

Recovered Strength

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Prolog: RS ~ No suspension

A/N: This story is a tribute to Lisbon who impressed me so much, especially during season four.

It is my first English story, so cut me some slack, please~

Recovered Strength

To my twin and every member of our facebook group "Lisbon Forever <3". I love you, guys!

Prologue – No suspension

"Suspension?!"

"Well, it's not exactly a suspension, Agent Lisbon."

"My team and I aren't allowed to return within the following thirty days. That's what I call a suspension."

Director Bertram sighed and rubbed the back of his nose. "I can assure you, it's not. But it's necessary that your team stays out of focus for a little while."

"Ah, and that's why you're sending us to somewhere in the middle of nowhere?"

"It's an old farm house far away from civilization, I admit. But there's a nice town nearby." When Lisbon pressed her lips angrily together he added softly, "It's really not that bad. This location has been used for witness protection before and it has proved to be useful."

Bertram watched his agent crossing her arms in front of her chest, and took a step closer, "Look, I'm sorry, Agent, but you have to understand my point. I need the whole Red John situation to cool down a bit. I want you and your team coming out of his fire, at least for a few weeks."

"I understand, Sir, but we still have to investigate this case. We nearly caught him two days ago. We have got one of his disciples – and she's still alive! We're close, we can't stop now!"

"Nearly, Agent, you *nearly* caught him and that's my point! Jane had his *brilliant* plan but nevertheless Red John frustrated it eventually. And his girl? You guys tried to crack her for forty-eight hours now and what have you learned?"

"Well, nothing much until now, but..."

"No, there's no 'but!' I want you out of Sacramento immediately."

"Sir, I really appreciate your concern, but this isn't our first Red John case. We can handle it. We did before. But if we leave now we might miss our chance!"

"Agent Lisbon", Bertram was standing in front of her with a very angry expression on his face, "You and your team – and that also includes Jane – you will go home now, you will pack some stuff and you will be at the airport in three hours. You will take the plane, you will be driven to that damn house and you will stay there until I give you permission to come back.

"And I'll tell you *why* you will do this: Red John wanted the death of one of my agents and he just killed another one. He tried to turn a CBI consultant into his disciple. We have at least one mole in the FBI and I guess that maybe – just maybe – he has some more friends in the CBI, too. But of course we have no clue who that might be. The SCU had been in great danger lately – and still is.

"So excuse me if I want to protect my people. You will go. That is an official order, Agent. You can also tell Jane, that he will go with you, because otherwise he will stay fired forever!"

Lisbon remained silent because she didn't expect an outburst like that from her boss. He cleared his throat.

"It is important that no one knows where you're going. So you guys aren't allowed to tell anybody. While you're away, your families will be protected and another CBI unit will deal with Lorelei Martins. I know it isn't easy but you don't need to worry. Agent Lisbon, CBI already lost five agents because of Red John. I don't want to lose another one, do you understand that?"

He looked directly in her eyes and Lisbon was astonished to see that he was sincere.

After a moment of silence, she nodded.

"Yes, Sir. We're leaving as soon as possible."

"Good," he turned around and went back to his desk. "That will be all."

She stayed for a few seconds, watched him sorting his documents and then she left with a heavy but silent sigh.

The last thing she heard was, "Be careful, Agent, and take good care of your team."

"I will, Sir."

TBC

*I really don't want to deal with Lorelei here, so I just kick her out of this fanfiction. *kick**

Kapitel 1: RS ~ Arrival

A/N: My beta reader and I had some technical problems, but everything is fine now. So thank you, 0YinANDYang0, you saved me!

Chapter one – Arrival

"It's the end of the world, isn't it?" Rigsby said when he jumped out of the old rusty truck and looked around.

"You're sure we're still on same planet?" Cho commented dryly and started to unload the luggage.

"Come on, guys, it's not that bad." Lisbon tried to motivate her team but didn't sound convinced either.

"Nice try, Lisbon."

"Jane, shut up." She took the keys and thanked the old farmer who had picked them up from airport. Jim Alliston gave her a toothless smile, tapped his hat and vanished somewhere towards the stables.

"So, Boss..." It was Rigsby again, who was still looking at the countryside in front of him, "Where exactly are we?"

"To be honest, I've no idea."

"I would check some maps but I don't have any reception." Grace waved her mobile phone through the air with not much success.

"We probably should drive to the town tomorrow and find out. It should be located just a few miles away." Lisbon picked up her bag and went to the farm house. A lot of plants had climbed the old wood over the years and its white color was more a dirty grey now. It wasn't big at all and a little bit crooked, but it had a cute porch with two inviting couches on it. It really wasn't that bad after all. Despite its old age it looked cozy somehow.

"Well, that looks promising," Rigsby murmured under his breath. It was unusual for him to be the grumbling one, but who could blame him for it? He had to leave his son and his girlfriend behind again after he had been pronounced dead just a few days before. Nobody possibly could take offense at him wanting to be somewhere else – not to mention that he wasn't the only one. Neither he nor his colleagues were pretty happy about their forced vacations.

"Come on, Cowboy," Grace clapped him on his shoulder and smiled softly to cheer him up before she went past him to follow Lisbon into the house. "Maybe it's getting

better on the inside."

xxx

It wasn't exactly better but it was clean and tidy; the fittings looked rustic and comfortable.

"Let's see..." Lisbon said, "We have four bedrooms and one living room. I guess two of us could share a bedroom and-

"That won't be necessary, Lisbon, I don't need one. I'm used to sleeping on a couch, so I'll just stay in the living room."

Lisbon glanced at Jane, "You're sure?" After he nodded she continued, "Well, it's settled then. Get your stuff in your rooms, guys. Jane, you can take your luggage to my room if you want. We'll meet back down here later."

Because they weren't at work now, Lisbon actually wasn't in charge anymore, but there was a silent agreement between the colleagues of SCU: It wasn't necessary to change something that worked as it was. So no one contradicted and they followed her orders as usual.

Lisbon went upstairs first and entered her room. It was small and barely lit due to window size. The room only had a bed, a bedside table, an armchair and a wardrobe, but it was enough for a few weeks.

With a sigh she dropped her bag on the bed and stepped to the window. Alliston's farm was on a hill so she could overlook the whole valley through cracked glass. The scenery consisted of meadows and fields in light and dark green shades with some paths between them. It was a nice view, though she would have preferred the view across the roofs of Sacramento.

She was just turning away when Jane's voice made her jump. "Already regretting your decision to come here?"

"Jesus, Jane!" Lisbon gasped for air as she faced him without looking him in the eyes, "Don't do that! And it wasn't *my* decision."

"But you could have prevented it," he pointed out softly.

"It was an official order." She automatically felt the urge to defend herself. Lisbon cursed herself for it because she should know better than letting Jane provoke her.

"Anyway," she said when she went past him, "I guess the wardrobe is big enough for both of us, so you can put your stuff in one half."

He was about to say something when Grace entered with a knock.

"Boss?"

"What's up, Grace?" Even though she tried to hide her relief Lisbon was sure that Jane was able to see right through her. She could feel his burning gaze in her back. Or maybe she was just paranoid.

"Mr. Alliston allowed us to take his horses whenever we want. So...-I was wondering if you'd like to come with me for a ride. I totally would understand if you want to unpack or relax first. Or if you want to postpone it or..."

"Give me ten minutes, Grace, and I'll join you," Lisbon interrupted the rookie who smiled in surprise and disappeared with a cheerful response. "Great! See you then, Boss!"

Lisbon turned to her consultant, "Would you excuse me, Jane? I really need to change for that trip."

Even if she wasn't directly looking at him she could still feel his staring.

After a pause he answered quietly, "Of course. But we probably should talk about why you're avoiding me." With these words he left, missing her sulkily murmured "I'm not avoiding anybody."

xxx

Although it had been awhile since Lisbon had ridden a horse, she and Grace had a nice time during their ride through meadows and fields. They didn't talk much but both of them enjoyed the quiet and also each other's company. It was somehow relaxing – slow and steady. At the same time it was a good opportunity to get to know a bit of the area.

When they returned over an hour later they noticed with pleasure that Rigsby and Cho already made dinner for all of them. On the contrary it wasn't a surprise to find Jane on the couch in the living room, taking a nap.

"You coming, Jane?" Lisbon asked when she peeked in, "We'll eat in a few minutes."

He blinked and then sat up. He got a glimpse of her while she was heading to the bathroom, and called her back.

"Lisbon?"

"Yeah?" She took a step backward so that he got a full look of her. Jane was scrutinizing her closely which she commented with a wary frown, "What?"

He just smiled. Lisbon's blouse and jeans were sandy and dusty, her cheeks glinted rosy-tinted and her long black curls looked like a cute wild mess. She was beautiful undoubtedly.

"Just checking to see if you had a nice trip."

Lisbon raised her brow. "You can tell that by looking at me?"

"Sure." He grinned.

She rolled her eyes. "'Sure.' Why am I asking anyway?"

Jane stood up and stepped next to her. "I've no idea, my dear." He twinkled and picked some hay straws from her hair, holding her gaze nevertheless. Lisbon felt herself blushing without knowing why, so she turned quickly to get out of his spell.

"I need to scrub up," she murmured and vanished into the bathroom. Jane watched her as she left and then joined his colleagues in the kitchen.

xxx

Lisbon stood in the small bathroom and watched herself in the mirror. The red shimmer on her cheeks didn't have anything to do with her ride anymore.

"What the hell is wrong with you?" she asked her reflection with a low voice. She'd been acting strange around Jane lately, but she couldn't help it. Since he returned – no, since he had disappeared six months ago – her feelings had turned upside down. Right now she felt happy and sad at the same time – and she was at loose ends with it.

"And what the hell is wrong with Jane?" she added tiredly. Since they had left Sacramento his teasing had been different – she couldn't pinpoint how yet – but for a change, she had no energy left to deal with his intentions. She was exhausted.

The past six months had made her lose strength. She had been worrying nonstop. She'd hardly slept. On top of that, her heart had almost burst from pain. And that pain was still there.

It felt like the shock he had caused when he had left – and when he had returned and told her the truth, followed by his stupid, failed plan – that shock was still paralyzing both her body and her soul.

Lisbon splashed some cold water in her face to clear her head. She couldn't think about it right now. They would know otherwise. They knew the whole time, but they rarely said something, because she wouldn't have wanted that.

And he would know. But she couldn't cast it on him. She needed to handle it herself. She was able to handle her feelings, as confusing as they were. She just needed a little bit more time – and distance from Patrick Jane, who had turned out to be her greatest weakness.

TBC

Kapitel 2: RS ~ First night

Chapter two – First night

Dinner was nice. The mood was slowly getting lighter. Cho and Rigsby were bantering about who had contributed the most important part to their meal while Grace tried to goad them even more.

Jane and Lisbon were watching them with silent amusement. Sometimes their eyes met for a brief moment before Lisbon applied her attention back to her team.

Afterwards Grace and her boss kicked the boys out of kitchen so that they could wash the dishes without ruffle or excitement.

When they finished, it provided Lisbon the opportunity to excuse herself and call it a night. She told her rookie that she was really tired – it wasn't a lie, after all – and disappeared upstairs, only shooting a "good night, guys" towards the living room.

She knew she wouldn't be able to sleep right now, but she desperately needed some time alone. Her thoughts were spinning in her head. Spinning around Jane.

Sitting on her bed, after exchanging her clothes for an oversized jersey, Lisbon rubbed her forehead and her eyelids. She took a deep breath and finally allowed her thoughts to wander. It wouldn't ease the pain, she knew, but it would calm her a bit. At least for a little while.

When Jane had left for half a year she had lost her ground. It had caught her out of nowhere. Certainly not the fact that he left, no: she had always feared that would happen eventually, even if she had expected it to happen in a different way. What caught her off guard were her own feelings.

It had taken her a while to notice that she wasn't just hurt. She had been grieving. Losing him practically overnight had shocked her in a deep way she'd never expected. She had missed him so much and it had nearly killed her not to know whether he was alright or in trouble. It had scared her to death that she couldn't reach him.

