkowitz came from an adopted home and upon discovering his real mother, was told by her that he wasn’t wanted.”

CJ walked back and forth, gesticulating with her hands to emphasize various points. “Originally being shy, insecure and angry, he blossomed into a potential killer. He found himself a large and powerful weapon which in turn made him feel bigger and more powerful, and set about unknowingly trying to obtain revenge for what his mother had done to him.”

CJ paused briefly and put her hand to her chin. “On a special note, I’d advise you to read up on John Douglas if you are thinking of heading down the profiler route. I learned a lot from researching his work and he was the subject of a paper I once wrote. That doesn’t mean you have to agree with everything he has said but he did a great amount of work on these killers, so definitely give it a look. And for all you movie buffs, he was the person Jack Crawford was modeled on in Manhunter and The Silence of the Lambs,” she nodded.

After a few smiles and murmurs from the audience, she decided to take a couple of questions to complete her day. A few hands shot up and she picked out Agent Garrison to see what he was going to ask this time.

“CJ, what about female serial killers? I mean, I know you covered that briefly earlier, but I wanted to know if the profiling elements change when trying to figure out a female killer’s motives. Do you have to come at it from a completely different angle?”

The agent nodded approvingly.

“Good question. I’ll pre-empt my answer by saying that psychologically, the thrill-motivated killer tends to be a sociopath, someone with a disorder of character rather than the mind. He lacks a conscience, feels no remorse, and cares exclusively for his own pleasures in life. Taking a specific example, I don’t believe this applied completely to Aileen Wuornos, perhaps one of the most well known female serial killers. Her mother abandoned her as an infant and her father, a convicted child molester, committed suicide in prison. She got pregnant at fourteen – the result of a rape – and was forced to give up the child. She dropped out of high school in the ninth grade and became a prostitute at fifteen. Alcohol and drug abuse followed. She was arrested a few times for DUI and weapons offenses in Colorado. Her first murder victim was found in 1989. She pled guilty to six charges.”

CJ took a deep breath as the various cases she had dealt with in her career flew through her mind. She shook her head briefly. “So, what I’m saying is that I don’t think Wuornos killed for the ‘thrill’ and she didn’t kill for sexual gratification. Most male serial killers to date have killed to carry out some sexual agenda, be it gratification or venting frustration. I believe Wuornos developed into a psychotic individual through her upbringing.”

“Or lack thereof,” Agent Garrison added.

“Exactly!” CJ agreed, finally seeing some confidence in the cadet’s eyes. “So, to answer your question, in some ways you have to look at every serial killer from the same basic angle. It all begins with a wrongful death. Wuornos’ case could easily have applied to a male killer but from experience I’d say that most males follow the power and sexual gratification or frustration theory. Just remember to always keep an open mind and look very closely at the evidence too. I was recently involved in the case of a killer who murdered three women, who happened to look like a female from his past, for whom he’d developed a deep unwarranted hatred. He wanted revenge. He was also sexually frustrated and laid the blame on this woman, who had left him years earlier.”

CJ faltered and suddenly wished she hadn’t started thinking about that particular case. Kate’s battered face and body flashed across her mind and she shook her head to delete the image. “It was found later that he was borderline psychotic but the behavior never really came to light until he began to abuse hard drugs.” She paused to take a breath. “But we have run over time, so that’s all for today. And thank you all for participating.”

A raucous round of applause followed and CJ turned to pick up her papers from the desk, quickly brushing tears away from her eyes. *‘Where the hell did they come from?’* she thought angrily.

She felt overcome with strange emotions and all she wanted now was to see Kate and hold her in her arms. The agent thought about canceling her hotel for the night and telling the boss that she couldn't take the morning class tomorrow. But she knew she shouldn't do that. She was just reacting to an emotional flashback and the fact that she wanted to be home.

As she was about to turn and head out the door, she heard a murmured conversation from a few agents who were packing up their bags, which included the phrase '*Nahh, she's wearing a ring. She's married, you idiot,*' and she couldn't help but smirk through her sadness.

* * * * *

CJ walked through the hotel lobby feeling slightly drained. She had enjoyed her day of teaching but was still thankful it was only a half-day class tomorrow. She picked up her key at reception and the young man behind the desk smiled as he handed her a bundle of messages, most likely from work.

She sighed deeply as she entered her room. Dumping her black suit jacket on the bed and kicking off her shoes, she pulled her cell phone from her belt clip. Flopping down flat out on the bed, she hit the speed dial for Kate and pinched the bridge of her nose while she waited for her wife to answer. Feeling somewhat uncomfortable, she reached around and removed her gun, placing it on the bed beside her.

CJ really hoped Kate could answer. But the actress might be working late and may not have her phone with her. '*God, I'm like a love-struck teenager,*' she mused. She also wondered why she couldn't go twenty-four hours without missing the younger woman so much it hurt.

"*Hey you,*" came the beautiful tones of Kate's voice on the line.

"I'm so happy you answered. I'm missing you so much, Katie."

"*God, I miss you too. Hard day, honey?*"

"Not really. Actually, I enjoyed teaching. I just miss you like crazy."

Just then, there was a knock on CJ's door.

"So, how was your day? Did you survive Jack?" the agent said, getting up to answer the door with a frown on her face. When she opened it, a smiling actress – still holding her phone to her ear – stood there in the hallway like a mirage.

"Jack was very polite but I don't want to talk about him right now. It looks like my wife needs me," Kate said, hanging up the call and closing the distance between them.

CJ was stunned, surprised and overcome with emotion. She wept as she took her spouse into her arms. Kate kicked the door closed with her foot and wrapped her arms around CJ but she was a little concerned about her wife's tears. She pushed back, bringing a hand up to brush the errant droplets away.

"What's wrong, baby?"

"Absolutely nothing. I don't know why I'm crying. I was missing you so much and then you were here. I guess wishes do come true sometimes," the agent smiled wanly.

“Well, I just thought I’d make the best of my last days off for a while. I have a pretty tough schedule coming up.” Kate ran her hand through CJ’s dark bangs. “I really missed you too and you’ve only been gone a day. Isn’t that pathetic?”

“No. It’s not. I can’t describe how glad I am that you came.”

“Seriously, CJ, what’s wrong? Tell me…”

Still holding onto her wife, the agent moved them over to sit on the bed. “At the end of the class today, I started talking about this killer I’d dealt with recently, like it was just another case at work. I almost choked half way through because it wasn’t just another case…”

Kate picked up on exactly what CJ was talking about immediately. “Do you need to talk about anything from back then?”

“No, Katie, not unless you do. You were the one who almost died. I just needed to hold you. And on the way back to the hotel, I guess I just got myself a little worked up because I thought I couldn’t. Maybe I’m hormonal.”

“It’s just as well I couldn’t stand to be away from you and decided to come visit. *And* fly home with you tomorrow night,” Kate said, giving her wife one of her most dazzling smiles.

“I love you.”

The actress leaned into her wife, kissing her softly on the lips. “I love you too.”

CJ initiated another, longer kiss and before they knew it, they were lying across the bed facing one another. When they parted, slightly out of breath, Kate’s stomach gurgled to remind her she was in need of nourishment.

“Have you had dinner?” Kate asked.

CJ giggled. “No. I only just got here. Wait… where were you before you came up here? Your timing was impeccable.”

“Uh, I asked the guy at the desk to let me know when you came in. I was sitting having coffee downstairs. I was only here forty five minutes or so.”

CJ nodded thoughtfully. “Thank you for surprising me. Let’s get some room service and fill your tummy.”

“Sounds perfect. Hey! *Are* you hormonal? I mean, is it that wonderful time of the month yet?” Kate said, sarcastically.

“Not quite yet… I don’t think,” CJ replied, raising a dark eyebrow. “Why? Do you have plans for me?”

“Maybe.”

“It never stopped you before, honey.”

“Yeah I know, but if you have cramps, I’d rather pamper you instead of uh…” Kate trailed off.

“Katie, I want you pretty bad right now. I promise I have no cramps,” CJ husked.

“Good. After dinner, I’m going to make love to you, then we’ll have a nice long soak in the tub before I ravish you for the rest of the evening,” Kate said, winking as she got up to look at the menu.

CJ didn’t speak. She just eyed her wife with a goofy grin on her face, very glad that her wish had come true.

Chapter 4

It was a beautiful, sunny day when Kate stepped out of the hotel to go and meet CJ after class. After a lazy morning, she planned to take the agent for a nice lunch at an old style bistro on the waterfront, then on to the market for a little shopping.

She jumped out of her cab and into the building where CJ’s class should be wrapping up for the day. She walked along the corridor and peeked through the small, glass windows on each passing door. She eventually found her wife in the fourth room and could hear the agent’s voice as she spoke to the new recruits. Kate tilted her head and decided to watch for a while, since she was unable to take her eyes off the tall, raven-haired beauty anyway.

The actress’ mind wandered as she gazed at her wife standing confidently in front of a room full of students. Kate noticed CJ used her hands a lot to emphasize various points and was momentarily mesmerized by the elegant fingers. CJ was mid-sentence when she noticed the face peering through the door. A broad smile briefly crossed the tanned face as the agent finished up her presentation.

Noticing the lecturer’s expression, a few heads turned to the classroom door and Kate disappeared from view, feeling a hot flush rising up her neck.

* * * * *

“How long were you watching me?” CJ asked as they strolled down the street.

“Not long,” Kate replied, bashfully. “I can’t help it. You’re so darn beautiful, honey.”

“Aww shucks. You’ll make me blush.”

“I’ll make you blush later... and it won’t be from embarrassment,” the actress assured.

CJ smirked and continued to walk, slipping her hand into Kate’s smaller one. They eventually jumped on a tram and headed for the Wharf. CJ checked her wallet as they got off a few streets away from their destination.

“Do you have any cash on you, Katie?”

The blonde checked in the bag that she wore crossed diagonally from shoulder to hip. “No. ATM?”

They walked a block or so and found a bank. It was a beautiful, old and very grand building and Kate nodded with approval while CJ got her card out. She was about to put it in the ATM when she noticed the sign.

“Damn. It’s out of service.”

Kate sighed. "I guess we could go in then. I don't know where the other banks are in the area."

They walked in together and Kate gasped at the interior. It really was an old building. Inside was just as impressive as the outside, with ornately painted ceilings and giant windows high on the wall that let the sun stream in. The large wooden continuous counter had obviously been added to for security reasons but the actress appreciated that they hadn't ripped it out. She stopped her architectural musings when she heard CJ grumble at how busy it was.