She hadn't been able to sleep properly and to concentrate on her work with her heart fully in it anymore. She had tried to hide it but it had bothered her team nonetheless. It had been visible in their concerned eyes. But worrying Cho, Rigsby, and VanPelt was the last thing she wanted.

And then Jane had returned just a few days ago, again out of nowhere. He had told her everything he had done was for setting a trap for Red John. First she had been relieved. He was back and okay. It was all that mattered...until she realized that she had suffered, had lost her strength for a stupid plan, for nothing – especially since Red John had figured it out. She was still glad that Jane was back but she was hurt as well.

Okay, that was an understatement.

The fact was, he didn't trust her. At least not enough to let her in on from the beginning. Instead he urged her into his plan just when it wasn't possible to back off anymore – as if Lisbon would have let him down one way or the other, but that wasn't the point.

On top of it all, he had accepted that he would have to hurt her for his plan. It had been a necessary evil.

The worst thing about this story? She wasn't even mad at him...just hurt. It was the way Jane handled stuff concerning Red John. It was just the way he was. She *could* understand why he needed to catch the killer so urgently. After all, he wasn't the only one who had lost someone under a bloody red smiley face. Figuratively, since neither Bosco and his two colleagues nor Wainwright had deserved a smiley face. They just were means to the end.

Lisbon felt her eyes going watery but she wasn't about to cry. She hadn't in the past six months, even if she had got every reason to do so.

She already had one weakness. She couldn't allow herself another one. Simply crying wasn't hers and wouldn't help anyway.

She just needed time.

xxx

It was late at night when Lisbon left her room as quietly as possible. While she tiptoed barefooted through the dark corridor, she could hear Rigsby snoring in his room and it made her grin.

Apart from that there wasn't any other sound. Everyone went sleeping hours ago. She knew because she had been awake the whole time. She had tried to sleep, but of course it didn't work, so she was left to tossing about in bed. It annoyed the hell out of her because she didn't have an explanation for it. There was still a restlessness and it didn't want to disappear even with Jane back in her life.

She really could use some sleep though. She'd been needing it for months now.

Lisbon sighed silently and snuck downstairs. As she traversed the softly lit living room, she didn't dare to look to the couch and quickly slipped into the bathroom.

After taking time to refresh herself, she hesitated before returning to her room. Actually, there was a good chance that Jane was asleep despite the small light he probably just forgot to turn off. If she was quiet enough, she wouldn't awake him, right?

Yeah, right, because Jane had such healthy sleeping habits.

Lisbon slapped her hand against her forehead. This was ridiculous! What was she, a fourteen year old teenager with a crush on the bad boy?

She straightened herself with a brave huff and left the small room. Looking straight ahead she almost did it, almost passed living room completely, when she couldn't help herself and stopped on the threshold to turn slightly and look back at Jane.

And there he was. Lying on the couch, in his usual suit but without his jacket, arms crossed behind his head, looking straight away at her. When their eyes met Lisbon froze.

There *it* was again.

Her inner disunity.

Pain. And happiness.

Longing.

Love.

xxx

The fact that Teresa Lisbon was in love with Patrick Jane wasn't new. Not for Lisbon anyway. She had realized it long before and made her peace with it. It had been confusing at the beginning but she had accepted it eventually.

Though it didn't mean that she suddenly had changed her behavior around him completely or had glutted him with love confessions.

Apart from the fact that she wasn't good at love confessions anyway, she also wouldn't have told him because she was sure he didn't need another complication in his life. Additionally, she was a strong woman. She could handle it herself. She had learned to live with it.

Therefore, despite feeling jealous and overly concerned from time to time, she was in control of her feelings.

That was the reason it had shocked her so deeply, that it affected her so much, when he had left six months ago. She had thought she was in control, but it turned out that she wasn't.

And now he was here, right in front of her, looking at her without a word, with an unreadable expression on his face. He was simply staring at her with his intense blue eyes, holding, chaining her gaze, making it impossible for her to turn away.

Lisbon swallowed hard. It felt like the world wasn't moving anymore. It was only him and her.

God, how much she had missed him. How much she longed for just sitting next to him, shoulder to shoulder – to feel that he was actually *here*, because her heart hadn't noticed yet. It still hurt.

As if he could read her mind for real Jane's expression softened.

"Get some sleep, Lisbon. You look tired," he whispered.

"That's rich, coming from you, Jane," she answered just as quiet.

Jane smiled slightly and eyed her meaningfully from top to bottom. How she was standing in front of him, dressed only in a long jersey. She followed his gaze and blushed. Again.

With an annoyed huff she stuck out her tongue and was about to leave, when she heard him whispering fondly, "Good night, Lisbon."

She looked back over her shoulder, watching how warm light painted soft shadows on his face.

Lisbon felt strong affection spreading through her stomach and the urge to say, *'I'm glad you're back, Jane. I missed you. Don't you dare do that again!'*

But all she said was, "Good night, Jane."

TBC

Kapitel 3: RS ~ Lightning without thunder

Chapter three – Lightning without thunder

The next morning, the old truck uttered a dry gurgle and died with an ugly puff.

"Well, that didn't sound healthy," Grace said when she dismounted the driver's cab.

"It didn't feel healthy either," Rigsby groaned and jumped off the truck bed, rubbing his backside. "I could feel every bump!"

"Don't make such a fuss, man." Cho had been sitting with him but only grimaced when he stretched his back.

Lisbon smiled sympathetically while she put the car keys in her jeans pocket. "I'm sorry, guys. I know this truck is much more dangerous than Jane's contraption, but..."

"Hush, Lisbon, what if she hears you?! It doesn't matter that we're hundreds of miles away, she's a very sensitive *car!*"

Lisbon ignored Jane's scandalized objection and continued, "We only have one other choice but I didn't think you want to take the horses."

"Let's try that next time. It can't be worse," Rigsby grumbled.

Jane grinned devilishly, "I'll take you at your word."

"You can talk! You sat with Lisbon and Grace in the upholstered driver's cab."

"Hey, it wasn't that comfy either. And don't try diverting, you're in it now."

"I'll ride a horse when you do, Jane."

Lisbon rolled her eyes. "Come on, Grace, let's go ahead."

The redhead grinned and nodded in response.

Looking around curiously, the two women walked towards town center, followed by Cho and his bantering colleagues.

It was a cute little town after all. Peaceful and friendly. Old houses, a few stores, a market place in front of a beautiful small and white church, and even a pub next to the town hall. Despite low population, the streets were pretty busy just now. Passing people eyed them with curiosity, but in a friendly, non-pushy way.

"It's nice, isn't?" Lisbon commented quizzically.

"Kind of..."

"Agent Lisbon!" Both women turned their heads and greeted the old farmer.

"So, everything's fine up there? You alright?" Alliston mumbled afterwards, chewing on a grass blade.

"Yes, thank you. We'll manage all right," Lisbon assured. "We're here to go grocery shopping and look around town a bit."

He nodded. "You do that, Ma'am, but you shouldn't stay too long though. We're expecting a heavy thunderstorm today."

Rigsby looked at Cho, who just shrugged. It had been a pretty nice morning so far – warm and sunny and barely windy – but Alliston probably was better informed than they were.

When they gave their attention back to their coworkers, Alliston was inviting them to every Friday's pub night – a tradition in the town.

"Thanks, but I don't think it's a good idea. We don't want to be conspicuous."

"Don't worry, Agent Lisbon," Alliston said, "People here are used to me having guests from time to time. They won't ask unpleasant questions."

"Well...we'll think about it."

Alliston nodded and lifted his head, "See you later then, Agents. You know where to find me if you need something."

Lisbon's team said goodbye and faced its boss who clapped her hands enthusiastically. "Okay then, let's paint the town red!"

Cho, Grace and Rigsby looked clearly flabbergasted at her, while Jane suppressed his laughter.

Lisbon smirked mischievously and Cho commented dryly, "Yeah, let's get the party started."

xxx

It turned out that Alliston had been right about the weather. After SCU returned to their temporary home a few hours later, the previously sunny sky already started to darken. It wasn't long before heavy rain drops were whipped against the roof and to the fields, pushing grass and corn down. In the distance rolling thunder could be heard and a nearly black cloud bank spread over the area.

Lisbon was standing on the sheltered porch and watching the approaching thunderstorm. She heard her team rumbling through the house and wanted to go

inside, too, but found herself unable to avert her gaze. It was fascinating how powerful this natural spectacle rolled above her head. It was different here; closer and more impressive, more intense than in California.

So it wasn't surprising that she was still outside when Jane was looking for her a bit later.

Sitting on one couch, Lisbon was curled in the cushions. Rain was drumming on the roof with steady rhythm, but she was safe underneath.

"Hey there," Jane greeted quietly when he came out and looked down at her.

"Hey, yourself," she shot back and yawned discreetly. The fatigue was back.

Jane walked around and sank onto her couch. Without thinking, Lisbon moved her feet to give him enough space, because the couch wasn't that big. He could have sat on the other one, but he had chosen to be with her – and she didn't mind.

She was too weary.

Lisbon could feel his closeness and warmth. It made her dizzy.

"I told you, you need some sleep."

"Shut up, Jane," she murmured and fought against the urge to close her eyes. God, she was so tired.

"I don't think so," he answered with a smirk. "You really need to sleep and you know it. It's okay...you can sleep, Lisbon. You're safe here. Just close your eyes and allow yourself to relax." His lulling voice was soft, warm and almost fondly, and mixed with the sound of dropping rain.

"You can feel how the tension left your body. Every muscle will be relaxed. You will sleep deeply and peacefully. Can you feel it, Lisbon? You're drifting away and sinking in comfy weightlessness..."

She knew what he was trying and she wanted to tell him 'Stop hypnotizing me!', but her heavy lids were already shut – when did that happen? – and neither her lips nor her tongue wanted to move anymore. Lisbon heard herself sighing when one warm hand was placed on her leg. As a second one wandered to the back of her neck and started caressing her sensitive skin she felt herself shivering and drifting off eventually.

xxx

Lisbon had no idea how much time had passed, when she awoke. She blinked tiredly and looked around. She was still outside, but it wasn't raining anymore, and found Grace and Cho sitting on the other couch with Rigsby perched on the porch railing.

She didn't need to check out that Jane was still next to her because she could feel his shoulder against hers.

Someone had wrapped her into a warm blanket, so she cuddled deeper in it.

"It's amazing, isn't it?" When Grace spoke with a low voice even Lisbon followed her gaze to the hills in front of them.

One side of the sky was painted in deep red and orange as the sunset had already started. The other side, however, was still laden with heavy dark clouds. Without a hint of thunder, lightning branched through them every second.

"It is," Rigsby agreed just as quiet, "As if someone's turned the sound off."

"I bet it was Jane," Lisbon muttered.

"Hush, Lisbon, I'm a mentalist, not a magician. Although I would have done it for you if I really had such power."

Barely awake, she just snorted and tidied the blanket around her before she closed her eyes once more.

"I mean it, Lisbon. Anyway, since nature is quiet now, go back to sleep, mother bear. Your beloved ones are just fine."

It was silly but in her drowsy state she felt reassured. And with that Lisbon drifted off again.

xxx

It was dark outside and Lisbon was still asleep when her team decided to call it a night. She didn't even stir when Rigsby lifted her up carefully to carry her inside and upstairs into her room.

After laying her down on the bed, he frowned at Jane, who was waiting for him to leave. When he did so, Jane turned his attention towards Lisbon and tucked her in carefully. Afterwards, he sat down on the edge of her bed.

He watched her sleeping and even now found some lines of worry on her forehead. His fingertip trailed them softly before he replaced it by his lips.

"We have to do something about your tension, my dear," he whispered, placing a feathery kiss on her warm skin.

"No..." she muttered, still sleeping and probably dreaming. "No...control...not...Jane..."

Jane shook his head. "Stubborn woman!" he mumbled himself.

With a second peck on the corner of her mouth he silently wished her a good night

and left her room.

TBC

Kapitel 4: RS ~ Pub night

A/N: It has to be said, I'm afraid. So here we go...

Disclaimer: The characters of The Mentalist aren't mine. And the other ones...well, forget about them.

Chapter four – Pub night

In the following days, nothing dramatic happened. Lisbon and her team tried to pass time as efficiently as possible without getting bored. Lisbon and Grace went riding every day, and afterwards Grace tried to teach Rigsby how to ride a horse. He still feared that Jane would carry out his threat eventually and he didn't want to make a fool of himself. (For that, it was indeed too late. His attempts were quite funny to watch, but his colleagues had to hide that since Rigsby refused to mount a horse when they were watching.)

Cho could be found on one of the porch couches most of the time. He was reading through Alliston's library, which was full of dusty old books. Sometimes, when Jane wasn't on a walk, he kept him company, since he was a passionate reader, too.

Lisbon didn't know what to do with herself at first until she decided to pay a daily visit to Alliston's sister, who had a small shop in town. It was the only place in the proximity where you could find a working internet access, after all.

Lisbon tried to stay current about the Red John case and everything else that was going on back home in Sacramento. Despite her attempts, though, she learned nothing new.

When Alliston couldn't pick her up in his second car, she chose a horse over the old truck for her daily trip. It simply was faster that way. Sometimes she met Jane on her way back, so she accompanied him a short way – until he annoyed her somehow, then she just spurred her horse and left him behind. Pretty handy, such a flighty animal.

xxx

After a week and a half, it wasn't hard for her team to convince her that the Friday's pub night actually was a good idea and a welcome change.

So Lisbon drove them to town in the evening. When they entered the pub it wasn't exactly what they had imagined. The pub was a huge room full of loud chattering, laughter, and cheery music. A pianist was sitting next to the dance floor and playing whatever people shouted to him. Young and old were sitting, drinking, and dancing together, barely taking notice of the strangers.

"Well, *that's* a party," Grace said, surprised.

"That's one way of putting it," Lisbon replied, "Guys, look for a table while Jane and I get some drinks, would you?"

After they nodded their agreement Lisbon fought her way through the crowd of people towards the bar.

When she reached it she was about to say something, but then the bartender turned to her completely and flashed a bright smile at her. Lisbon grew stiff all of sudden.

"Hey, what can I do for you?" he wanted to know welcoming.

When Lisbon didn't answer and just stared at him open-mouthed, Jane lifted his brow and placed their order instead of her. With a nod the bartender turned slightly away.

Jane leaned towards Lisbon and murmured to her ear, "He looks a little bit similar to Greg, doesn't he?"

She blinked in confusion and was back in reality then.

"You're kidding, Jane," she hissed back, "He looks *exactly* like a younger version of Greg! That's creepy." Indeed it was. The guy must have been in his mid-twenties and with his short dark blond hair, two cute dimples and an honest bright smile he looked pretty much like Lisbon's ex-fiancé Greg.

Before Jane could say anything, 'Young Greg' was back again and handed them their drinks.

"If you need anything else, just ask. I would do anything for such a beautiful stranger."

Jane rolled his eyes and expected Lisbon to kick the barkeeper's ass verbally as she would do under usual circumstances, but to his great surprise she blushed slightly and smiled.

"Thanks, we'll do that...?"

"Oh sorry! It's Sammy."

"We will take you up on your offer, Sammy." Sammy grinned and winked at her before another guest caught his attention.

Still smiling Lisbon looked around and found her team at the further end of the pub.

"Come on," she said to Jane, who gave her and Sammy a wary look and hurried to follow her through the crowd again.

"What was that, Lisbon?"

"What was what?" Her gaze back over her shoulder found Jane before it flickered to Sammy again.

"That!" Jane pointed out. "You have a soft spot for him."

"What – no, I don't!"

As soon as they reached their table, Jane claimed, "Our lovely Lisbon here might get drinks for free tonight."

"Shush, Jane!"

"Why, Boss, did you flirt with the bartender?" Grace wondered aloud, grinning.

"Of course not!" Lisbon huffed as her colleagues tried to get a glimpse of Sammy.

"Yes, she did."

"Jane!"

When her team, including Jane, smirked at her, Lisbon felt her cheeks get hot.

"Oh hush! Are we drinking now or what?" She earned a collective 'Cheers!' and rolled her eyes at Jane who sipped innocently at his drink. Lisbon wasn't sure if already regretted coming here in the first place.

xxx

It wasn't long after when Cho muttered, "Hey Boss, bartender at 12 o'clock."

Everyone on the table was looking up when Sammy appeared.

"Hey guys," he greeted, "you're having a good time?"

They answered with polite thanks and the barkeeper turned to Lisbon.

"You know, I didn't get the chance to ask for your name. I mean, I could still call you like I did before – it's not a lie that you're beautiful – but-"

Judging from the expression on her face, Lisbon was horrified by that option, so she interrupted quickly,

"My name is Teresa."

And since she didn't want to stay focus of attention, she added, pointing at her colleagues, "And these are my friends: Kimball, Grace, Wayne and Patrick."

"Nice to meet you all," Sammy smiled, "It's great to have some new guests, so feel free to order whatever you want tonight. It's on the house."

Jane chuckled and coughed what sounded suspiciously like 'I told you so.'

Lisbon gave him a dirty look before Sammy caught her attention once again.

"You know, Teresa, I'm having a break at the moment, so I wondered if you would like to dance?"

Caught off guard Lisbon opened and closed her mouth without saying anything. She would usually decline such an offer and yet again, she surprised herself and her team with answering a short pause later, "I'd love to."

'And why not?' she thought. An apparently nice and definitely handsome man asked her to dance. And the music was light and jazzy, just as she liked it.

...Oh well, and he looked like Greg.

When she stood up and headed towards the dance floor with Sammy she barely heard her team talking.

"He looks familiar, but I can't pinpoint it," Grace mused.

"He's kind of blatant." Jane.

"Really, Jane?" Cho.

"I think he's a nice one. Does anyone else want some fries?" Rigsby, of course.

Lisbon sighed with relief to be out of earshot when they entered the dance floor.

"You have some nice friends over there," Sammy commented, smirking as he pulled her closer.

"You've no idea!"

He chuckled and Lisbon found herself liking that sound.

They danced quietly for a moment until he started again, "So, you're with Jim, aren't you?"

She nodded slightly. "Yeah, we're taking a vacation...well, sort of."

"Don't worry," he smiled at her warmly. "Since Jim has some special guests from time to time, I won't ask any further."

Lisbon couldn't help returning his smile.

The longer they danced and chatted the more it was getting obvious that he closely resembled Greg – not only in his appearance.

The way he talked, his smile, the dimples, of course, and his honest charm, all of it was

similar. Maybe that was the reason why it was pretty easy for Lisbon to relax in his arms. Even though they never got married, she still thought very fondly of Greg – so she was unable to do anything but have sympathy for his younger version.

They danced together for a few more songs until someone tapped Sammy's shoulder from behind.

"I'm sorry, I really don't want to do disrupt your nice dancing." Jane beamed at both of them and Lisbon raised her eye brows as if to say 'Yeah right!'

"What's up, pal?" Sammy said friendly while Lisbon could barely hide her amused snort because of this name.

Jane stayed pretty serious – even though his eyes gleamed mischievously – and pointed to the bar, where a lot of people waited for their drinks.

"Your colleague over there is quite busy. I'm sure she seriously could use your helping hands."

"Oh, damn it! Got to go. I'm sorry, Teresa."

Before Lisbon was able to say anything Jane pushed himself between them and took her from Sammy's arms.

"Don't worry, Sammy, I'll take care of her," Jane reassured him.

"Thanks, man!" And with these words the barkeeper disappeared.

Jane smirked in a very self-satisfied way until he met Lisbon's gaze. She lifted her brow again, put her hand on her hip and tapped one foot reproachfully on the floor.

Her consultant's grin became innocent when he pushed her zestfully against his body to start a new dance.

"Anything wrong, my dear?"

Lisbon snorted, not buying his guiltless look, but letting him lead her around the dance floor nevertheless.

"So," Lisbon started and watched him with a challenging expression, "Tell me, *pal* ...What did you do?"

"Excuse me?" Another innocent smirk.

"Oh come on, Jane!" She lifted her fist to punch him, but he immediately backed down before she could do him any harm.

"Okay, fine! ... Maybe I *did* tell some other guests that I would buy a round."

Lisbon rolled her eyes, while she finally relaxed in his arms.

"Why?"

"Well, since everything we order is on the house today..."

"Oh no, forget it!" Lisbon frowned at him, "You are not going to use Sammy's offer, but you're going to pay for that round!"

He pouted.

"Anyway, that wasn't what I meant, you know that. Why did you distract him from me?"

"I have no idea what you're talking about. Oh, listen, that's a beautiful song, we should enjoy our dance." Jane pulled her closer and swayed to the music.

Even though she put her head against his shoulder – it was just then when she noticed that he wasn't wearing his jacket and his vest was softer than Sammy's shirt – she whined in protest. She wouldn't give up that easily.

"Don't lie to me, Jane. You had something in your mind and I want to know what it was. You aren't jealous, are you?" she joked, but he just sighed heavily.

"Lisbon, hush, seriously! 'Dream a little dream of me' is a classic. Show some respect!"

She was about to give him a teasing reply when she noticed that the pianist was indeed playing the said song. With a shake of her head she fell silent and listened to the melody.

When Jane started to hum along she found herself smiling and closing her eyes.

Almost unnoticeably, he hugged her closer.

Warm attraction flooded through her body once more and painted a soft rose on her cheeks. Shyly she shifted her face into the crook of his neck and buried it there.

That moment full of intimacy, closeness and peace remained her of that very similar moment over two years ago. They had danced together before, on the high school reunion.

How much had changed since then?

Although this memory was still fresh in her mind and it felt as it had been just yesterday, everything was different now. So much had happened. Another CBI agent was dead. Red John was so much closer, Jane much more insane and Lisbon herself – she was falling for her consultant more than ever, in spite of the fact that he had hurt her badly by leaving her behind without a single word.

Lisbon felt her cheerful mood turning into glumness all over again and a lump growing in her throat.

Last tones of 'Dream a little dream of me' faded and a new song begun, just as blue.

"You're still sad," Jane suddenly stated with a low voice, whispering directly in her ear. In soft moves he entwined his fingers with hers.

Lisbon stiffened in his embrace.

"I'm not sad."

"Yes, you are. Don't even try to deny it, Lisbon."

"Or what? You're going to leave me again?" As soon as she had spoken these words, she immediately regretted them.

"Lisbon..." he started, but she shook her head. With a sigh she pushed away and stepped back.

"Sorry, Jane, I didn't mean to...Just forget it. I really need a drink now."

Without looking back, she left the dance floor and joined her team, while Jane stayed behind thoughtfully for a few moments.

TBC

Kapitel 5: RS ~ Distance

Chapter five – Distance

It was late at night when Lisbon and her team returned to their farm house. The change of scenery had done them good.

Relaxed and cheerful, they met again in the living room after changing their clothes into more casual ones – except for Jane, who only doffed his jacket and rolled up his shirt sleeves.

It was past midnight, but nobody was in the mood to go sleeping already. Between candles, with some beer and a deck of cards they made themselves comfortable on armchairs and Jane's couch.

Even though Lisbon really enjoyed their game, she had some trouble to concentrate. She had tried to avoid sitting next to Jane on the couch, but he had tricked her. So now and then his leg brushed hers and sometimes his bare arm met her skin.

Whenever Jane touched her ever so accidentally, she felt soft shivers of pleasure flickering through her body, and it distracted her for a trice. Apart from that it drove her crazy.

After a while she was tired of it, really, because she knew, he was doing it on purpose. She moved away abruptly and ignored the quizzical look of Cho, who was sitting next to her.

Lisbon felt Jane's gaze on her, but she still couldn't bring herself to return it.

Only when Jane got up, excused himself and went upstairs, Lisbon lifted her look and let it follow his back.

Suddenly she felt sore again.

"Boss?" Only Cho was directly looking at her, but she could see the worried expression also on her other colleagues' faces.

Lisbon shook her head and pointed to the waiting cards, "Who is next with shuffling?"

xxx

Not even an hour later, all of them were barely awake and suppressing their yawns. Lisbon was the first to call it a night and after a quick side-trip to the bathroom she went upstairs.