"Probably because the ATM's broken, honey," Kate said. "There's no rush. We'll wait."

"Do we really need cash?"

The actress tried not to smirk at her wife's impatience. "We need cash for the market stalls. Here... why don't you lean on me while we wait in line?"

Kate lifted one of CJ's arms and put it around her own shoulder. The agent's expression brightened perceptibly.

"I love this shirt on you," CJ said, tugging gently at Kate's black, sleeveless halter-neck.

"Thanks. I know you like it. That's why I wear it so often," the blonde grinned.

"You're *so* good to me," the agent quipped.

"I know."

While they stood in the very slow line, Kate decided to people-watch. The woman in front had a little dandruff sprinkled on the shoulders of her black tee shirt. The man in front of her typed away on his cell phone with such speed, the actress wondered how many typos he was sending in his message. She glanced over at the counter. One woman was trying to talk with the clerk while her tiny son pulled on her skirt. Kate giggled when he stomped his little feet in protest of his mother's lack of attention. A few other customers were being served at the other tellers and she sighed deeply as she turned back toward the front of the line.

The actress frowned and tilted her head when she noticed a man, a few places in front of them, just about to go to the next free teller. She couldn't figure out why he stood out at first. Narrowing her eyes and looking him up and down, she realized that it was because of his clothing. Everyone else in the bank was dressed for the hot, sunny weather. Nobody wore a jacket... except for this guy who had on a padded winter coat. He was *very* over dressed.

A strange and unwelcome feeling crept across Kate's gut and she turned to her wife. As her eyes met CJ's, the agent immediately noticed the change in her wife's demeanor. Kate signaled with a frown towards the man and she swallowed convulsively. Was she being paranoid? She looked back at the agent – who had to lean forward to see the man – and watched as CJ assessed him. It only took a few seconds for the tall woman to understand what her wife suspected. But they were too late to do anything else as the man walked to the teller and pulled a handgun from inside the coat, resting it quietly on the counter.

CJ watched wide-eyed as the teller took a step back and opened the cash drawer. It happened so silently that nobody else had panicked yet. The agent gripped Kate's shoulder to get her attention again. She put her finger to her lips to let Kate know that they should remain quiet.

As the teller continued to stuff bills into the bag, the minutes seemed to pass in slow motion. CJ scanned the premises, trying to get a full inventory of people and possible escape routes or places of protection if this went bad.

A very young looking girl walked up to the robber. CJ thought she couldn't be much more than sixteen years old. The girl took the first filled moneybag from the gunman. He had an accomplice.

* * * * *

CJ closed her eyes in total disbelief when she heard the first sirens approaching their location. Someone had tripped the raid alarm, no doubt at foot level because the robber hadn't noticed. As the sirens came closer, she heard screeching tires as the vehicles came to a ridiculously dramatic halt, surrounding the building. '*Jesus Christ. Haven't they ever heard of a silent approach?*' CJ growled internally.

The young criminal panicked a little and swung around, sending a warning shot through the glass on the bank's front windows. "You! Go and lock those doors! Now!" he shouted at one of the bank clerks.

The African-American woman seemed very calm – no doubt from her staff training – as she went to the doors and secured the bolts at the top and bottom.

It had gone bad. The now-agitated robber was swinging his gun-wielding hand around in front of him.

"Nobody tries anything or I swear I'll fucking shoot you all. I've got nothing to lose now. Everyone up against the counter and sit with your backs to it. No fucking funny business... you do something I don't like and somebody will die. Move! Now!"

The customers did as they were told, including CJ and Kate, who made sure to sit down beside one another. CJ's eyes were scanning the surroundings, then analyzing the man. She took a quick look at the girl, who looked just as shell-shocked as most of the customers.

"I said everybody! Get out here and sit the fuck down!" he shouted at the staff behind the counter.

The clerks came out the security door and sat down. CJ briefly wondered why they complied, then saw that the gunman had the pistol aimed through the gap in the bulletproof glass. The robber held two of them at gunpoint at the door and instructed them to activate the time delayed opening of the safe. He figured it was all or nothing now.

CJ looked round to check everyone was complying with the robber's demands. She heard whimpers and soft cries as some of the customers took stock of what was happening. She noticed that there were two children in the bank. This was turning out to be a very bad day. She cursed under her breath as her mind whizzed round at the possibilities.

Kate slowly leaned into her wife and whispered. "The girl keeps looking at me. Do you think she recognizes me?"

CJ's heart thumped unpleasantly and her eyes widened in fear. She didn't answer, trying to keep her worst nightmare from re-surfacing. If something happened to Kate now, CJ didn't think life would be worth living. It would be hell on Earth.

The phone began to ring. She looked at the robber, who was distracted while he barked instructions to the two employees, as they pointed out the manager who could activate the safe. The young girl had suddenly produced a gun and held it aimed in the direction of the customers. She seemed to do whatever the robber told her to do.

Kate nudged CJ's leg almost imperceptibly. The agent flared her nostrils and didn't respond. The smaller woman turned her head slowly to look at her wife and noticed that CJ looked angry, her jaws clenched together and eyes set like steel.

“Shh...” the agent whispered to her.

Kate felt her own anger rise but had to keep a neutral expression because the young girl was looking at her again. Her stomach flipped. If this girl did recognize her, she might point out to her criminal boyfriend that they had an actress in their midst, able to provide them with a good ransom. On the other hand, Kate might be able to appeal to the girl in some way if she was a fan. It was too risky to think of things like that for now but Kate filed it away for later.

She turned and noticed a father holding his baby, who thankfully slept in his arms, oblivious to the mayhem. The actress smiled at the little boy who sat a little further along, as he cowered next to his mother. All the other hostages were adults. Kate scanned the rest of the people slowly. The woman who had locked the doors earlier looked very calm and seemed to be constantly assessing the situation. The actress wondered if she was an ex-cop.

Turning her attention back to CJ, Kate wondered why her wife was so angry. They had to communicate, put their heads together to somehow resolve this. But Kate didn't have experience in hostage situations. CJ did. The actress scowled at herself. *'Let her do her thing. This is what she's good at.'*

CJ sat completely still. She was absorbing everything that was going on, still sizing up the robber. She could tell he was not an experienced bank robber. Turning his back on people, not answering the phone – which was clearly going to be the cops who wanted to negotiate – not keeping his cool when things went wrong. He hadn't checked for alternate escape routes and was so busy stuffing money into his bags that he didn't notice his girlfriend putting her gun down on a nearby counter and leaning her face on her hand as if bored.

'Stupidity,' CJ mused.

The phone began to ring for the hundredth time and the agent really wanted this guy to answer it before a SWAT team came bursting in – not knowing how many innocent hostages there were – and blew holes in everything.

CJ stood up slowly. The young girl picked up her gun and pointed it at the tall woman. Kate drew a sharp intake of breath.

“Carl!” the girl shouted.

The robber spun around on his heels, moneybag in hand. “Don't use my fucking name, you idiot!”

Then he saw CJ standing very still with her hands up in a gesture of surrender.

“Sit back down or I'll fucking kill you,” the criminal shouted as he walked over towards her.

Kate's face had turned incredibly pale when her wife stood up and she was now holding the breath she took earlier, wondering when her heart would start beating again. She was just about to jump up and shield CJ from the gun when the agent spoke calmly to the man.

“I just wanted to tell you that you should answer the phone. Give them your demands.”

The robber was in her face now, the gun pressed directly between CJ's breasts. “You've got some balls on you. What the fuck are you talking about?” he snarled.

“If they don’t know how many hostages you have, they might come barging in here and blow your whole deal.”

“How the hell would you know that? You a fucking cop?”

“No,” the brave agent replied steadily, trying to get inside his head, “I just watched a lot of cop shows, I guess. Just wanted you to get as much money as you can... and I really don’t want these people to get hurt.”

He seemed to frown a little and think about what she said. *‘Definitely not an experienced robber,’* CJ thought to herself, *‘Didn’t even think about ransom money.’* She just needed to keep everyone alive and keep this guy calm somehow. If the cops barged in, he would start shooting and that would not be good.

He removed the gun from her chest and stepped back. His voice was low and eerie. “Sit back down. Don’t move again or somebody gets it.”

CJ moved slowly and sat back down next to Kate. The actress kept her face still, looking down at the floor so as not to draw any attention to them both, although her wife seemed to be putting herself directly in the line of fire already. Kate tried not to feel anger and fear, but even the thought of a slightly increased chance of CJ getting hurt was killing her.

The robber walked back behind the counter to finish taking the cash from the registers. The young girl leaned on the counter again but did not put her gun down this time. But she wasn’t really paying attention, pulling her bubble gum from her mouth with her free hand.

“What a fucking mess,” CJ whispered.

“They don’t do this very often, do they? He hasn’t taken anyone’s cell phone, for starters,” Kate said almost silently, keeping her head down.

“I know. And I don’t like it... means they’re too unpredictable.”

“My cell is on silent from this morning. What about yours?”

CJ slowly turned to her wife, her eyes wide in surprise at Kate’s thought processes once again. “Mine too,” she whispered.

“Please don’t do that again.”

CJ frowned.

“Please don’t draw attention to yourself,” Kate said seriously.

“Don’t interfere. I know what I’m doing,” the agent scowled.

Kate’s eyes were on fire with rage now but she forced it down and turned abruptly to stare at her legs in front of her. She wanted to throttle CJ for not understanding what she was feeling.

The agent’s eyes were constantly checking on the two robbers while she figured out the best way to appeal to these naïve but dangerous individuals. The girl was really not paying attention – meaning she could be easily startled – and the guy was... well, she couldn’t see where he was but he hadn’t come out from behind the counters yet. *‘Greedy bastard,’* she thought.

Although, the phone had stopped ringing for now, so she guessed he had spoken to the cops.

* * * * *

The robber made an appearance and dumped a few more bags over next to his girlfriend. He spoke in a low voice to his accomplice and approached the hostages, gun in hand.

“Listen up. All of you are going to get up when I tell you and go through that door in single file...” He waved the gun toward the door leading behind the counters. “You’re all gonna keep your mouths shut... that includes you, Stretch,” he said, growling at CJ. “I want all cell phones on the desk... then you’re all gonna have a seat in the office. Every time one of you pisses me off, one of you dies.”