When she arrived on the dark landing, she wondered where Jane was. He hadn't returned yet, although some time had passed by.

Suddenly she felt the irrational fear that he could have left on the sly again. Was it possible that they hadn't noticed?

A sharp pain cut through her gut and she clenched her fist. He wouldn't have, would he?

Pure relief washed through her body when she opened her door and found him on her bed.

It was ridiculous. Where should he go to anyway? They didn't even know where exactly they were.

Lisbon let go of the breath she had been holding. Silently she stepped closer and was amazed to find him sleeping. He lay full-length on her covers, with his arms hugging her pillow and his face buried in it. He was actually sleeping. That was new.

For a few minutes she stood beside her bed, simply watching him, since she wasn't sure what to do next.

Waking him up simply wasn't an option. She knew he barely slept properly, even though he lay on couches most of the time.

So she decided that the easiest solution was to swap sleeping-place for one night. She would take his couch in the living room as soon as her team went sleeping, too.

Satisfied with this possibility she took a blanket from her armchair and pulled it carefully over Jane's frame, anxious not to disturb him. When she tugged the fabric under his chin, her gaze got caught on his face. For a change it was quite relaxed. There was no pain, no slyness and no mischievousness on it.

Lisbon's expression softened as she watched him. She allowed herself a brief moment of weakness, allowed love and longing to scratch the surface. She lifted her hand and let her fingertips trace over his jaw-line, up to his blond curls. Fondly she stroked some of them out of his face. They still were a bit too long. A remnant of his six-month plan.

The memory was painful, but she ignored it for now. It was her attraction's turn, even if the unsaid 'I missed you' was still spooking through the room.

After putting the armchair close to the bed, at the level with Jane's head, she curled up in the rough cushions.

Just for a few minutes. She wanted to watch him just a few more minutes. To convince herself that he was actually there.

And with her mind full of yearning, fondness, and worry she drifted off finally.

xxx

In the early morning, with the first rays of the dawn, Lisbon awoke with her back aching. She blinked in confusion and found herself sunk down in her armchair, wrapped into the blanket.

The bed right in front of her was empty.

Had it been just a dream?

When she crawled drowsily onto her bed and buried her face in her pillow to at least try to get a little bit more sleep, she could actually smell Jane's cologne.

A smile grew on her lips as her eyes fell shut once again.

xxx

Lisbon was annoyed.

To be honest, she was angry with herself. Because Jane had been right, of course.

She indeed tried to avoid him, especially during the days after their first pub night.

She had to gain back her control before she was able to face him again. Another slip-out like back then was really redundant.

Needless to say that he still tried to confront her, to catch her alone nonetheless, but she was a smart person, too. She was capable of tricking *him* from time to time.

Besides, he was obviously containing himself for now, she could tell.

Lisbon was sure that it was just the calm before the storm – and that irritated her even more.

As if that wouldn't be enough though, it was now teeming down every single day.

Because of the weather Jane was compelled to stay inside, he could go for a walk less and less often and that meant that it was even harder to avoid him. (Besides, a bored Jane was never a good sign.)

To make matters worse, Grace and Lisbon might indeed still have their daily rides, but they needed to shorten them occasionally, as it wasn't that fun to ride through rain and hail.

The unsteady weather mixed with the lack of reasonable activity caused an irritable mood in Lisbon's team in general. They fell into a boring daily routine. Town didn't offer much variety either.

So whenever it wasn't pouring down, they used the opportunity to get out of the house immediately.

However, these few hours hardly lifted the mood.

xxx

"Thank you for keeping me company again." Grace smiled when they were leaving Alliston's farm on their horses on a cloudy Wednesday morning.

"No problem." Lisbon returned the gesture. "It's always a nice change."

They rode in silence for awhile until Grace started carefully with a sidelong glance to her boss, "And it's also an opportunity to escape Jane, isn't it?"

Lisbon gave her a dirty look and was tempted to deny it harshly. However, it wasn't her colleague's fault anyway and she wasn't that unfair to take it out on her.

So she changed subject and speed instead. "Want to gallop a little?"

Before Grace could express her agreement Lisbon already urged her dark brown mare to speed up.

Neither the redhead nor her sorrel needed much more to follow her example.

Nevertheless, Grace dared to bring the subject up again later – but more subtle this time.

"Boss, do you think that we will catch Red John some day? Or rather that we will catch him without anybody else getting hurt or...killed?"

Lisbon blinked and hesitated, not sure if she could allow herself and Grace the thought which was currently crossing her mind. Besides, remembering Bosco and Wainwright caused a sharp pain in her chest.

"To be honest, I don't know." When her fellow awkwardly remained silent, she continued, "You know, sometimes it seems that we actually have a real chance to get to him, that we really are a step closer. And then something like the desert disaster happened; and we have to realize that we're still standing just where we had begun years ago."

She huffed with frustration.

"Did it ever occur to you to resign this case?"

"No." This time Lisbon didn't hesitate. "Red John killed many innocent people, he killed Jane's family, and he caused the deaths of Bosco, his colleagues and even Wainwright's. If I ever get the chance to bring him to justice I will take it."

Grace agreed with a nod, a fierce expression on her face. She had her own bone to pick with the killer. For a moment the two women shared disgust, before Grace let her

tension fade away.

"However, Boss, aren't you afraid, that Jane will pull you into destruction with him some day?"

"Grace..." Lisbon warned but when her colleague shrugged apologetically she couldn't force herself into ire anymore.

Therefore she remained silent.

Grace felt sorry for her, especially since she had sensed her boss' suffering during the past six months, so she tried to comfort her.

"You know, Wayne, Cho and I are going to stand behind you, no matter what. Even if we're still mad at Jane, you can count on us, whatever decision you make."

Lisbon glanced at her enthusiastic friend and couldn't help smiling.

"Thanks." Then she frowned, "Wait, you guys are still mad at him?"

"Of course we are."

"Uh, you don't have to be."

"Yes, we do!"

Lisbon sighed. "Look, I know he disappointed you, too, and you're still worried about me, but I also know that you like him. It's okay to forgive him, Grace."

With doubt but somehow relieved Grace muttered opaque words under her breath.

To lighten the mood Lisbon grinned, "I know, sometimes it's quite hard to forgive Patrick Jane."

However, the redhead stayed serious and looked straight into her eyes.

"Did you forgive him?"

"Yes..." This single word didn't even sound convincing in her own ears, so she could watch Grace lifting her brow.

"Why are you avoiding him then?"

Once again Lisbon stayed silent, but since her frustrated expression spoke volumes, Grace changed the subject once more.

xxx

If they had been hoping for better weather, they were bitterly disappointed. It just

stayed like it was; cloudy, rainy and thundery. That hardly helped to lift the mood, so it was kind of sad but understandable that Lisbon and her team were looking forward to town's own pub night on Friday evening.

Lisbon even had been asked out by Sammy whom she had met during her town trips every now and then. She realized that she really liked him and it flattered her, that he was interested in her despite his younger age.

So she was truly looking forward to an evening of lightness and a bit fun.

Especially since she could feel Jane's burning gaze on her whenever they were in the same room. Lisbon might have been very successful in avoiding him lately, but she could almost feel his increasing dissatisfaction physically. (It was even worse since he had learned about her 'date' with the bartender.)

That was just another good reason to get as much people and space as possible between them, at least for one night.

She really should have known that this plan would backfire eventually.

TBC

Kapitel 6: RS ~ Smile

Chapter six – Smile

Their second pub night was a little bit unlike their first one.

Since everyone in the pub remembered well that the newcomers had bought a round one week ago, they greeted them with a loud and friendly (and drunken) welcome.

"Hey Teresa, hey guys!" Sammy appeared just in front of them and grinned brightly.

"Hi Sammy," Lisbon smiled, while her colleagues nodded politely.

"I saved you a great table right next to the dance floor. I thought it might be a clever choice since Teresa and I are going to have a hot dance night tonight." He gave her a conspiratorial wink and turned to head towards promised table.

"Uh Sammy, I propose to drop the 'hot' part," she insisted as they followed him. Rigsby, Grace and even Cho smirked and she blushed slightly, throwing a not-so-serious glare at them.

When they arrived at their destination she caught a glimpse of Jane. His expression was hardly readable but she could see that he wasn't as relaxed as he tried to pretend.

Just now he was staring at the barkeeper and asked a bit too friendly, "So, *Sammy*, I estimate that your guests won't like it when their barkeeper is busy with dancing the whole night, right?"

Lisbon gave him a both suspicious and warning look, but he ignored her.

"Don't worry, Patrick, I'm utterly free tonight," Sammy flashed him a honest smile and looked at Lisbon as he added, "I felt really sorry last week, so for tonight I promised Teresa every dancing capacity I own."

"I see..." Jane forced himself to return the smile. His gaze met Lisbon's for a brief moment before she quickly turned away, grabbing Sammy's wrist in this movement.

"Then we better get started, huh?" Pulling the surprised but delighted barkeeper with her she strolled to the dance floor.

xxx

It was a pretty nice evening so far. Lisbon was enjoying her dancing with Sammy. He entertained her with witty anecdotes, made her not only laughing but also relaxing against him. Additionally, he was a quite good dancer.

The music was brisk and jazzy again, and the pianist was accompanied by a saxophonist tonight.

Over an hour later the mood in the pub had changed though. The light was dimmed now, the music slow and blue.

People on their tables were drinking and musing silently, the dancers only swaying lightly.

"Teresa..." Sammy whispered while they were dancing closely, arms wrapped loosely around each other, her cheek on his shoulder.

"Hm?" She didn't even open her eyes.

"Do you think it is working? Making your friend jealous I mean."

Now she did open her eyes. "Excuse me?"

She could hear him grinning as he answered, "Come on, I know there's something between you and Patrick. I can tell that by the way he's trying to kill me with his eyes."

"Sammy, what are you talking about?" Lisbon wondered confused and slightly embarrassed.

"Wait, I'll show you..." Slowly he turned them around so that she could see their table over his shoulder.

Since Rigsby and Grace were dancing, too, Cho and Jane were the only ones who remained there.

With the light of a candle Cho was reading one of Alliston's books while the consultant's gaze was indeed constantly targeted at the dance floor – or to be more precisely: at his partner and the bartender.

Astonished Lisbon held her breath for a few seconds.

"How long...?"

"Since we entered the dance floor."

"No, that's impossible."

"Why are you surprised, Teresa? You are an impressive woman, beautiful and smart."

She felt her cheeks warming up. "...Thank you," she mumbled. He chuckled into her ear.

"You're welcome."

xxx

Now, since she had noticed Jane watching her, she could barely concentrate on anything else. His steady look upset her.

They irritated her badly, both his audacity and her own weakness.

'Damn, Jane!' she thought, 'Stop it!'

As if he had understood her glare, he suddenly smirked.

With an increasing feeling of unease Lisbon watched as he stood up and walked to the pianist to whisper something into his ear. The musician nodded with a smile and called his colleague. They finished the current song and started a new one.

As soon as Lisbon recognized the notes of '*More than words*', beautifully played just by a piano and a saxophone, her eyes widened in shock and she could feel a sudden longing burning through her veins.

Stunned she stared over Sammy's shoulder at Jane, who was standing beside the dance floor, calmly and with serious eyes now. He held her look without a single flicker.

'Why?' formed her lips and this time she was quite sure he understood. Why was he doing this?

This song meant something to her, especially since she had danced to it with Jane some years ago. It was childish and stupid, but it was *their* song, Jane's and hers. It was a symbol for these rare moments between two deeply caring friends, when the most important thing in the world was the other one – even if only for a blink of time.

As much as she liked dancing with Sammy, she simply didn't want to dance this song with him. And she was sure, that Jane was also very aware of this fact.

He smiled softly at her and besides the longing Lisbon felt anger raising in her chest.

"Everything okay?" Sammy asked when he felt her stiffening in his arms.

Lisbon blinked and nodded quickly, "Yeah, uh, would you excuse me for a moment?"

"Of course." A little bit confused he let her go and watched as she stormed towards Jane, grabbed his arm and pulled him out of sight.

"Apparently it isn't working..." Sammy stated sympathetically and left the dance floor with a shrug.

xxx

"What the hell is wrong with you, Jane?" Lisbon hissed while she dragged him outside

through the back door.

"What do you mean?" His replay sounded almost sulky and way too innocent.

The heavy door fell close with numb clanging and shielded them from everyone else. The backyard was quiet and only slightly illuminated.

"Oh come on!" She rubbed her temple and constrained herself to remain calm. "You act like a jealous teenager."

"I'm not jealous!"

"Yes, you are!" She glared at him. "You can't stand the fact that my attention isn't on you for a change."

Jane was speechless for a moment. This discussion was definitely heading for the wrong direction.

"Lisbon, that is ridiculous."

"Fine. So why are you trying to distract me from Sammy then?" With an exhausted sigh she turned slightly away from him and added, "Why can't you at least *pretend* that you care about other people and behave yourself – just for once?"

"Wha – Lisbon, I *do* care about people! I care about *you*!"

"No, you don't. You need me. It's a difference."

"That's what you think? Lisbon," seriously and almost angrily he took her hand and pulled her closer. Taken by surprise she looked at him and was confused by his expression, so she stayed quiet as he continued.

"Yes, I need you, but I also care about you. I care about you avoiding me since I came back. I care about the fact that you could barely look at me since then, and especially since last week. You keep me at distance for weeks now, Lisbon. I understand why you're doing it, but that doesn't mean that it isn't bothering me. I know you're angry – with good reason – but you refuse to let it out. You must feel like exploding but instead of dealing with it, you're busy with a guy, who looked like your ex-fiancé. Let's face it, he isn't Greg. He is more than ten years younger than you and in about two weeks you'll never see him again." Uh, wrong direction again. Jane cleared his throat, but before he could go on, Lisbon interrupted.

"Are you insane? This isn't about Sammy or Greg, it's about you. You don't know anything about how I feel! You have *no* idea."

"Yes, I do."

"No, Jane, don't you dare pulling that mentalist crap on me! You care about me, my ass!"

She wrenched her hand from his grip and built it to a fist. Her control was ridiculously about to slip away and she needed to do everything to avert that scenario.

"You know what, I don't care. I'm going to go back inside and have a bit fun now. God knows, I need it! Do whatever you want but leave me out of it."

"Lisbon..."

She ignored his near-pleading and turned away to leave him finally.

And suddenly he couldn't bear it.

"Lisbon, please don't go." With that and a kind of desperate glint in his eyes he stepped forwards, reaching for her, grabbing her arm and pulling her close once more. Tumbling against his chest with her own she had no time to react.

"Not you, too," he whispered, and then he bent down to press his lips on hers.

Lisbon froze.

With wide open eyes she stared at his face, which was so close that her gaze got blurry.

About that, he really didn't care.

He kissed her with smooth movements, but intense and with all urgency he was able to afford.

Lisbon felt her knees becoming weak immediately and there was nothing she could do about the exhilarating shiver that was electrifying her body from top to toe.

Finally, with a sinful sweet sigh, she relaxed against him, her fingers buried in his jacked as she held him tight and started to return his kiss. It was still gentle but became even more intense soon.

Caught off guard by their own passion, they stumbled a few steps when Lisbon suddenly came back to her mind and pushed away.

Not letting her escape too far Jane reached for her sleeve.

"Lisbon?" he breathed heavily. Since he was distracted by her rosy cheeks, the red, only smidge swollen lips and her bright eyes, it took him a few seconds to realize that her expression wasn't just bewildered. It was horrified. And she wasn't looking at but past him.

Now confused, he followed her gaze, turning around to the wall behind him.

To the wall he had barely paid attention to before.

To the wall, on which a bloody red smiley face had been painted.

TBC

Kapitel 7: RS ~ Showdown

Chapter seven – Showdown

It had been laughing at them for three hours now. That damn bloody smiley face. In this fateful pub's backyard.

With her arms crossed in front of her chest Lisbon was standing slightly apart and watching.

When Cho appeared next to her, she gave him an expectantly look.

"So?"

"The good thing is," the agent stated, "There's no blood, it's just color."

"You're sure of it?"

"As sure as I can be without forensic analysis."

"Fine. And the bad thing?"

"It's difficult to figure out whether it is *in fact* Red John's or not. The painting itself fits the pattern. As far as I can tell, not even Jane seems to know."

Lisbon nodded with understanding and chewed on her lower lip. It was indeed a bad thing, since it made a huge difference if this had been Red John or just a copy-cat.

"Do you think, the chief will be able to help us?" Lisbon wanted to know and both of them gazed at said chief who was currently talking to Jim Alliston – with a bored expression on his face.

Cho snorted, "I doubt that."

"I thought so." Lisbon shook her head and groaned, when Chief Cornell strolled towards them.

"Agent Lisbon," he called, still obvious languid.

"Chief?"

"Is it really necessary, that your people are still investigating this...case?"

"Yes," she deadpanned and watched Cho suppressing his grin.

"You see, Agent," Cornell started again, "This is a small town. It won't be long until your doing will attract people. Hell, it is even a surprise that no one in the pub noticed

yet. Besides, I'm not really sure if there actually is a case in the first place. The smearing may look like the stuff of that Red Jack person you told me about, but don't forget, Agent, California is hundreds of miles off. Isn't that a bit unlikely?"

Lisbon withstood the urge of rubbing the back of her nose irritably. She was too tired and not in the mood to tell him, why exactly that question was the *point* of this investigation.

She already regretted calling local police. It didn't make any difference after all. Chief Cornell was hardly enrichment to her team. Especially since there was no forensics far and wide.

Alliston stepped beside her and looked at her with sympathy.

"Don't mind him, he's a jerk," the old man murmured as Cornell turned away to face Jane, Grace and Rigsby, who just quit pub and joined them outside.

"Tell me about it..." she whispered in return, before she asked her team loudly if they had finished.

Grace nodded. "Yeah, we asked around inconspicuously but learned nothing. Most of them are drunk anyway."

"Of course they are. It's Friday night!" It was beyond Cornell why these Californian people he just met would make such a fuss about an ugly painting. Anyway, all he wanted was to be back with his beer, was that so hard to understand?

Lisbon ignored him and glanced at Jane. He also nodded slightly.

"Fine," Lisbon finally said, "we're done for now. We'll be back in the morning though, to look and ask around again by daylight."

"Very well," Cornell grumbled and was about to turn away.

"Chief Cornell," Lisbon called politely but firmly, "Please make sure that no one has access to this backyard until we're back again."

He looked at her like she was totally crazy, but gave in eventually.

"Of course, ma'am, I will tell Sammy. Good night, Agents." And with that he disappeared inside.

Lisbon's team exchanged looks until their boss shooed them to the truck.

xxx

"So, any thoughts?" Lisbon asked on their way back.

It was quiet for a moment, before Grace blurted out, "Why here? How does he know

where we are?"

"If it was Red John, it wouldn't have been difficult for him to learn where we are." Jane's voice was calm but obviously strained.

"How do we figure out whether it was him?" Rigsby was on the truck bed with Cho again, and both agents looked through the small back window of driver's cab.

"It seems pretty real, doesn't it?" Grace stated, but Cho remarked, "Yeah, but there was neither real blood nor a body. Wouldn't Red John rather use them to scare or warn us?"

"Probably," Jane answered. "I think Cho's right. Besides, Red John would not come the whole way down here to paint his smiley on a backyard's wall."

"Maybe it was one of his disciples?"

"It's possible, Lisbon, but even then it's hard to imagine that they would use simple color."

"Maybe it's just a coincidence," Rigsby said hopefully.

They fell silent. It was needless to voice that it would be a really huge coincidence. Red John's smiley face here of all places, where people didn't know him, where it was just a smearing on a wall and wouldn't spread fear and terror – except for the few people who knew it.

"Cho, how old do you think is it?" Lisbon wanted to know.

"I guess a couple of days or weeks tops. It was definitely dry but still fresh."

"Someone could have recognized us and played a trick on us," Grace mused.

"But," Rigsby was also pondering, "regardless of Red John or not, how could they be sure that we would find it eventually? It was indeed a coincidence that Boss and Jane stumbled upon it. I mean what were you doing there anyway?"

Lisbon felt herself blushing deeply. She was glad that she was driving and that Grace was sitting between her and Jane. Until now she had been pretty capable of ignoring that sinful memory, and it wasn't either the right place or time to remember it.

"The question is," Grace interrupted, "What are we doing now? Aside from checking town again tomorrow, I mean. Maybe we should leave."

"No."

Everyone was looking at Lisbon after her firm statement, until she explained.

"There's only one week left, we'll cope with that. Besides, I want to be sure that

nothing more has happened here. I want to keep a wary eye on the town for the last few days."

When they arrived at the farm Lisbon turned the engine off and faced her team.

"Listen, guys, from now on everywhere you go to will be in pairs at least. No more going it alone. That applies to everyone." She glanced at Jane just for seconds.

"And take your guns as well as your badges with you. I mean it, guys, I don't want everyone of you going alone to anywhere. I'm classifying this as a Red John related case, so this is an official order, are we clear?"

"Yes, Boss," it echoed three times.

"Jane?" Their looks met briefly, he was tantalizing her.

And then he nodded reluctantly. "Fine."

xxx

Neither Lisbon nor her colleagues were much surprised that also their second research on the following day brought nothing new. No one knew or had seen anything. The smiley on the wall stayed a mystery.

They had no option but to record the scanty information and add it to the CBI Red John files later.

The incident brought even more tension and frustration, but Lisbon somehow managed to lighten her team's mood again by keeping them busy – so that they hardly had time to become grumpy.

The other tension, namely the one between her and Jane, wasn't as easily solved. Added to their former disagreement the unexpected but breathtaking kiss in the backyard had made it worse.

It seemed that even Jane was baffled by it.

And Lisbon? Well, her sleeping habits had been a smidge better since Jane's little suggestion, but that first success just vanished. Again, she wasn't able to sleep properly as her mind tried to reconcile the whole heartbreaking disappearing-for-six-months-story and the unsettling kiss, which had been initiated by Jane of all people.

It really unnerved her. She wanted to tear her hair constantly.

At the same time, whenever she remembered the kiss and in particular the feeling of Jane's demanding lips on hers, all she wanted to do was to grab him, push him against the next wall and kiss him senseless.

What a dangerous combination.

Especially since she had no idea why he had kissed her in the first place. Had it been just an act in the heat of the moment – like an embrace followed by a breathless 'Love you'?

It better hadn't been! His 'love confession' – if it actually had been one – she could handle. It was no pleasure of course, but she was able to pretend it never had happened.

This kiss, however, was a different case. It was the forbidden fruit. Now, since she knew its sweet taste, she longed for more of it. Much more.

Damned Jane! It was his fault that she had another weakness.

And he was obviously aware of that. His lack of composure lasted for exact one day. Soon afterwards he was throwing this mischievous gaze and a knowing smile at her whenever their eyes met.

It made her both blushing and angry; and it gave her just another reason to avoid him stubbornly.

xxx

It was only Thursday when they decided to visit town and its pub again – since they had played cards a hundred times and ran out of drinks, everyone agreed to Lisbon's suggestion of a change of scene without hesitation.

To Rigsby's regret not even Cho, who had claimed not to like horses some time ago, complained about Jane's request that all of them should actually *ride* to town. Grace on the other hand was very pleased with this proposal and since the thought – about seeing the men riding – alone made Lisbon smirk, it was a done deal.

xxx

To the women's surprise Jane and Cho indeed cut a fine figure on their horses. Cho's advantage was his stoic keeping-cool-mentality which hardly could be shattered – no matter what his mare tried.

Jane's explanation, however, had something to do with a horse being easier ridden than an elephant – and nobody really wanted to question that.

So, poor Rigsby was the only one, who looked pretty unhappy during their trip to town. His horse, named Bunny, really loved the fresh green grass from the wayside and it followed its companions by *strolling* passionately. Needless to say, that it ignored the man on its back completely.

When they arrived at town's pub, Bunny had driven Rigsby to desperation and his colleagues to almost-crying because of suppressed laughter.