The agent got a bad feeling in her gut when the guy kept looking her way. When he went to the security door and people started moving slowly to their feet, CJ shoved her FBI identification behind a nearby trashcan. She then slipped her wallet back into her pants pocket.

At the man’s command, everyone filed slowly through the door, under the watchful eyes of both robbers. The girl observed every adult hostage producing their phones and placing them on the table. CJ made sure she was at the end of the line and was the last to give up her contact with the outside world. She cursed the robber for finally catching on about cell phones.

Once everyone was inside the office, the girl stood at the door, gun aimed into the room, while the young man ripped the phone from its wall socket and threw it out the door. Smirking to himself, he also smashed up the fax machine.

“Watch them,” he barked at the girl.

The young girl looked so out of her depth but still, she did as he said.

“You! Out here with me... now!” he shouted, pointing at CJ.

Kate jumped up and grabbed CJ’s arm.

“No! Please don’t take her!”

“Shut up, Red,” the robber said, shoving the gun under her eye so hard, the pain caused her to fall backwards and slam her head against the wall.

The tough little actress got back up and was about to say something else but the agent gave her a pleading look and an almost invisible shake of her head, before going with the robber. CJ’s heart was pounding at what she’d just witnessed. She couldn’t deal with Kate getting hurt and that fact alone scared her.

The actress tried to control the tremble in her bottom lip and the racing of her heart as she saw her wife disappear out the door, gun digging into her back.

* * * * *

In the large outer office, CJ knelt before the young man, who had the gun pressed against her face just under her eye. It seemed to be his preferred location and she fleetingly wondered if he watched too many Mafia movies.

“Are you a cop?” he repeated again.

“No.”

“Where’s your ID?”

“I only have my driver’s license.”

He began to trail his free hand over her ass, searching the back pockets of her pants. She prayed he wouldn’t search down her legs as the only gun she had on today was strapped to her lower calf. She only did that when the weather was warm and she wasn’t wearing a jacket to hide her usual upper body harness.

The cool agent hadn’t had an opportunity to draw her weapon. She needed the two of them away from the hostages to guarantee that no innocents would get shot, but that hadn’t happened so far. Now she wondered if she should try to overpower the robber while she had the chance. The girl did have a gun but would she use it if her boyfriend were incapacitated? CJ didn’t know for certain and couldn’t risk it... yet.

She tried not to grimace as he came to rest on the wallet and slipped it out. Flipping it open, he read her driver’s license.

“Well, Stretch, you’re from LA. What you doin’ in San Francisco?”

“Giving a lecture,” CJ replied calmly, wanting to punch the guy for calling her ‘Stretch’ never mind anything else.

“A teacher huh? Well, I guess you *would* know a thing or two.”

The agent certainly wasn’t going to correct his assumption about her job. She just wondered why he wanted her out here. It became apparent pretty quickly. The robber lifted the gun from her face and brought it down hard against her cheek, slicing the skin with the impact. The blood dripped onto her blouse, leaving a stark red blotch against the crisp white. She guessed he was trying to assert some authority but she barely flinched.

“You listen to me... and listen good. Next time the idiot cops call me, you’re gonna talk to them. They said they won’t give me what I want and they don’t believe I’m holdin’ people, so you’re gonna tell them the situation in here. And if you try anything stupid, I’ll kill a hostage. Their blood will be on your hands, not mine. Got it?”

CJ nodded, feeling the stinging on her cheek and the pressure of the gun, which was pressed against her head once more. The only thing that told her she was under pressure was the trickle of sweat that ran down her spine.

* * * * *

Kate tried to swallow again, her dry mouth and throat making it almost impossible to get any saliva. She was terrified for her spouse and furious at her at the same time. ‘*When does the job become more than her life?*’ she thought. She knew CJ would want to get all the hostages out of this unharmed. The agent was always trying to redeem herself for losing hostages in the past – especially Sandy, her ex-girlfriend.

Kate shook her head in self-deprecation. She realized CJ must be reliving past incidents, but for Gods sake, she couldn’t go on like that for the rest of her life. The actress felt anger again but she knew it was just being intensified due to her fear of what might happen. She spotted the young girl watching her again and dropped her eyes to the floor. Her avoidance tactic didn’t work this time. The girl approached.

“What’s your name?” the accomplice said, narrowing her eyes.

Kate looked up. “Katherine Carson.”

It wasn’t a lie. Her name *was* Katherine Carson. The only reason she still used Marshall was for her career.

“Oh,” the girl mumbled, slumping her shoulders.

‘Oh my God, maybe she does recognize me a little,’ Kate thought, as she watched the girl turn and walk away to lean on the doorframe again.

The actress didn’t want to chance talking to this young woman while she had no idea what was happening to CJ, so she linked her hands together in her lap and tried to stay calm, listening intently for any signs of a struggle outside... or a gunshot.

* * * * *

When the phone rang, CJ glanced at the desk, seeing the white light flashing indicating an outside line. The robber leaned over and picked up the receiver. Still on her knees on the floor, the agent listened carefully to the one-sided conversation.

“No, you listen to me... I call the shots. I have a hostage here you can talk to. No funny business. I’ll be listening.”

He put the phone near CJ’s face and leaned down to make sure he could hear the conversation. The tall woman had to get a Bureau-related message out there somehow.

“Hello,” CJ prompted.

“This is Lieutenant Chapman with the San Francisco PD. Are you all right?”

“Yes. So far.”

“Are you a hostage? Can you tell me your name?”

The agent hoped this Lieutenant was sharp enough to pick up her clue. “CJ Carson, from the CNU...”

The robber whipped the phone from her ear. “What the fuck was that? What’s the CNU?”

“The California National Union of Teachers,” the agent replied.

“That would be the CNUT,” the man growled, not really any the wiser.

“Yeah, the CNU... T,” CJ said loudly enough so that the Lieutenant caught her ‘mistake’.

The robber spoke on the phone. “Are you still there?”

“Yes,” Chapman said. *“I need to speak to the hostage a little longer. Then you and I can make a deal.”*

The phone was thrust back into CJ’s face. “This is CJ.”

“CJ, you’re a... teacher?”

“Yes, a *teacher*. I gave a lecture today.”

“*Okay.*” Chapman paused.

The agent heard a quiet ‘confirmed’ coming from someone beside Chapman and she prayed they had run her details through the computer.

“All right, CJ. Can you tell me how many hostages he has?”

“Around twenty, I think, including myself.”

“Is anyone injured?”

“No, not seriously,” she replied.

“Just one robber?”

The robber grabbed the phone again. “Enough! Now listen up. It’s time for you to get me what I want. You know what that is, now do it before I start shooting hostages. You’ve got fifteen minutes.”

“That’s not long enough to...”

He slammed down the phone and grabbed the agent by the hair. “Okay, Stretch, move.”

He dragged her to her feet, placing the gun in the small of her back. He shoved her through the door into the office where Kate looked up and gasped at the state of her wife’s face and blouse. The guy walked out again, pulling a member of staff with him, muttering under his breath about opening the safe.

The agent sat down in a space between Kate and the door, her back to the actress’ side. She could feel the silence from Kate seemingly penetrating her very soul and the green-eyed glare piercing the back of her head.

“I’m okay,” she whispered over her shoulder. “Please just stay quiet.”

Kate bit her lips hard, caught between concern and frustration. She brushed her hand up CJ’s back in a response of sorts. The agent turned to face forward again, keeping a close eye on the young accomplice standing in the doorway.

She wanted to negotiate with them somehow but so far, they showed no signs of being open to discussion. It was easier on the phone, when they had to talk about it to get what they wanted. CJ sighed and dropped her head to stretch out her tense neck muscles.

* * * * *

A few moments later, the robber could be heard shouting at the cops on the phone. At least, that’s what CJ thought it must be from the few words she could make out. Something had gone wrong somehow. That couldn’t have been fifteen minutes already. Could it?

A gunshot made her jump and a few screams could be heard around the office. The young accomplice also jumped and spun around, leaving her back open to CJ. The agent knew this was it and leapt silently to her

feet. In one smooth motion, she pulled the gun from her ankle strap and maneuvered quickly behind the girl and put the gun to her head.

“Don’t move and stay quiet.”

The young accomplice was shaking from the sound of the gunshot still ringing in her ears and the agent’s sudden appearance. She moved into the office at CJ’s instruction and laid the gun down on a desk when she was told. CJ knew she had sized the girl up accurately when she put her hands on top of her head without any fuss. This young woman didn’t want to be here and gave up her position very easily. CJ could hear the robber still shouting on the phone but she knew she didn’t have much time. And she now knew from his words that he had shot the staff member.

Kate had got to her feet, along with one of the male customers and they were now restraining the girl against a nearby wall. CJ blinked when she realized that it had all happened without her saying a word. Focusing her attention again, she headed quietly for the door, signaling to the hostages to stay quiet and remain down on the floor.

Before she left, the agent pointed to a few vulnerable hostages. “You three,” she whispered, “move away from the door... behind that desk.”

The people did as she said and she left the office, knowing that everyone was safe from straying bullets.

The actress didn’t want to be stuck here holding the girl when her wife might need her so she got the attention of a member of the bank staff and the African-American woman eagerly came to her assistance.

“Keep her against this wall. Don’t let anyone touch the gun,” Kate whispered to the staff member.

The woman grabbed Kate’s arm briefly. “You be careful out there.”

Kate nodded and went to the door of the office, keeping low and out of sight.

* * * * *

The agent crouched down, knowing something of the layout outside the office, and sneaked along the side of the cubicle partition toward the more open area beyond. She spotted the robber, smashing the phone handset against the tabletop. Below him, she could see a pair of feet sticking out from behind the table. The female staff member he had taken with him was lying on the ground. CJ closed her eyes momentarily in a silent prayer that the woman was not dead.

The robber was now tapping the gun barrel against the side of his temple in thought. His eyes seemed somewhat frantic and scared and CJ suspected he hadn’t shot anyone before. ‘*What a mess,*’ she mused, thinking of the situation and this guy’s life choices.

He suddenly turned and took a step toward CJ before he saw her. She aimed for his shoulder and fired but he had leapt for cover. He fired back, his rounds echoing out into the bank and surrounding rooms, smashing glass and puncturing a metal filing cabinet. If CJ had assessed his weapon correctly, he had a Smith and Wesson Sigma. An educated guess told her he’d have a seventeen-shot magazine and she’d counted eight shots fired already. She hoped she could draw his fire until he had spent the last bullet, knowing that from there, he couldn’t harm any hostages. What she didn’t know, was that Kate had followed her.