While he gladly dismounted Bunny, Lisbon threw a worried glance heavenwards, where the sky was laden with black clouds.

"Looks like we'll get another rainstorm tonight."

"Maybe Alliston could drive us back then," Rigsby implied hopefully.

"I wouldn't worry," Jane teased, "Your Bunny isn't afraid of rain, she can protect you."

Before the agent was able to defend his honor, Grace grabbed his arm und dragged him into the almost empty pub. Cho followed with a grin.

Jane waited for Lisbon, keeping the door open for her, to let her in before him. His hand slipped to the small of her back to guide her, but she jerked away immediately.

They looked at each other and Lisbon couldn't help glancing at his lips. When a blush crept over her cheeks, she quickly turned away and fled inside.

xxx

It was a little while, some drinks and dances later when Lisbon's team met again at their table. They were chatting about random subjects when Grace suddenly got serious and dared to bring up Wainwright's dead for the first time since they had left California.

"Uhm, Boss? Why do you think had Red John chosen to kill Wainwright?"

When Lisbon hesitated, Lisbon interjected, "Maybe it was a warning?"

"Or he wanted to punish us since we tried to trap him," Cho added.

"Isn't it obvious?" Everyone faced Jane who sipped composed from his water.

"Jane..." Lisbon said with a warning voice but he didn't seem to hear it, so he continued.

"Undoubtedly he was one of Red John's disciples."

"Jane!" Lisbon hissed angrily and glared at him while Cho, Rigsby and Grace exchanged looks.

With an uneasy glance to her boss Grace admitted, "That thought had already crossed my mind, too, but how can you be so sure about it, Jane?"

"Think about it. Why would Red John kill him otherwise? He wasn't high enough to be important and not close enough to us to harm us."

"Stop it, Jane!"

His gaze met her glare. A sudden insight flashed in his eyes.

"Why, Lisbon? We have to consider every opportunity." His voice was challenging, his look direct and without a flicker.

"You're condemning him without any solid evidence! You know, they say 'innocent until proven guilty' and not the other way round."

"Lisbon, you're being naïve. This is Red John, we're talking about."

"Oh yeah, how could I forget about *that* fact? How could I forget that it's always about Red John?" Before he could answer her rhetorical questions, she added, "I tell you something, Jane, I don't care what you think – not this time! As long as I don't hold any proof in my own hands, I will believe in Wainwright's innocence."

Grace already regretted bringing up this subject and she, Cho and Rigsby were watching this discussion with worry.

It was insane to push their boss further, but of course Jane did it nevertheless.

"Think about it, Lisbon, why should he take the risk to kill a CBI agent? He had already proven that he was capable of doing so."

Lisbon flinched. She hated to remember the massacre of Bosco and his colleagues.

Jane didn't hesitate and continued though, "Red John planned to entice me so he needed someone near us to have an eye on me – and on you when I disappeared."

She knew he was right. However, just because it was indeed a possibility, it didn't mean that she would give up believing in Wainwright.

"Bite me," she hissed in defeat and stood up. "I'm going home."

"Boss-" Grace was about to follow and accompany her, but Lisbon shook her head firmly.

"No, you stay here! I'm fine."

With an insecure "Okay" the redhead sank back to her chair, while her boss stormed out of the pub – and once again away from Jane.

"Was that really necessary?" Cho frowned at Jane, who chewed absentminded on his lower lip.

"Yes, it was." Lisbon's team looked baffled at her consultant as he suddenly jumped to his feet, grabbed his jacket and also disappeared outside.

"I've a really bad feeling," Rigsby stated.

"You're just hungry."

"Not funny, Cho!"

"Jeez, boys!" Grace rolled her eyes, "Come on, I buy a round. This is going to be a long night."

"Ask for a carrot, too, maybe it motivates Bunny for our way back home." When the read head chuckled because of his words, Cho smirked slightly.

Rigsby tried to stare at them with an angry expression, but even he couldn't hide a small smile. "You two are enjoying this way too much, you know that?"

xxx

Lisbon wished she could goad her horse, but the path in front of her was pitch dark and huge rain drops whipped against her face so that she could barely see anything. Great, the heavy rainstorm had already started. Just what she needed.

"Lisbon!"

Correction; *that* was the last thing she needed right now.

She had just left town behind when Jane appeared next to her side, a bit out of breath. With satisfaction she noticed that he wasn't sitting as graceful as earlier on his horse.

"What do you want?" she asked coldly, not averting her gaze from the muddy trail.

"Well...we aren't allowed to go out alone, remember? That includes you, too."

"Seriously, bite me! As if you would be able to protect me."

"I would if I have to."

"Yeah right."

"You should have more trust in me, Lisbon."

"Trust? In you? Don't make me laugh!" She wasn't in laughing mood after all. Angrily she tightened her grip around the reins. Her mare snorted nervously.

"Oh well, here we have once again two friends recognizing the boundaries of their relationship."

"Really, Jane, quoting yourself? You don't expect me to do a trust fall again, do you?"

"No...I don't think a trust fall will do it this time."

Her grumble got lost in the sudden thunder. When the rain became much heavier Lisbon had to protect her eyes with her arm.

Choosing now of all times to ride back obviously had been a stupid idea. On the other hand it was easier to avoid Jane during this storm.

"Lisbon..." Jane whined. Okay, she was wrong again.

"We need to talk."

Lisbon glanced at him with disbelief. "Now? Are you crazy?"

"Probably."

"It can wait!"

"No, Lisbon, because I won't let you escape me any longer."

The agent tore her damp hair and huffed in frustration. "Why?"

"Otherwise you'll explode rather sooner than later with much more caused damage. You have to blow off your steam, to let go your exasperation. You'll feel better afterwards."

"I'm not exasperated!"

"Well, you should be."

"Excuse me?"

"You heard me. Just let it out."

"And what exactly would 'it' be?"

"You could probably start with why you stubbornly believe in Wainwright's innocence. Okay, it's obvious that he reminded you of your brothers, so that brings your motherly instinct into the arena. But what's with your inner cop? Doesn't she have anything to say in this case?"

"How do you know...?" She was speechless.

"Come on, it wasn't hard to tell. You liked him. That's why you can't consider him as a suspect."

"He isn't a suspect!"

"See?"

It was too easy. They were just simple words but they cut in deeply.

Yes, she had liked Wainwright. Not in a romantic but sisterly way.

He had been a nice guy, sweet sometimes, almost gawky now and then. When Jane had been 'missing', Wainwright had cared. Sometimes, when she had been the last one in the office, alone with the sorrows for her consultant, he had been there, had talked to her (just small talk but still), even brought her a cup of coffee from time to time (when no one was there watching). She had assumed that he had felt guilty (even if she had never blamed him) and that he had been worried about her.

The gestures had been small but she had been thankful for them nevertheless.

So no, she didn't consider him as a suspect, simply because she didn't want to. Not without proof anyway.

However, it hurt that Jane implied her to be an unprofessional cop.

She bit her lip.

"I told you, it's because there's no evidence," she murmured contritely.

"Meh, evidence. Whatever comfort he might have given to you, it was just a piece of Red John's plan. You're credulous, Lisbon, you should learn not to trust everybody, who's nice to you."

"Well, that's true!" she snarled, "That's why I don't trust you."

"Oh, but you can do that. I told you can trust me, Lisbon."

"Yeah, right! That worked well with your stupid plan you hadn't told me about!"

He knew he was getting to her. It wasn't funny at all but it had to be done. And now of all times was his best chance, he could tell.

He knew she was way too furious and hurt by now to back down. So he wound up for a final blow.

"If you had trusted me completely, my dear, there wouldn't have been any reason to worry in the first place. You should have settled back, relaxed and waited for me to solve the Red John case."

Lisbon jerked around and hissed with fury, "What?!"

And then it happened. Since it was very aware of the rider's mood Lisbon's horse had been uneasy and nervous since they had started their way back. Her sharp move mixed with a sudden thunder frightened it tremendously and made it jump – literally! The mare lunged forward and Lisbon, just as startled, fell of her horse with a surprised yell.

With a thud she impacted on the path and moaned painfully, while the mare bucked a few times but stopped eventually, trembling all over the body.

"Lisbon! You're okay?" Immediately Jane dismounted from his own horse and kneeled down beside her.

She grimaced with pain when she sat up and wiped her wet bangs out of her face.

"I'm fine," she muttered as her gaze met his honestly concerned eyes.

"I guess that doesn't count as a trust fall, huh?" he tried to joke lamely and earned a glare.

Lisbon slapped his helping hand away and stood up by herself. Wordlessly she knocked off some soaked sand from her butt and started to walk towards her horse.

"I'm sorry, Lisbon, I didn't mean that to happen," he called after her – he had to call against the rainy storm – and after grabbing his reins he followed her quickly.

"Of course not." Her voice was dripping with sarcasm, though it became softer and warm when she reached her mare and whispered soothing words. The animal calmed down a bit and pressed its head against her palms. Lisbon smiled briefly and caught the reins.

By foot she continued the way back.

"Lisbon," breathlessly and also by foot Jane caught up.

"Shut up, Jane. Just...stop, okay?!"

"I can't...we have to move on, past that, Lisbon."

"Move on?" Anger, no, blind fury burned through her body. All the frustration, sadness and hurt became overwhelming all of a sudden and exploded in fiery rage. "Move on? We can't move on, Jane! Can't you see that we're stuck? No matter what we do, nothing will ever change! Despite your great plan we failed again. Face it, Jane, we can't catch Red John and we won't move on!"

"No...no! Lisbon, you must not think that way. Otherwise he will destroy you...us!"

"He already *did*!"

The storm was blowing and howling around them, but they suddenly lapsed into heavy silence.

For a while they walked next to each other without a single word exchanged until Lisbon started again.

"Look, Jane, we're miles away from Sacramento. We were supposed to be out of Red

John's fire, but instead of that and instead of us hunting him, he's still hunting us! We found a smiley face, here of all places! There's nothing left for us to do. Whatever we try he will see through it either way. Just like he did before." Naturally she wasn't that pessimistic, but it was her frustration speaking now.

"You honestly don't believe that. We can do it."

"Yeah right, so, then, what now?"

"We'll go on, move on, we'll catch him, Lisbon. Together."

"Oh yeah, like what?" Okay, she was officially insane now for bringing that up, but too upset to care anymore.

He looked a bit startled as he answered, "As a team, as partners, as friends!"

"Friends? So why did you kiss me then?" she blurted out.

"Because I wanted to!" It had been unintentional, she could tell by his caught expression. Lisbon opened her mouth but didn't know what to say.

"Anyway," Jane shook his head to clear his mind and to come back to the point, "I need you to have faith in me, Lisbon. We can do it."

"Oh, that's rich! You expect me to trust you, but it doesn't work the other way round! Otherwise you would have told me about that silly plan of yours."

"I told you before that I trust you! With my life, Lisbon! However, that hadn't anything to do with my plan. I couldn't tell you about it, because I had to be sure that you were safe. I needed to protect you, from Red John, his disciples and myself."

"That's bullshit..." Her voice broke and she wasn't able to identify the flooding water on her cheeks as rain or tears anymore. Hoarsely she continued, "I didn't need your protection, Jane. All I wanted was to know that you were okay, that you were alive! You scared me to death! I thought I lost you!"

They were standing still now, closely together, just like their uneasy horses.

Jane swallowed hard. Only now he could see how heartbroken she really had been – and still was.

"No...You will never lose me, Lisbon." Carefully he put his free hand on her wet cheek.

Lisbon closed her eyes as if his touch would cause her physical pain, and yet she allowed it.

"You know, that isn't true. Someday I will lose you, because of him," she whispered so that he nearly missed it.

Jane stayed silent. There barely was anything he could say against it, except, "I'm sorry...I'm sorry I always cause you so much pain, Lisbon."

His hand was in the back of her neck now and he pulled her closer to press his lips to her forehead.

"I'm so sorry! I never meant to hurt you in the first place but if I have to accept this to keep you safe I must do it. I can't let you become his new target. Red John already made it clear, that he wants your death. I can't lose you to him. I can't lose *another* woman to him." He almost pleaded now.