But it didn’t matter. Before she had a chance to think much longer, she heard a scuffling sound and peeked out from her hiding place to see the robber get up and run toward a corridor leading to a fire exit. Adjusting

her aim quickly, the agent shot him in the thigh. He fell to the floor with a wail and dragged himself behind another desk.

CJ got up into a half standing position and quickly crossed the distance between them, keeping her head low, gun raised in front of her.

Kate was watching this from her secreted vantage point and went to help the woman lying on the floor. She lowered her ear to the woman's mouth to find she was still breathing. Kate quietly told her to hold on, while putting pressure on the gunshot wound to her stomach.

On the agent's approach to the robber's position, she heard him groaning. Both hands on her gun, aiming it precisely at the man's chest, she moved carefully around the desk to see his face. He was slumped against the drawers, gun hand lying on the floor but he still had a good grip on it. His other hand held the thigh where blood was gushing through his spread fingers.

"It's over, man," CJ said calmly. "Slide the gun away from you. Now!"

He didn't reply. He just looked at the tall woman with a hopeless expression crossing his features. His eyes looked so empty and the agent frowned. He raised the gun and before CJ had a chance to stop him, he put it in his mouth.

"No!" she shouted.

But it was too late. The bullet blew a hole out the back of his head and his limp body slid completely to the floor. The agent almost cried at the senselessness of it all.

Kate's head shot up at the sound of the gun but when she saw CJ still standing there, she turned her attention back to the woman. Pulling the bag from her own body, she ripped the long handle strap from it with brute strength and proceeded to wrap it around the woman's torso, tying it tightly over a makeshift pad on the wound to try and stop the bleeding.

CJ walked over and stared blankly at the injured woman. The agent didn't say a word to Kate. Rubbing her forehead, she went to the nearest phone and dialed 911.

Chapter 5

Once she got a reply, CJ spoke wearily to the call handler. "This is Special Agent CJ Carson with the FBI. I'm inside the bank near Fisherman's Wharf... I don't know the street... the robbery in progress..."

CJ felt exhausted as she listened to the woman on the line trying to find the right information.

"Yes, that's the one," CJ said calmly. "The hostages are safe but we have one injured female, gunshot wound to the abdomen. I need the police to enter the building calmly, hold their fire. I'm going to open the front doors after you assure me that they know I'm not hostile."

"Where is the robber now, ma'am?"

"He's dead. He shot himself. His accomplice has been detained," CJ replied, getting a little irritated, although she didn't know why.

"I need your badge number, Agent. I hope you understand," the woman said.

"Of course I do. Badge number XAG0651613. Los Angeles Field Office," the agent stated, pinching the bridge of her nose.

After what felt like forever, the woman told her it was safe to open the front doors. CJ hung up the phone and went to the door, keeping to the side until two cops appeared in her line of vision. She raised one hand in front of the glass and made the "OK" sign, before reaching over and releasing the locks.

As the cops filed in, she directed them to the office where the girl was being held. Paramedics rushed over to the injured woman and took over while receiving a brief update from Kate. The actress got to her feet and her eyes sought out her wife. CJ didn't look at her and headed over to what looked like the Lieutenant.

As she approached the gray-haired man, he reached his hand out to shake hers.

"Agent Carson, I presume?"

"Yes. Lieutenant Chapman?"

"Yes. Well done, agent."

CJ sighed. "Not really, Lieutenant. He killed himself after I shot him in the leg. We also have one civilian down."

"It could have been a lot worse... and it could have taken a lot longer to bring to a conclusion," the cop said with certainty.

"Well, you'll forgive me if I don't go celebrating. Did you get my message earlier? The Crisis Negotiation Unit?"

He nodded. "Good thinking, too. Knowing you were in here made sure the SWAT guys didn't get too twitchy," he said, raising a silvery eyebrow.

"I hear ya."

CJ turned around as a cop approached her with her FBI identification, which had been found lying on the floor. At the same moment, the girl was brought out by the cops, hands cuffed behind her back. She looked at the agent and mouthed the word 'sorry' as she passed by the injured woman who was now on a stretcher. CJ just watched with tired eyes as the girl grimaced and began to cry when she saw that her boyfriend was on the floor in a large pool of blood, a blanket covering what was left of his head.

* * * * *

Kate stood leaning on the desk once the paramedics took the injured woman away. She watched CJ's cool working attitude as she spoke to the cops. The agent didn't even look her way or check on her and Kate felt a sharp pain in her heart. She looked down at her hands, seeing the woman's blood smeared up to her elbows. She spotted a paramedic loitering next to CJ, waiting to look at the agent's cheek.

The petite blonde walked over and asked the paramedic for a medi-wipe and he happily cleaned her arms for her, smiling and talking quietly to her as he did so. He also checked her head for swelling when she told him about being pushed into the wall. Apart from a slight bruise under her eye where the barrel of the gun

had been pressed hard against the bone, he said she seemed fine but if she had any headaches, she should attend her local ER. Kate thanked him and sat down wearily on a nearby chair.

It took an hour or so to get out of the bank. CJ gave a brief statement to the Lieutenant and assured him he would receive her full report as soon as she got back to LA. She just wanted to go home. She'd had enough of San Francisco for now. At the Lieutenant's instruction, two cops took the women back to their hotel and they collected their belongings.

They barely spoke during the flight, only the occasional clipped but polite statement passing between them.

All in all, it had turned into a really shitty day.

* * * * *

Very late that night, CJ and Kate were silent in the car all the way home from the airport. Tony seemed quite concerned, not saying a word but occasionally glancing worriedly in the rear view mirror. He noticed their unusual body language. They would always be at least sitting close to one another in the car and more often than not, Kate would practically be on CJ's lap – but not today. They sat stiffly apart, Kate leaning on the door ledge, looking out the window, CJ sitting rigid and straight, staring at her knees. It was very unsettling for the driver, who had come to care for his employers.

The overwhelming stress from the day was invading CJ's body like a poison. It was too much. She could usually cope with everything at work but when it came to the woman she loved more than life itself being in danger, she couldn't deal with it. She'd dealt with it before – not well – but still, she'd managed. Was there such a thing as being too in love... of someone being too important to you? The agent shook her head disapprovingly.

When they arrived home, they both tried to settle but as they went about their business not speaking to one another – CJ too anxious and Kate too worried about saying the wrong thing – the atmosphere became so thick with tension, you could've sliced it with a sword. It was like a volcano about to erupt, bubbling up from deep inside both of them.

CJ dumped her gun and holster down on the island counter in the kitchen – thinking she would sit and clean it to keep her busy – and went to get a glass of water. Standing at the sink, she heard a forced sigh from Kate and clenched her teeth in anger.

"I was just about to move it. I just needed some damn water first!" the agent barked.

"I never even said anything, CJ."

"No." The taller woman pinned her with a piercing blue stare. "You didn't, did you?"

"What the hell is that supposed to mean?"

"Nothing," CJ said, realizing that Kate hadn't been bothered by the gun's location.

But Kate wasn't ready to stand down. Anger and fear caused them to explode, hitting out at each other in a venting of high-octane emotion.

Kate was unrelenting. CJ just stood and took the verbal outpouring until she felt she had to fight back. Her eyes widened in anger as Kate called her out on her professional actions.

“How could you do that? Just put yourself right in the line of fire like that... you didn’t even think about how that felt to me!”

“You? You? You think that whole fucking robbery was all about your feelings? What the Hell, Kate? This isn’t *you* saying these things. What’s going on here?” CJ said in exasperation.

“You don’t get it...”

“No. It’s you who ‘don’t get it’. That kind of situation is not about one individual. It’s about every person in that bank!”

“That’s not what I’m saying...”

“I hear what you’re saying loud and clear. You expected me to ignore my training... ignore my job, just so you wouldn’t have to worry about losing anything! Well, pardon me for trying to do my fucking best!”

“I didn’t ask you to ignore...”

“No! You didn’t ask me anything. You just expected me to sit there and hide from the damn robber!”

CJ was shouting now. Kate had never seen her like this and it worried her. The emotion was getting the better of the blonde and she couldn’t hold back her cries anymore. She burst into a flood of frustrated tears but CJ just ran her hands roughly through her dark hair and turned her back.

“Happy fucking birthday to me,” the agent shouted as she stormed out the back door.

“Don’t you walk away from me! Damn it, CJ!”

Kate’s head fell into her hands in despair, her face soaked from her tears. This was such unfamiliar territory for them both. Their first real fight had turned into a big one. She slumped onto the kitchen floor and cried until the tension was released. Afterwards, she crossed her legs and focused her breathing, trying to clear her mind, if just for a moment.

A short time later, she looked up to the clock and realized it was indeed after midnight. It was CJ’s birthday.

* * * * *

CJ stood rigidly on the porch, her fists balled at her sides. She hadn’t felt like this for a long time, and she’d never felt this way since being with Kate. Why had it made her so incredibly wound up? She paced back and forth as she thought.

She supposed it was because when she was on the outside of a hostage situation, she could concentrate on negotiating with the criminal. All there was for her was his psyche, his demands and she had to figure it all out blind. But being there, inside the bank when it was all happening around her, not able to just pop the guy to take him down in case innocent lives were risked, frustrated the hell out of her. Not to mention the fact that Kate had also been there and anything could have happened to her. The image of Kate pleading with the robber not to take CJ away sprang into her mind. She almost threw up at the idea of her beloved wife being hurt. *‘God, he could’ve just shot her in the face, right there in front of me.’*

The agent’s stomach churned unpleasantly and she headed for the gym at the rear of the house. Throwing off her pants and bloody blouse, she began to kick the crap out of the punch bag. Once she got that out of

her system she started a workout to release the pent-up emotion that was making her feel so self-destructive. Kate didn't deserve her fucked-up wife shouting at her in the middle of the kitchen. She didn't deserve to take the brunt of the agent's anger. *'Oh my God, I didn't even let her speak... I'm such a shit!'*

CJ released the weight machine she was working on and realized that she was crying. What made her feel even worse was that she and Katie usually helped one another after a stressful day. But they had been in this one together and experienced the same thing. It had been new and difficult.

"Aww crap," CJ gasped aloud, "she was feeling the same as me. Why didn't I see that? I'm a horrible wife."

The tears were streaming over her cheekbones and she reached round to wrap her arms over her bare ribs as the sobs racked through the tall body, bringing her to her knees.

"You're not a horrible wife," said a small voice from the doorway.

CJ collapsed on the floor when she saw Kate, the actress' eyes were swollen and red, her beautiful face strained and tight. She held a tissue in her hand and as she crossed the distance to get to CJ, she pulled another one from her pocket.

The agent began to shiver, suddenly feeling her fears released to the surface and the sweat from the workout cooling on her skin. And the fact that she was only partially dressed was now having an effect too. She couldn't stop crying and tried to speak as Kate knelt before her and took her into her arms – but no words came out.

They clung to one another, kneeling on the floor, each of them leaning on the solidity of the other body for support. No words were spoken. CJ was too busy crying and Kate was drained after the emotional rollercoaster they had been on.

Some time later, CJ pushed back to shift position.

"I'm so sorry, Katie," she croaked, not able to look the actress in the eye.

"Don't, CJ..."

"No. I owe you an apology. I didn't mean the things I said and I never gave you a chance to talk. I'm such a shit."

"Hey!" Kate snapped, taking CJ's chin in her hands and raising her head. "Look at me!"

The tough special agent looked up, feeling weaker than she had ever felt before.

Kate's voice softened. "We need to talk about this but we are so exhausted. Let's go to bed."

CJ nodded mutely and got to her feet. She silently pulled Kate behind her as they ascended the stairs, putting lights out as they headed to the bedroom.

* * * * *

They had been lying in bed for about half an hour, neither of them able to get close to falling asleep. CJ turned slightly and ran her hand over the reddish-blond head at her shoulder.

“I guess we do need to talk now,” the agent whispered, feeling the smaller body still tense in her arms. “I’m sorry I got so mad, Katie.”

“Can I say something without you interrupting me?” the actress asked.

“Yes.”

“I need you to understand something, CJ. Even though you are the tough, experienced FBI agent who deals with this kind of thing all the time, you are still my wife, the woman I love more than anyone else in this world, the woman I do *not* want to live without. So, when you stand up and put your self in danger, drawing the attention of a gunman to you and only you, I feel the overwhelming need to protect you whether you like it or not. I know it’s your job to diffuse situations like that if you can and to protect civilians, but you treated me like a kid sometimes in there and it got to me. I know it shouldn’t have because inside, I knew that you would know best and you wanted to protect me and everyone else, but CJ... turn that around. That need you have to save me, to take care of me is strong. But don’t you realize, I feel exactly the same way about you?” the actress said, looking up at her wife in the near darkness.

“I do realize, Katie. I promise. It just didn’t sink in at first. I’ve been so stressed out by this and I guess the fact that it got to me... well, got to me. I might have looked calm in that bank but on the inside I was scared. I’m not really sure why because like you said, I’ve done this type of thing tons of times,” CJ husked, feeling her emotions getting the better of her again.

Kate squeezed her arms even tighter around the tall woman’s waist. “It was different. You were *in* the bank, not on the phone. And I was there too... probably distracting you.”

“No. Well, not really. Of course I’m going to be concerned that my wife is in danger but the way I acted in there seemed so cold to you because I went into ‘agent mode’. When I do that, I have to detach myself from the civilians to try and do my job. I’m sorry if you felt I treated you like a kid, Katie. That wasn’t my intention. You just have no idea how scared I am of losing you...”

“But that’s just what I was saying, CJ. I *do* have an idea. I feel the same way. I wanted to help you, to protect you. When you came back into that office with your face busted and blood all down your blouse, my heart stopped. I hate seeing you hurting... in any way.”

CJ wrapped herself around Kate’s body. “Oh baby, I’m so sorry. I guess I’m not used to people looking out for me that way. Please forgive me.”

“There’s nothing to forgive, honey. We just need to talk about these things like we’re doing now,” Kate said, burying her face into CJ’s chest. “And I’m sorry it had to end with you having to kill the guy too.”

“What?”

“The robber.”

“I didn’t kill him, honey,” CJ said, now understanding that Kate hadn’t seen her shoot the guy or heard her talking on the phone afterwards.

“You... you didn’t? What happened then?”

“I shot him in the thigh. I think he realized it was over and he... he put his gun in his mouth and pulled the trigger...” the agent trailed off.

“Right in front of you?” the actress gasped.

CJ nodded. “Yes,” she whispered.

“Oh God, honey. I’m sorry.” Kate said, kissing the agent’s face in between words. “So... so... so... sorry.”

“I’m okay, Katie. Just hold me. Please.”

They lay in silence for a few moments, just breathing one another in. The actress held her wife as tightly as she could, feeling reassured by the arms that wrapped securely around her back, returning the gesture. More quiet moments of thought passed until CJ started comfortingly rubbing the smaller woman’s back. Kate suddenly had an unbearable urge to make love to her wife. She needed to be closer to her than she was right now, if that was possible.

“CJ, I need...”

The agent’s heart rate had increased perceptibly, as if she sensed her spouse’s need and felt it simultaneously.

“I know. I would crawl inside you right now if I could,” the taller woman murmured.

Kate was suddenly on top of CJ. She covered the agent’s face with hungry kisses, tasting her, then biting and nipping the skin on her neck. The taller woman’s hands were all over her wife’s back, her buttocks, up to her shoulders, fingers tangling through the strawberry blonde hair. They were rough with one another – nails digging in, teeth gripping skin – then they would smooth over those hurts with tender touches and hungry licks. It was frantic and desperate, filling a need to feel alive, to feel something other than anxiety or fear.

CJ rolled them over and covered Kate’s body with her own. She took the actress’ mouth harshly in a kiss, lips and teeth coming together as if starved of the touch. It got too intense and Kate yelped as CJ bit down a little too hard. The agent drew back when she tasted the blood.

“Oh God, Katie... I’m...”

“It’s okay,” the smaller woman said, gasping for breath. “Take me, CJ... please...take me now.”

Kate pulled her wife down onto her again and when the agent’s thigh came up between her own, she couldn’t stop her hips from thrusting forward. CJ could feel her lover’s wetness on her skin and it enflamed her desire. She covered Kate’s mouth once again, licking the lips carefully, tasting the metallic tinge of blood before slipping her tongue into her wife’s mouth.

Kate couldn’t get enough. She needed release. It was boiling up inside her but she wouldn’t reach her goal like this. She sucked on CJ’s tongue and pushed herself harder onto her thigh but it was futile.

“Ciara... I need... I... need you to fuck me...”

“Oh Jesus!” CJ growled, feeling her stomach clench at the words.

Kate had never asked her that before. It sounded strange but unbelievably arousing. The agent immediately raised herself up and reached her hand between them. She knew what Kate needed and entered her immediately with three fingers. The smaller woman screamed out and pushed herself hard onto CJ’s hand

as it pumped in and out of her. It was definitely what the actress wanted and as Kate began to climax, CJ pressed her thumb down hard on her wife's aching center.

The petite woman screamed loudly in her ear. "Ciara! Yes! Yes! Oh God... yessssss!"

CJ was overcome by her wife's passion and felt herself come very close to her own orgasm. But it eluded her, much to her surprise. Kate lay shuddering and covered in sweat beneath her but CJ had to voice her demands.

"Damn it... Katie, I need you... now."

The smaller woman didn't miss a beat and pushed CJ up and away from her. Looking down, she grabbed her wife's buttocks and dragged her up so that CJ was straddling her face. She thrust her tongue as deep inside her lover as she could, causing the strong thighs to shake uncontrollably. Letting her nose rub against CJ's clit, she continued to lick and swirl her tongue around inside her wife until she felt the agent push onto her face. Kate groaned in ecstasy, the vibration causing CJ to cry out in pleasure. The taller woman climaxed hard, flooding Kate's face with her essence. The actress lapped it up, succumbing to her hunger and taking CJ quickly to another orgasm.

The taller woman was shaking so much now that she had to move away, effectively removing her hungry wife's tongue from her body. Kate tried to catch her breath, licking her lips and tasting her wife on them. CJ slid down and rested her very wet thatch of dark hair on top of Kate's mound.

"Oh!" the actress moaned, her pelvis thrusting forward involuntarily.

"Gimme a minute..." CJ panted close to her ear.

"S'okay honey. I need a minute too."

Both of them were covered in sweat and other bodily fluids and as CJ moved to Kate's side, she planted a gentle kiss on her wife's shoulder. "Let's slow it down a little."

"Agreed... but I really needed that." Kate paused to take a breath. "We were like animals, huh?"

CJ laughed, then stopped suddenly as Kate sprung up on her elbow. "What?" the agent asked, furling her eyebrow.

"I... I just wanted to watch you laughing."

"Aww, honey. I know it was a rough day, but were you really so worried you'd never see it again?"

Kate slapped her shoulder. "No, silly. I just *needed* to see it. It's so beautiful."

The agent reached over and pulled Kate to her for a soft kiss. "*You* are so beautiful," she said, brushing a sweat-covered strand of hair from Kate's forehead.

The actress wiggled an eyebrow. "We *were* like animals..."

CJ smirked. "Yes, we were. It felt right though, Katie. We seemed to need it."

"Yeah," the blonde said, laying her head on her wife's breast.

“Sorry about your lip, baby,” CJ said quietly.

Kate looked up and blushed slightly. “I uh... it actually spurred me on.” At CJ’s surprised look, she continued. “Not that I’d want that all the time but in the moment... it was a turn on.”

“Ah. Well, I’m not going to be drawing blood on a regular basis, honey, but as long as you enjoyed it...”

Kate grinned at her lover’s teasing and licked the agent on the nose before laying her head down again. CJ’s breast was so warm and soft and Kate inhaled the scent of sweat and their lovemaking as it tickled past her nostrils.

It was inevitable that she would start to nibble on that breast and CJ was soon feeling it throughout her entire body.

“Baby,” she gasped as her wife took a hard nipple into her mouth, “we... oh... we haven’t showered... ah... since...”

“I don’t care,” Kate said around the mouthful of flesh.

“Oh... good... me either...”

CJ couldn’t think. And her ability to speak was quickly dissolving. She managed to switch their positions. “Let me make love to you, Katie.”

The agent began a trail of kisses over the very sweaty body but it all tasted amazing to her. Her tongue laved her spouse’s breasts, her firm abdomen then trailed down a strong thigh, before coming back up to take a journey down the other one.