Carefully Lisbon pulled away.

"You just said that he already targets me, so it's either way too late," she replied softly when she started walking again. "I *want* to be at your side, Jane, no matter what. I don't know if I'm strong enough now, but I will be when the time comes, I promise."

Driven on by their hurrying horses they neared the old farm house quickly now, when Jane entwined his fingers with hers.

"Believe me, Lisbon, you are indeed strong enough, even now. I meant it when I said I trust you with my life – not only because you're great with guns."

A small smile ghosted over her lips.

"I've faith in your strength, Lisbon. Even though the thought of losing you is killing me – and I'm going to do everything necessary to prevent that scenario – I want you by my side, because I know you're strong enough to handle it."

"Besides, you are lost without me." Her sulky words made it his turn to smile.

"Indeed, my dear."

He became serious all over again. "I *do* need you, Lisbon. During past six months I learned, that you're my weak point. I don't say I'm weaker without you, but I *am* stronger with you."

Jane hesitated only a few seconds until he leaned down to her ear and whispered, "And I missed you badly."

Despite the coldness of rain and wind Lisbon felt a burning red spreading over her face.

Hasty she let go of his hand and tramped past him.

"For your information, I didn't miss you at all!"

It was an insult for every ever spoken lie. And of course he knew that. He knew that

she knew that he knew.

And she knew without hearing that he chuckled when he followed her towards the stable.

TBC

Kapitel 8: RS ~ Recovered Strength

Warning: Lime

~*~

Chapter eight – Recovered Strength

She didn't need to turn around. She simply knew that he had just entered her room.

Without a word Lisbon took a second towel from the wardrobe and handed it to him. After that she wrapped herself in her own, shivering with cold. Her clothes were soaked wet and stuck to her body. She really needed them off.

"Jane?" Lisbon faced him finally and found him standing right in front of her. He looked lost with the towel waiting in his hands, his clothes just as drenched as hers, his locks a blond chaos and his blue eyes shimmering in the dimness.

His gaze was as deep as always, but now it was full of sorrow, fear and strong affection as well. He looked at her like he was pleading for her forgiveness and closeness. Like he would lose his ground the second she turned away.

Lisbon swallowed and was about to do exactly that but wasn't able to move. She knew, things would change if she didn't stop them right now.

At the same time she wasn't sure whether it already was too late to back down.

She wasn't sure what she was feeling right now at all. There was huge relief mixed with a longing, which had never been that strong before.

"You should get out of these wet things and towel yourself, Jane" she said hoarsely with chattering teeth, when she eventually averted her gaze.

Jeez, she was freezing! She had to get out of her clothes right now and she didn't care that Jane was still here.

Before her towel could possibly become saturated, too, she threw it on her armchair and removed her dripping shoes. She was trying to open her blouse but her fingers trembled so much she couldn't get the button through its hole.

With a frustrated groan she tried to peel the buttoned blouse off but failed since the wet fabric adhered to her skin.

She was on the verge of simply ripping it off, when two already warm hands were put on hers to stop their frantic movements.

"Let me help," Jane whispered. Lisbon blinked and glanced at him. She could feel

herself blushing slightly but she nodded anyway.

He gripped the blouse's lowest hem and pulled it carefully upwards and, after she lifted her arms, over her head. Carelessly he let it fall on the floor and while his gaze was suddenly entwined with hers, his hands found their way back to her hips, caressing her damp skin. His fingers travelled feathery to her stomach and down to her jeans.

Lisbon shivered and when he started to unbutton them she noticed her own fingers doing the same with his vest. It was easier there because its buttonholes were bigger, so the vest soon joined her blouse on the floor. Before he helped her out off her jeans, she extracted his shirt from his trousers.

When only her underwear was left she took his shirt off; and then they were just standing in front of each other. Closely. Looking into each other's eyes. She couldn't help smiling and he smirked back. As if they just realized how weird this situation was; both wet to the skin, not quite naked, standing in a half dark room of an old farm house in the middle of nowhere, with a rainstorm outside, the danger of a serial killer above their heads and a doubtful future ahead.

However, at this very moment, all they could care about was the person right in front of them.

This time Lisbon made the first move. She pulled him closer on his waistband and untied his belt. Thereupon Jane's hands came back to her hips again, wandering around and up on her back. She shivered and felt warmth returning to her veins when he opened her bra slowly.

When his trousers fell down so did her bra. Lisbon shivered with cold once more and stepped intuitively closer. Without thinking Jane wrapped his arms around her and felt her soft breasts pressed against his chest. He couldn't help blushing slightly.

Lisbon chuckled. "Shouldn't I be the one blushing, Mr. Jane?" she whispered smirking.

"I really have no idea what you could possibly mean, Agent Lisbon!" he answered just a quiet and buried his face in the crook of her neck. When his lips caressed her sensitive skin, a sigh escaped her own.

Smiling fondly Lisbon hugged him back and leaned her head against his shoulder. Another low sigh fled her throat when Jane let his palms stroke her back up and down. After a few moments his fingers drifted upwards again, over her shoulders to her neck until he could cup her face in his hands. Lisbon lifted her head to look at him and found him serious now.

His thumbs caressed her cheeks tenderly while he was staring right away into her eyes. With his gaze burning into her soul Lisbon felt a lump in her throat and she swallowed. Suddenly she became very aware of the fact that he was able to see the love in her eyes clearly. Probably he had been able to see it all along.

"Jane..." she breathed without knowing what to say. She couldn't apologize for having these feelings for him. She just couldn't.

He didn't want her to, though.

Jane simply leaned down and brushed her lips with his. Lisbon caught her breath and felt her heart leaping into the throat. Before she could say or do anything his lips returned to hers fully, pressing a sweet but longing kiss on them.

And all she could do was giving in. Her lids fell shut and her body sank against his while she tightened her embrace and started to kiss him back.

xxx

Lisbon lay on her bed with Jane right above, both completely naked.

Her sensitive skin wasn't cold anymore, it was burning, but the fire was sweet and tempting. His fingers explored every part of her, his lips trailed her curves. He took his time. To pleasure her. To get to know every inch of her he didn't know before.

"Jane..." Just a whisper. Her eyes laden with lust, longing and love. Her cheeks were rosy-tinted.

His gaze met hers and he crawled up, beside her, to kiss her deeply and dearly. Lisbon buried her fingers in his blond locks, pressed her body against his. She felt him shivering.

Her fall had caused a bruise on her hip but she couldn't care less about the numb pain just now.

"Lisbon...be careful..." he groaned into her mouth while his hands roamed down to her hips and around to caress her butt.

"Jane!" she tried to hiss but it sounded rather like a squeak – and it wasn't painful after all. She arched away from his hands which caused an intimate body contact. Both sighed with pleasure before Jane chuckled against her swollen lips.

"Don't tell me you're ticklish there."

Lisbon blushed.

"Jane, shut up and kiss me!"

"Your wish is my command," he breathed and let his lips trail down to her breasts until he could place a tender kiss on one of her rosy peaks.

Lisbon moaned softly and grasped his hair tightly. She sighed savoring.

"Not exactly what I meant, but be my guest, please go on."

Jane smirked knowingly and did what she had implied.

xxx

Her fingers were entwined with his, when he finally merged with her.

Lisbon threw her head back and her body arched against his. Her gaze never left his moonlit eyes though. He returned her look with unbearable love and lust. When his feelings became too overwhelming he sank down on her, deeply into her. Desperately he captured her lips and kissed her passionately, refusing to let her go again.

She didn't mind.

He was here, she could actually feel him. Finally.

He won't vanish. At least not anytime soon.

He was back.

He was with her.

Suddenly, eventually, this knowledge sunk in.

He was back and it was all that mattered.

xxx

It wasn't long after when they lay cuddled together between the sheets, their hot and sweaty bodies entangled.

"Do you feel better?" he asked.

"I feel exhausted."

"Ah...but in a good way." It wasn't even a question.

Lisbon rolled her eyes at him. "I'm not so sure about that."

As punishment Jane simply let his finger tickle over her butt. She acted like before with an uncharacteristic squeak.

"Stop it, Jane!" Just then the terrible knowledge sunk in. "You will never forget this, huh?"

He didn't need to answer, because his grin was enough as a reply.

Lisbon huffed in desperation.

They stayed silent for a few minutes, before Lisbon finally gave in.

"I do feel a little bit better though," she admitted. "A bit more relaxed. I don't like your method, but I guess there were some things which had to be said. And which had to be done." She added a suggestive lift of her brow and placed a teasing kiss on his neck.

He smiled fondly and caught her lips with his own for another loving gesture.

"Thank you," she mumbled into the kiss. "I kind of needed to regain my strength."

Jane pulled away a few inches and shook his head.

"Look at me, Lisbon."

He waited until she did so, looking at him quizzically, and then continued.

"You never lost it. You only needed a push to remember."

His expression was serious, while his thumb traced her upper lip feathery.

When Lisbon furrowed her brow, he whispered, "You're the strongest person I know, even when you think you're weak." His hand was in the back of her neck now, pulling her closer. "Believe me..."

And suddenly she knew that he was right. She was strong enough. Even without Jane back in her life she would have survived her broken heart. If necessary she would have dealt with it alone. Though, if she had the choice, she'd always want him at her side.

When his hands roamed over her body again, her last thought was that she will be strong enough for both of them.

She just decided that he was hers, whether he liked it or not. So she will fight for him.

xxx

The early morning was quiet und surprisingly sunny.

With a low sigh Lisbon stretched and then snuggled back into Jane, with her head on his shoulder and one arm around his waist.

"And again," she mumbled, "it is your fault that I didn't get much sleep that night."

Jane smirked against her hair and placed a soft kiss on the top of her head, while he pulled their cover up to her shoulders. Because of the open window it was crisp in the small room, so that they had a perfect excuse to cuddle together even more.

"Are you complaining?" Jane asked and beneath the cover he let his fingers stroke up and down her naked side.

"No?"

"That's what I thought."

Lisbon snorted, "Thank God you're not conceited!" She didn't need to look up to know that he was grinning impishly.

"Hey Lisbon, isn't that a bit cliché?"

"What do you mean?"

"You know, waking up together after a...hot night?"

"Huh..." She pretended to think about it seriously, but the cheerful glint in her eyes gave her away. "It would be, if you wake up alone, wistfully reminiscing."

"Me? Why not the other way round?" Jane pouted.

"Because in that case I would kill you with my bare hands."

"Uh, okay, point taken."

"However," he said so quietly that she almost missed it, "I'm glad you're still right beside me."

Lisbon lifted her head, crossed her arms on his chest and put her chin above them. For the first time in weeks she was able to hold his gaze with an open and direct look, without feeling uneasy.

"I'm always on your side, Jane. You know that, don't you?" she double-checked.

He smiled at her honestly and gratefully. "Yes, I do." His fingers found their way to her cheek again and trailed into her tousled dark waves.

She returned the smile and under his caressing hands she closed her eyes to relax a few more minutes.

xxx

"Did you mean it? That stuff about Wainwright and all?" Her voice was light and careful when she broke the pleasant silence a little bit later.

He looked at her critically while his fingers played with some strands of her hair.

"Partly," he confessed, "however, let's take care about it back home."

"Okay," she whispered and turned her head to catch his fingertip with her lips.

"But..." he said hesitantly after awhile. "I did mean every single word I told you about you and me. I meant every gesture, every touch, and every look. I need to be sure that you know that. Don't forget it in the future, no matter what will happen back at the CBI."

She looked into his now serious eyes. A bad feeling settled in her chest, like a foreboding, and yet she nodded slowly.

When his hands reached for her, she hesitated just a few seconds, before she finally gave in and let him kiss her forcefully.

xxx

"Hey Jane?" Lisbon sat up, with her bare back towards him. She felt his fingertips along her spine and shivered with pleasure. It was as if he couldn't stop touching her, but since she still longed for both his touch and kiss, she wouldn't dare to complain at all.

"Hmm?"

"Promise me something?"

"Yes," he replied without hesitation.

"That's it?" she wondered, "Simply yes?"

"Exactly."