Kate was making little moaning sounds with each breath that got louder when CJ went near the juncture of her legs. The taller woman reached her hand up to palm a heaving breast and she felt Kate’s hand cover her own, holding it in place. She dipped her tongue into the thatch of dark blonde hair and her spouse raised her hips to meet her. She pulled back in an effort to slow this encounter just a little.

She could feel her own center ache and reached with the other hand to touch herself. Kate looked down.

“No...”

The actress sat up and pushed CJ down on the bed. She straddled her wife’s thighs and slipped her hand sensually between them. Placing her fingers between her swollen ridge and CJ’s, she leaned down, squashing her lover’s breasts with her own. She kissed her and moaned into the agent’s mouth as they both began a slow rhythm, thrusting against Kate’s hand.

The smaller woman licked her spouse’s lips. “You’re so wet, Ciara.”

“Anngghh...” CJ tried to speak. “I... baby... take your hand away,” she said, pushing Kate up into a sitting position. “I want to watch you come.”

Kate growled as the agent tilted her hips until she felt their engorged clits brush against each other.

“Oh!” Kate moaned and threw her head back, basking in the sensation.

CJ watched her beautiful wife as she headed for that pinnacle of pleasure. She brought both hands up to hold Kate's breasts, massaging them gently.

"Now, Ciara..."

"Yeah... yeah..."

They came together, just like CJ knew they would. She had been holding her orgasm back for just this moment and it was totally worth it. Kate's head fell forward as she pressed herself hard against her wife. The blonde bit her lips, her nostrils flaring in an attempt to get more oxygen into her lungs. Her green eyes were darkened and hooded as they watched CJ follow her to climax. It was beautiful. It was amazing. It was a moment they needed to connect, to bring them back from the separation they had felt the day before.

As Kate slumped down beside her wife on the bed, the tall agent wrapped her arms around her. They were silent and sated, breathing as one in the afterglow. CJ planted little kisses over Kate's face, which was conveniently tilted up to receive the gifts.

"I love you, Katie."

The actress smiled. "I love you more, honey."

A whisper in her ear... "Not possible."

"I beg to differ..."

"Shall we agree to disagree?" the agent grinned.

"Yeah."

And with that reaffirmation that they had come back to one another, CJ pulled the covers up around them and they fell into a dreamless sleep.

Chapter 6

The next morning was a flurry of activity in the Carson household. Since they had got home after midnight, had a horrible argument, made-up and then made love for quite some time after that, it had left little time to catch a few hours sleep. The alarm had rudely awakened them at 7am and they were now running frantically around the house trying to get ready for work.

Somehow, they managed to help one another shower, find clothes and organize a quick breakfast. With barely enough time for a birthday kiss, CJ headed out the door to go to work, throwing her hand in the air in a wave of sorts at Tony, who was sitting in the Mercedes waiting for Kate.

CJ got in the Bureau sedan – which she'd be in trouble for, as it had been signed out for way too long – and screeched down the long driveway, noticing on the dashboard clock that she was actually on time.

"Wow, how did I manage that?" she asked herself with a smirk.

Looking quickly in the mirror, she winced at the tired eyes staring back at her. "Please, whoever is listening... I need a quiet day at work. Then I can go home and sleep for a year or two."

After exiting the farm gates, she focused back on the road and headed to the office.

* * * * *

Kate came running out of the house with her bag hanging from one hand, shoving things into it with the other. *'Why did I rip that strap off my favorite bag? It didn't do any good anyway,'* she grumbled silently. *'Or maybe it did. I need to remember and ask CJ if the woman is okay.'* She shook her head, trying to erase yesterday from her memory for a while.

Noticing her scurrying down the porch steps, Tony jumped out and held the car door for Kate. She smiled at him briefly.

"Hi Tony."

"Morning, Miss Kate. Nice to see that smile."

Once she was seated, he closed the door and got in the driver's seat.

"My smile?"

"Yes. I was worried about you two last night."

"Oh." Kate thought for a moment. "Thank you, Tony. You're a good friend. CJ and I are okay now. We had a rough day yesterday."

"Anything I can help with, Miss Kate?"

"Please Tony, call me Kate. I feel like I'm in *'Gone With The Wind'* or something," the actress said with a grin.

Tony let out a bark of laughter. "Sorry. Kate, is there anything I can do for you... to help?"

"No. You're already helping. CJ and I were caught up in a... uh... bank robbery yesterday."

Tony's wide eyes glanced quickly in the rear view. "Oh God, are you okay?"

"Yes. Fine now. It just got a little tense for a while," she replied, smiling. "Oh, you could help me with something..."

"Anything?"

"Could you go to the bakery and pick up CJ's cake?"

"Oh yes. It's today, isn't it? I'll do that this morning. I'll drop it by the house when I pick Kamali up to go to the vet for his vaccinations. Is it Carey's City Bakery?"

Kate grinned. It was her favorite bakery. "Of course. You're a Godsend, Tony. Thank you."

"Did you manage to get her gift the other day?"

"Yes, one larger gift and two little ones," Kate replied, winking.

“Larger?” He laughed knowingly. “I’ll say. How ever did you hide it?”

“It got delivered just before I left for San Francisco. Worked out just fine, actually. It’s in the barn with a big bow on it.”

“Excellent,” he smiled.

They drove the rest of the way in silence. Kate prepared herself mentally for a day of Jack Bannerman, vaguely wondering if she’d survive it on only three hours sleep. She was looking forward to seeing Cyn, though. Some light-hearted chat was just what she needed.

* * * * *

CJ entered her office yawning widely. The sight that greeted her made her smile. Agent Jamie Green was asleep with her head on the desktop, a thin trail of drool coming from her mouth to pool in the wooden surface. The raven-haired agent stood for a moment and watched Jamie’s smooth cheek as it twitched while she slumbered.

“Someone’s been workin’ too hard,” CJ muttered.

She walked over to the tall blonde’s side and moved her hair back from her face, then scratched lightly on Jamie’s cheek to wake her.

“Hey Penfold. Wakey, wakey...” CJ grinned.

“Huh? Oh... oh... hi...” Jamie mumbled.

As she sat up, CJ thought about how their relationship had progressed since they met. After a somewhat hostile start, they had become a duo of sorts. They had found out they both had a love for the British cartoon, Dangermouse, and had nicknamed one another accordingly. It certainly brightened CJ’s day when she could call Jamie ‘Penfold’ and watch her narrow those dark eyes in a mock growl. But sometimes in the office, Jamie wore glasses – that somehow managed to make her look even sexier – so it seemed right that she should be Penfold.

Green rubbed her cheeks and sheepishly wiped the drool from her skin. “Hey, you’re back. We heard what happened.”

“Oh yeah?” CJ grinned as Jamie tried to fix her hair.

“Yep. The AD was informed when you gave your name to the cops on the phone. They called to double-check you were for real. Mulroney was ready to send us up to kick some ass if it went on any longer.”

CJ nodded thoughtfully and seemed to wander off for a moment.

Jamie eyed her. “You okay there, Dangermouse?”

The tall woman looked up and smiled. “Yeah. Tough day is all.”

“I guess. Do you need to talk about it?” Jamie asked, sensing CJ was still distracted.

“Maybe later. Thanks.”

“Is Kate all right?”

CJ slumped down in the chair opposite Green. “Yeah, I think so. We had a rough time when we got home but it didn’t last long. I was being an ass and finally realized it.”

“You apologized?” Jamie asked, sounding surprised.

“Of course I did.”

“I thought you were more stubborn than that. You sure are, here at work...” Jamie said, waiting for a reaction.

“Damn right, but I prefer ‘determined’.” CJ shook her head. “But when it comes to Kate... and of course, the fact that I was in the wrong... well...”

“A woman in love,” Jamie swooned sarcastically, with her hands on her heart.

“Ya got that right. And quit teasin’ me!”

The blonde held her hands up. “Sorry.”

“So why were you drooling on the desk?” CJ asked, turning the teasing around.

Jamie sighed. “Just tired... working a new case. Wanna help me with it?”

“Once I’ve written the report for yesterday, I’ll take a look. Okay?”

“Sure, CJ. I’ll get the coffees and then we’ll get down to it,” Jamie said, then blushed. “Uh, get to work, I mean.”

CJ hadn’t thought she meant anything else and caught the unusual look on Jamie’s face. Was Agent Green harboring some unrequited feelings? CJ narrowed her eyes as Jamie busied around her desk with a slight flush to her cheeks.

Just as the dark-haired woman was about to ask Jamie about it, Ethan and the new guy – Special Agent Michael Ryan from Texas – arrived at the office.

Mikey was the new member of the team, coming to them after that fiasco with Powell. He seemed to be a real nice guy. He was only in the job two years but, like Ethan, was already a great agent. He showed a definite affinity for psychology and profiling, and was learning even more from CJ and the team. It didn’t take long before they all settled down to a long morning of paperwork, but CJ didn’t forget that look on Jamie’s face. She’d ask her about it some time later.

* * * * *

Kate stood on the ‘master bedroom’ set with her hands on her hips and a bored look on her face. Well, it could have been mistaken for boredom but she was actually exhausted. Her thick layer of make-up probably hid her sleepy eyes quite well but she could feel it. She was deathly tired, emotionally and physically drained from the events of the previous day. ‘*And I have no vacation time for months,*’ she thought sadly.

She yawned as Jack complained about the script for the fifth time today. But what completely confused her was that Jack was arguing that Kate's character deserved more respect from his. The actress found that very amusing considering what Jack used to be like.

He came back over to her to do the re-take.

"Hmphh, they won't change it, Kate. I'm so sorry," he said, holding her shoulders in both hands as the start of the scene dictated.

"That's okay, Jack. I really don't care. Let's just get the scene, okay?"

"Right. Say, would you like to have coffee with me after we get this? No strings..." he said, raising his hands briefly in surrender.

She looked at him for a few seconds. "Not this time. I need to get home as soon as we're done. Can I take a rain-check?"

"Sure."

They looked at Phil just as he opened his mouth. "Aaaaand, action!"

* * * * *

At the end of her day, Kate crawled into her trailer and began the cleansing. "God, why does my character need so much damn lipstick? Eww."

Cyn came skipping through the door.

"Hey Kate. Good day, huh?"

"Hey you. Yeah, it wasn't too bad."

"What ya got planned for the Goddess' birthday?" the make-up artist quipped.

"Her main gift is in the barn. I think we should christen it... if I can stay awake that long."

"Christen it? Oohhhh... back seat?"

"Don't know. I hadn't made specific plans and I hadn't accounted for us being hostages yesterday either. I bet CJ is as tired as me, if not more so."

"Well, get home and play it by ear. Just make sure you guys have a good night and I'll cover up the tired again tomorrow," Cyn said, bending down to kiss Kate on the cheek.

"You're so damn sweet, you know that?"

"Oh, I know. My man thinks so too."

Kate's eyes widened. "Oh yeah, I forgot to ask you about that. Who's the lucky guy?"

"Uh..."

“Cyn?”

“Uhm, it’s Tony,” the young woman said with a frown.

“Why are your eyebrows down so low? You’ll swallow your piercing,” Kate giggled.

“Smart ass. I just didn’t know if you’d approve... you know... he’s your driver and everything.”

The actress stood up to face Cyn and crossed her arms over her chest, yawning and grasping onto herself. “Why would I have a problem with two of my best friends getting together? I think it’s great. How’s it going?”

“It’s going good. He really is a sweetheart.” Cyn grimaced. “Are you okay?”

“Yes. Just so drained, it’s making me shiver. I’m gonna head home. See you tomorrow,” Kate said, reaching out to hug the artist.

Cyn hugged her warmly then guided her out the door, grabbing the actress’ bag on her way. “Go home to your wife. See you tomorrow, Kate.”

The actress waved as she left to find Tony. She was soon on her way home, remaining quiet during the drive due to her head lolling to the side as she dozed on and off. Tired was an understatement.

* * * * *

Once home, Kate jumped in a lukewarm shower to waken herself up a little. Pulling on a pair of black sweatpants and her favorite top – a Foo Fighters tee of CJ’s – she went downstairs to make a small but tasty birthday dinner. After throwing the dish full of Mediterranean vegetables and spiced chicken breasts in the oven, she went to the barn to check on the gift, making sure the ribbon was just right – dead center on the hood. CJ had a picture of her dream truck in the gym at the back of their home and Kate thought it was about time she had the real thing.

The shiny, deep blue truck sat proudly near the horse stalls inside the large building and Kate nodded toward the vehicle as she spoke to the animals.

“What do you think, girls? Will she like it?”

Nevada threw her head around in what looked like an affirmative, even though Kate knew it was just a response to her voice. The dark mare, Idaho, just stood munching on her hay, not fussed either way.

“I do too. She’s gonna freak at how much I spent. But she built the addition for the gym and bought all the machines, so she can’t complain,” the actress said, justifying her decision.

After feeding the horses and turning them out in the field, she jogged back over to the house and brought out the two very small gifts and put them in their positions. She set up the plates, candles, basket of bread and a small bunch of fresh flowers that Jack had handed her to give to CJ for her birthday. The actress had been stunned silent when he had stopped her earlier in the day and sheepishly asked her to give the lilies to the agent. ‘*Seems my wife has a stalker,*’ she thought to herself, then giggled out loud.

Settling down on the window seat, she called CJ’s office to see how long she would be.

* * * * *

“Special Agent Carson,” CJ said, rubbing her forehead.

She had the beginnings of a headache, which probably hadn’t been helped by the consumption of many mugs of coffee to help her stay awake.

“Hi sweetheart, how are you coping?”

“Oh, Katie, I wanna come home,” the agent moaned, Kate’s voice seeming to release something inside her instantly.

“How long will you be, honey?”

“Hopefully less than an hour. I’m almost done... in more ways than one. I may fall asleep as soon as I get in.”

“I have plans that will keep you awake for a little while. I have dinner slowly roasting in the oven too,” the blonde said, as she headed for the stove to turn the heat down a little to extend the cooking time.

“Mmmm, that sounds so good. I’m gonna finish up and get my butt out of here, okay?”

“Okay, baby. See you soon.”

CJ covered the handset with her free hand and whispered. “Stop calling me baby when I’m not there to do something about it.”

Kate giggled. *“Okay, sorry. But when you get home...”*

“Right. I’m leaving now,” the tall agent decided, smirking at Jamie, who was gawking at her from across the room. “Bye.”

“Bye, CJ.”

The agent put down the phone and innocently began to tidy her desk. Agent Green was still watching her and she could feel the dark brown eyes pinning her with a ‘look’.

“What?” CJ said, thumping her bundle of papers on the desk to align the edges.

“Nothing,” Jamie said, nonchalantly, “You guys seem to be doing okay. I’m glad the stress didn’t get to you both.”

“Well, it did, but we fixed it pretty quickly. You don’t think she could stay mad at little ole me, do ya?” the raven-haired woman said, batting her eyelashes.

CJ knew she had guessed right about her colleague when Jamie’s cheeks flushed at her teasing. It seemed Agent Green did indeed have a little crush. *‘Interesting,’* the agent mused, *‘I’d have thought Kate was more her type. Who knew?’*

“You okay, Jamie?”

“Hmm? Yeah, sure. You go home and I’ll finish up anything you have left to do,” the tall blonde said, getting up and holding out her hand for CJ’s files.

“It’s okay. I’m done. I’ll get back to these tomorrow. You go home and get some sleep too.”

Jamie nodded, wished CJ a happy birthday and went to her desk. Ethan and Mikey had already left to do some legwork on a case, so CJ bid her friend farewell and headed for home.

* * * * *

The agent’s nostrils were pleasantly assaulted by the most wonderful scent as she walked through the front door. “Oh my God, that smells amazing,” she said to Kamali who had come to greet her. “Hey boy... Mommy’s been cooking, huh?”

The big black dog bounded through the house to inform Kate of CJ’s arrival. A cute – and quite sleepy-looking – actress came through the hallway and enveloped her wife in a hug.

“Hey you,” she slurred into the agent’s blouse.

CJ didn’t say anything. She was overcome with gratitude for some reason, most likely because she was home in the arms of her love and they were truly okay after yesterday’s nightmare. She held her wife tight and buried her face in the strawberry blonde hair. After deeply inhaling Kate’s scent for a few moments, she pushed back a little to brush some strands from the smaller woman’s tired eyes.

“Hi.” CJ looked down at the tee shirt. “That fits you better than it ever fitted me.”

“Well, you *do* insist on buying ridiculously tight tees, honey. Not that I’m complaining or anything.”

“It was the only style they did and I liked the gun on the front,” the agent pouted.

“It’s mine now, but you can still look at it if you want,” Kate said, batting her eyelashes. “Happy Birthday, honey. I love you,” she added, cupping her spouse’s cheek in her hand.

CJ hummed happily and kissed her wife. “Thank you. I’ll go get changed, then I want some of that delicious food I can smell. Oh, and I love you too, just so ya know.”

Kate sent her off with a playful slap to the buttocks.

CJ threw off her work clothes in the ensuite and came back downstairs quickly in sweatpants and a T-shirt. Kate eyed the tight material covering the pert, bra-less breasts. *‘Later... if I can muster up the energy,’* she silently told herself.

As they ate the sumptuous meal, they talked about their day. Kate told CJ about Jack, explaining the flowers on the table and telling her she thought the actor had a crush on the agent.

“He wouldn’t be the only one,” CJ said, round a mouthful of vegetables.

“Oh?”

The agent wondered fleetingly if she should even tell Kate about her suspicions. The doubt left her mind as fast as it came and she swallowed her food. “Jamie seems to be acting a little weird around me,” she said, watching Kate’s face carefully for any concern. She didn’t find any.

“Weird? In what way?”

The taller woman licked her teeth. “Not sure yet. She seems to blush a lot when I joke around with her and she gets flustered and tries to explain what she actually means when she says something that could be misconstrued. It’s kinda funny actually. I just hope it doesn’t get out of hand. She knows damned well I’m not interested. And we’ve become good friends, so I hope it doesn’t wreck that.”

CJ looked up after loading her fork again and Kate smiled at her.

“Honey, I’m not worried, if that’s what you think.”

“I knew you wouldn’t be. That’s why I told you. I only want you, Katie, you know that,” the agent asserted, grinning as she stuffed pieces of chicken into her mouth.

“You have me.”

“Nen my nife is complede...” CJ mumbled with a mouthful of food.

“CJ, that’s just disgusting and beautiful all at the same time,” Kate chuckled.

The tall woman smirked at her wife and continued to chew on her food. The meal progressed at a steady pace and before dessert, Kate gave CJ her first little present. It was a Yin Yang pendant the agent had coveted in a store downtown. Kate was suitably thanked with a sloppy kiss with just the right amount of tongue.

* * * * *

After dinner, they went to the couch with mugs of coffee, though neither of them were under any illusion that it would keep them awake much longer. Kate reached under the cushion behind her and pulled out a tiny box, brightly wrapped in shiny blue paper. This one was a little clue that led to the actual gift outside.

“Ooh, another present,” CJ purred as she picked at the fastening.

“Yep.”

Kate leaned back to watch the expression on her wife’s face when she saw the key. CJ frowned and held the key in her hand, looking more closely at the key ring attached to it. It looked like a large two-sided coin. On one side, the Native design of the Wolf Track, which CJ knew was a symbol of leadership and authority. She also knew it was the symbol used by her great-grandfather many times in his life. Feeling her throat close up from emotion, she flipped it over, seeing The Morning Star engraved on the other side. It was the brightest star on the dawn’s horizon, and had been associated with the renewal of tradition and resurrection of past heroes. CJ shook her head slowly, overwhelmed so much by the symbolism of the gift, she almost forgot there was a key attached to it.

Kate watched her wife hold back the tears until one trickled down the tanned cheek. The actress lifted her finger to catch it, effectively snapping CJ out of her emotional thoughts.

“Oh Katie, it’s so beautiful,” CJ said, wiping her eyes.

“I’m glad you like it. I had it made for you. You’re my protector and I’m pretty sure we’ve been here before. It seemed fitting.”

CJ nodded. "I love you so much."

"Ditto, my darling. Now, what about the key?"

"Oh. Yeah, the key. It looks like a..." The agent's blue eyes widened so much, Kate thought they may just pop right out of their sockets. "You didn't!" CJ said, still not blinking.

"Maybe I did. Wanna take a walk with me?"

CJ nodded profusely, unable to form a sentence due to astonishment and excitement. '*She bought me my own car. But I don't really need one. Oh, but it's such an awesome gift,*' CJ pondered as they walked out of the house. She never suspected for a second that her dream truck was in the barn.

In front of the barn doors, Kate slipped her hand into her sweatpants pocket and pulled out a bandanna. "You need to put this round your eyes, honey. No peeking," Kate warned as she moved behind her wife to tie the bandanna.

CJ wiggled slightly like a little kid at Christmas and Kate burst out laughing.

"What?" the agent asked.

"You were wiggling. Are you excited?"

"Yeah!" the tough special agent squeaked.

Kate laughed again. "Wait right here. You must not move until I tell you. Agreed?"

"Okay, okay. Just hurry..."

Kate opened the large barn doors, revealing the brand new, shiny blue Dodge Ram. Even *she* felt excited. She knew CJ was going to just die when she saw it. The actress ruffled up her strawberry blonde locks and leaned back against the hood of the truck, perched on her elbows in a seductive pose. She licked her lips, suddenly feeling more awake. And it seemed CJ had a new lease of life too.

"Okay. You can look now."

CJ whipped the bandanna off her face and when she saw the vision before her, she had to rub her eyes and do a double take. "Oh my God, what have you done? Oh... oh... it's... it's gorgeous!" She staggered toward the truck but to Kate's complete surprise and delight, the agent swept the smaller woman up in her arms and kissed her thoroughly. The kiss lasted for quite some time and Kate felt herself being lifted onto the high hood of the vehicle. CJ sat her on the shiny blue metal and opened her eyes. "You are unbelievable, do you know that?" CJ said, gasping for breath.

"No... *you* are unbelievable, honey. I thought you'd go straight for the truck!"

"No way. You always come first, Katie. But can you sit right here for a minute so I can go drool over it?"

Kate laughed heartily and CJ watched her in awe. She was so damn beautiful, especially when she was happy.

"Go drool," the actress said, bringing her legs up onto the hood and crossing them at the ankles.

CJ gazed at her for a moment then went to take a slow walk around the vehicle. Every now and then, she'd gasp out a comment. "Wow, it's a quad cab... oooh... awesome wheels... I love the color..." She got to the back of the truck and Kate heard a squeak.

"You okay, baby?"

"You got me the Thunderoad 5.7 liter V8? Seriously?" she said, bounding round to the front again.

"Yeah. That's the right one, isn't it?"

CJ showed practically every tooth in her mouth. Her smile was so incredibly huge that Kate guessed the answer to her question. The tall woman got up on her tiptoes and the actress bent down for the offered kiss. They were both breathless when they eventually parted and CJ raised an eyebrow. "You know, you're at a great height for me to, uh..."

"Don't you dare..."

"Oh, go on. Make my fantasy come true. Please?" she begged, lips pouted.

"Honey, we're in the barn..."

"So? The horses are out, baby. We're all alone," CJ said, her grin covering her whole face.

Kate raised a sandy eyebrow. "Your fantasy?"

"You... on a big shiny truck? Hell yeah!"

Kate blushed. It had crossed her mind but she wasn't going to admit that... yet. CJ sensed her change of heart and reached up to the waistband of Kate's sweats. Keeping her eyes locked on her wife's green orbs, she pulled the pants down, helped by the actress raising her hips off the hood. The agent's nostrils flared when she saw that Kate had no underwear on and she inhaled deeply at the sight of the tender flesh before her, releasing her breath with a shudder. Kate's reflection in the shiny metal did nothing to quell the flame inside CJ and she carefully slid her spouse towards her, to the edge of the hood.

Kate's breath was coming in gasps now as the taller woman pressed her body against the sensitive bundle of nerves at Kate's center. The actress could feel the underside of her wife's breasts pressing against her mound and her stomach clenched in anticipation. They kissed long and hard as the agent massaged the supple skin on her wife's back and buttocks.

When they parted again, CJ looked down at her tee with a menacing grin on her face. She pulled the dampened material up to her nose to smell her lover's scent. Kate licked her lips, watching the agent do the same.

CJ leaned down to kiss the soft flesh on Kate's leg, trailing her mouth up and down the tender thigh, teasing the smaller woman mercilessly. Kate pushed herself forward a little more and it was all the encouragement the hungry agent needed. She licked her way up to the very wet juncture of her spouse's legs. She blew gently on the damp curls and heard a moan coming from above her as two small hands came to rest on her hair.

The agent poked her tongue out to taste her wife. The strokes became more definite when the fingers on her head grabbed at her hair and pushed her harder against the swollen flesh. She licked and sucked and tried to

enter Kate but she couldn't reach. She stood up quickly and pushed Kate back so that she was leaning her elbows on the cool, metal surface, her hips tilting with the movement.

She was now completely accessible to CJ and the tall woman went in to feast on her lover. She thrust her tongue inside the actress and heard her scream out. CJ's eyes opened in surprise as she felt the silky walls start to spasm around her already. Her wife's pose, the full breasts rising and falling under the 'Foods' tee along with the fact that they were making love on the truck, sent CJ over the edge.

"Ciara! You... oh God... yes..."

CJ climaxed as Kate started writhing around on the hood, accidentally slipping forward. CJ's mouth held her up but the agent's teeth bumped against the very sensitive flesh at her lips. Kate squealed but then startled the agent, as she pushed into her even harder. CJ obliged and sucked harder on her wife's tender nodule. Kate had another orgasm, screaming CJ's name. It took a few moments for them to catch their breath. The tall woman reached down to adjust her sweats, always amazed at how just the thought of making love to Kate made her climax. The agent grinned widely as her wife lay down on the hood of the truck, sated and smiling widely.

"Honey, you're amazing," the actress growled once she found her voice.

"Thanks," CJ purred as she kissed a delicate trail over the firm abdomen.

Kate giggled. "I think the truck is christened."

"Oh... I'd say so."

A few more moments passed, catching their breath, CJ kissing any and all bare skin she could find.

"Wanna... take a quick drive before we... go to bed for the rest of the night?" the actress asked, finding the energy to sit up.

"Oooh. Could we?"

"Of course, baby. Let's uh... get me dressed and go."

CJ laughed and lifted the petite blonde off the truck. She held the sweatpants open as Kate stepped into them, kissing her on the forehead before they jumped into the vehicle.

"Oh yeah. Full leather. You are so good at gift-giving, Katie," the agent said, rubbing over the seat with her hand.

"Glad you like it. Now, take me for a drive, woman. I have to get back and finish off the birthday night before I get too tired."

"Oh? There's more?" CJ said, eyebrows raised under her dark bangs.

"Oh yeah," Kate smirked, licking her full lips in response. "I'm hungry too, ya know."

CJ groaned and started the engine. The truck left a dusty trail as it growled down the driveway and headed for the highway. The agent couldn't believe her wife had managed to turn her birthday from nightmare to fantasy in less than twenty-four hours. Kate Marshall-Carson truly was an amazing woman.

Epilogue

One week later, CJ arrived home to find Kate soaking in the tub.

“Jump in,” the smaller woman said, sleepily.

The agent didn’t need an invitation. It had been a long day of FBI work and convenience food and now, at 10pm, she needed to relax... and what better way than to lay with her wife in the warm, bubbly water. She slipped in behind Kate and wrapped her arms and legs around the petite body. She groaned happily, as the comforting feeling seemed to surround her like a blanket.

“How was your day, Katie?”

“Oh, it was fine. I did have to pry Jack off me at one point. He was practically begging to come to dinner... said he wanted to come talk to you about FBI stuff. He’s got it bad, CJ.”

“Did someone tell him I was with the Bureau?”

“Yeah, Cyn and I were uh... playing with him a little. You now, to brighten up our long day,” the actress grinned.

“And?”

“He seemed to melt into the floor. I think it made his obsession worse.” Kate looked at CJ and laughed quietly. “Sorry, honey.”

The agent smirked and bit her lip. “Maybe we should invite him and Jamie over... you never know what might happen.”

Kate turned her head again. “You’re serious?”

“Might be worth a shot. Jamie’s interested in me but she’d never do anything about it. We’ve been building a good friendship and I want her to be happy. Jack wants you *and* me it seems, but he can’t have either. Couldn’t hurt to introduce them... see if there’s any spark there,” CJ said, idly taking a wet sponge on a trail over Kate’s upper chest.

“Hmm, maybe.” the actress murmured, enjoying the soothing caress.

“Oh,” CJ said, “I meant to tell you right away. The woman you helped at the bank? She recovered. You helped save her, Katie.”

“Me? I didn’t do much. But I’m glad she’s okay. What a horrible day that was,” the blonde said, shivering at the memory.

“It was. But remember... the initial actions at a scene like that are crucial to the victim’s survival. You did the right thing and slowed the bleeding. I’m very proud of you. I’m still sorry I acted like a jerk, though. You were really great in there, you know.”

“You weren’t a jerk, honey. And I was so proud of you too. I just forgot to let you get on with your job. But you know what surprised me?”

CJ dunked the sponge in the water and squeezed it out over Kate's breast, watching the water as it trickled away. "What?"

"That I wasn't afraid of the situation. Yes, I was terrified that you or anyone else would get hurt, but I wasn't afraid of what was happening."

"That doesn't surprise me. I keep telling you to join the Bureau. Hell, Mark mentions it at least once a week," CJ said, snorting out a laugh.

"He does not!"

"Actually, he does. He wasn't kidding around when he said he wanted you to work for him."

"My God, I might not even get in," the actress said, surprising both her and her wife.

CJ leaned her head to the side to look at the smaller woman. "Have you been thinking about it?"

"Well, not specifically. But when I was helping that woman I felt like I was doing something so worthwhile. I loved that feeling. And from what you've told me now, I might have had a small hand in saving her. That feels incredible, CJ."

Green eyes met blue and the agent smiled. "It is a good feeling but my job has a lot more of the horrible stuff. I guess you have to take the good with the bad."

"Yeah, I know. But I find your job interesting and the danger doesn't put me off. Anyway, I'm not saying I'm gonna run out and become a Federal Agent but I have thought about it a little."

CJ squeezed the small body in her arms. "Well, whatever you do, I love you and support you one hundred percent, honey. And I always will."

"I love you too."

CJ pondered their discussion well into the night as her wife slept in her arms. Could she cope with the love of her life being in danger every day? She supposed she'd have to, if that was what the actress decided to do. And as Kate had pointed out during an after-bath discussion, she was in danger at her current job. The fact that she was a successful actress had already put her in mortal danger. CJ relaxed into the warmth of her wife's embrace and decided that whatever happened, Kate was just full of surprises. And that suited CJ just fine.

They would just have to deal with any changes or challenges... together.

The End...