"I see...still a cool customer, huh?"

"Yeah...I have faith in you."

"Ha, you may regret that."

"Nah, I don't think so."

"Oh fine."

"...So?"

She watched him over her shoulder, her eyes stern now.

"Don't ever disappear again...not without a word, without a goodbye. I mean it, Jane, don't do that again."

She won't ask for never disappearing in general, because this whole thing was still about Red John after all and Jane had to do what was necessary. No, all that she wanted was an explanation and a goodbye.

Jane held her gaze for a brief moment and then he agreed.

"I promise."

xxx

"You know, we probably should forget last night," Lisbon mentioned not exactly serious as she put plates on the kitchen table. Since they wakened before their colleagues they currently were preparing breakfast.

Furrowing his brows Jane looked at her with a piece of cheese in his hand.

"Really, Lisbon? Didn't I tell you once that I will never forget an important thing?"

A smirk spread over her features.

"Yeah right, sorry I forgot. I guess I was kind of hyped up..." She lifted her brow at him.

"Touché." Since he was suddenly very busy with the coffee machine, she let him off the hook this time.

"So...last night is in the bedroom of your memory palace now?"

Jane snorted with amusement. "You might say that."

"Who said what?" Rigsby yawned when he entered the kitchen.

"We just talked about your excellent riding skills."

"And what could that possibly mean, huh, Jane?"

"Just what I said. Lisbon, was it so hard to understand what I just said? Or maybe Rigsby's still sleeping with open eyes."

"Keep me out of this, would you?!"

Shaking her head Lisbon escaped the men's banter and stepped outside. Standing on the porch she deeply inhaled the fresh air and watched the awakening valley.

Even though she had been annoyed about their non-suspension, it was a pity that they would leave the following day. It was a nice place after all.

It had helped her to remember what was truly important. It had reminded her of her strength. A strength that will help her to keep the team together, face Red John and stay at Jane's side to the bitter end.

Nevertheless she will hinder Jane from pulling her down with him. As a matter of fact, she will make sure, that he will stay up as well. In the end she will keep him safe.

You won't win, she thought when the imagination of a red smiley face flashed in the blue sky – just like the one they had found in the backyard.

I promise I won't let you win, no matter what happened.

"Boss?" Grace called from inside, "You coming? Coffee's getting cold."

Lisbon blinked; the bright sky was unblemished now.

"I'll be right there!" she answered and after a last look into the distance she turned away.

You won't win...because finally we will be stronger.

End

Kapitel 9: Frustration - Episode tag for "Cherry Picked" (5x06)

Frustration

Lisbon sat in her office, still pouting because of Brenda's remark.

Well, frankly, she didn't give a damn about the interview but sulking was easier to deal with than all the other feelings brooding under her surface.

Lisbon groaned and ran the fingers through her hair. It wasn't fair. She didn't want to have these feelings. The pain, the worry, the burning jealousy. The love. She hated to feel so torn. And whose fault was it? Jane's, of course.

Why was he doing this again? Why was he constantly pushing away? Why was he shutting her out? It was just the same damn situation like over seven months ago when he had left without a single word – leaving her behind, leaving her suffering with worry and pain.

He obviously didn't learn from the past. He obviously didn't understand that she will always be at his side, no matter what he needed from her. Until now she had joined every stupid plan he had come up with. She had always been there to help him along.

Maybe that was her fault. Maybe she should deny him herself a little bit more often. But at the same time she knew she couldn't deny him anything. Whenever he needed her, she would be there.

Despite the fact that his rejection hurt like hell. It cut down deeply, every single time.

But not only was his rejection making her almost physically sick.

She hated it when he was like this – being not even half-hearted into the case, being with his mind elsewhere. They closed the case, alright, but his mind had been full of Lorelei and, of course, Red John all the time. It wasn't good for him. It poisoned him, she could tell. Maybe it was ridiculous but she was sensing that he was becoming darker and darker with every Red John-related situation.

Teresa Lisbon was a tough woman who barely dreaded anything, but *this* was steadily increasing a subliminal panic. A panic which was proportionally increasing to his darkness.

The point of this panic was the helpless feeling of being unable to do anything to stop him. Stopping him from becoming a slave to Red John's game, stopping him from pushing away from her, stopping him from losing his mind and sanity.

Lisbon cursed under her breath. She hated to feel this *weak*. She wasn't supposed to feel like this.

It was frustrating and unnerving.

xxx

With a deep sigh Lisbon leaned back in her chair. It was only then that she noticed the darkness both outside and in the bullpen. No one was there anymore. How long had she been musing? She had been so deeply caught in her thoughts that she hadn't even heard her colleagues wishing her a good night and leaving.

Just great. She had missed the whole afternoon. Now she had to stay even longer to finish her paperwork.

Wonderful.

Grumbling she got up and headed for the kitchen to brew herself a cup of fresh coffee.

When she passed the bullpen her gaze found Jane's empty couch. She hadn't seen him for awhile, she suddenly realized. For a couple of hours actually.

Lisbon frowned suspiciously while finally arriving at the coffee machine.

Did she really want to know where he was? If someone had asked her to guess she would have implied that he was doing something about that driver he had refused to talk about the day before.

Rather no one should ask her about what exactly he could be doing, since she was the one without any clue.

Feeling frustrated and grumpy all over again, she grabbed her now full mug and turned, only to suddenly stop dead in her tracks.

There he was. Right in front of her. Only a few feet away.

"Hey, Lisbon," he said softly. Just like that.

xxx

"Where have you been, Jane?" She had no idea from where she suddenly got the strength to sound so coolly, but she was proud that she did.

Jane didn't even flinch, just shrugged slightly.

"I had some business to do."

"Right...I guess you won't tell me what this 'business' is about?" Her voice was dripping with suppressed anger and – even worse – hurt.

"It doesn't matter. It's not important, Lisbon. Just a stepping stone." He tried to appease, but it wasn't working.

"A stepping stone? Oh, you mean like I am just a stepping stone for you? Something you can use as you please and throw away as soon as you don't need it anymore?"

"What? Of course not. Don't be ridiculous, Lisbon. Why are you so angry?" He was still calm but there was a hint of uneasiness in his features.

Lisbon growled. He got some nerve to ask her that! Without a warning she suddenly was just inches away and slapped him in the face.

"Stop kidding me, Jane!" she hissed, her hand still hovering between them.

Jane blinked in surprise and looked at her with unbelieving eyes while his fingertips felt his fast reddening cheek.

"You just slapped me," he stated and it sounded so bewildered that Lisbon would have laughed if she hadn't been so angry and sad. So she just ignored it and went on.

"Why are you doing this to me, Jane? You do know that I would help you if you only let me in. We have been over this! Why, Jane," all of a sudden her voice sounded hoarse and her hand dropped to hold onto his jacket. Damn, she hated to feel so weak just because of him. "Why are you pushing me away?"

'Why are you hurting me so much?' she almost added but her pride interdicted it.

For some long quiet moments he simply watched her, not a single emotion visible on his face.

While she held his gaze stubbornly she could feel tears prickling in her eyes but she bit her lip sharply to keep them there.

Then he lowered his hand and put it on top of her own which was still clenching his jacket.

His other hand found its way to her face. She watched it attentively but didn't flinch when his fingers met her skin in a soft touch. He started to caress both her cheek and the back of her hand fondly.

His hands were warm and comforting, she almost couldn't bear it. It was confusing and distracting.

"Lisbon..." he said with a low voice. He was sincere, his eyes never leaving hers.

"What?" she breathed just as low.

"Trust me," he whispered. "I know I'm asking for much, I know it is hard, but I beg you to trust me, Lisbon...Teresa. I have to play my cards carefully now, that's why I can't

tell you everything. So please, trust me."

"How am I supposed to do that?" she asked, her low voice breaking away.

When he took a deep shivering breath she noticed how close they actually were. She could feel the warm blow on her cheek. It got even more intense when he started again.

"Deep down you know that you are already trusting me. You only have to allow it."

"Why is it so important to you that I trust you?"

"Because, even if you can't feel it now, I do need you, Lisbon. I can't do this without knowing that you'll have my back. I need you. Neither Rigsby, Cho nor Grace. I need you."

"Why? I'm just..." she trailed off.

Jane shook his head. "Lorelei is a stepping stone, but you are not. Do you understand? I need you to understand this, Lisbon! I need you to trust me."

She looked into his serious eyes while his fingertips trailed her cheek and his thumb caressed her upper lip. She felt goosebumps growing on her sensitive skin and shivered slightly. He had never done anything like this before, but it felt good, in a very inappropriate way.

xxx

Some time passed until she finally managed to nod.

"I'll try."

"That's fine with me." He smiled softly. "Thank you." With that he bent down to close the distance between them and pressed a feathery kiss on the corner of her mouth.

Lisbon held her breath sharply and felt a blush creeping over her face. It was the first time that he ever kissed her. Comfortable warmth spread through her body and made her skin tingling.

She heard him chuckling and gasped when he let his lips move over hers. She nearly sighed in anticipation but unfortunately he was gone too soon as he carefully pulled away.

"You should go home, you know," he said with his normal voice and the usual grin.

Lisbon needed a few seconds to regain her control and then snorted.

"That's rich, coming from you," she murmured under her breath.

"Oh by the way," she said out loud. "Just so you know, I'm still mad at you." She gave him a glare and turned to her office.

Jane smiled absent-minded. "I know. Good night, Lisbon."

She looked back over her shoulder. "Good night, Jane."

She watched as he strolled towards his attic and couldn't help wondering if this had been just another one of his mind-manipulating tricks.

Shaking her head Lisbon stepped into her office. Either way she had no other choice but to wait and see.

The End

Kapitel 10: About sleeping and dreaming - Episode tag for "Black Cherry" (5x09)

About sleeping and dreaming

He was still brooding over his notebook when Lisbon entered the attic.

"Still here, Lisbon?"

"So are you," she answered wryly and stopped next to him.

Jane smiled without looking up and added another name to his list.

"You should take a break, you know." She nodded towards the book and sat down on the edge of his makeshift desk – just because he was often doing that on hers.

For a second – she almost missed it – his gaze flickered to the point where her bottom met the table surface, and she had to turn her head away to hide her smirk.

"Nah..." His reply came a bit delayed. "I don't need a break!...What about you? Did Sarah agree to drop the charges?"

"As a matter of fact she did. Juliana and Noah left half an hour ago."

"And don't you feel relieved now?"

Lisbon refused to answer. Of course she was relieved that the kids won't get separated, that Juliana will be able to rear her little brother. But there was no way on earth that she would admit it to Jane.

He knew anyway.

Lisbon looked at him over her shoulder.

"They're really good kids, you know" she said evasively and couldn't help smiling when she remembered the hug Noah had given her.

Jane raised his head and watched her expression becoming absent-minded.

"The boy has been especially thankful, huh?"

Lisbon blinked and returned his look. "I won't even ask how you know that."

"It wasn't hard to figure out." He shrugged with a grin, but then it softened. "He reminded you of your own brothers."

"Maybe..." It was her turn to shrug.

The attic was filled with comfortable silence for a few minutes.

XXX

"So...?"

"So what, Lisbon?"

"What did I say?"

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

"Oh come on, Jane! You said I was talking in my sleep. What did I say?"

Jane chuckled and closed his notebook to concentrate completely on the woman in front of him.

"You've wanted to ask that again for hours, haven't you?"

"Just tell me!" Lisbon furrowed her brows and pursed her lips into a pout.

"Why?" His blue eyes gleamed in amusement.

"Because."

"You're afraid that you might have said something embarrassing."

"Wha-? No, of course not."

He ignored her objection and went on. "Or that you might have given away a secret. ...Or more than one."

"What secret? Why would you assume that I have a secret to tell?" She scrutinized him suspiciously.

"First of all, my dear Lisbon..." He raised his index finger like a schoolmaster and got up from his chair. "Every woman has at least one secret, something truly important, she would protect with *everything* she has."

Lisbon rolled her eyes and crossed her arms in front of her chest.

"And secondly...I would like to have a cup of tea. What about you?" With these words he picked up his empty cup and the saucer, and strolled out of the attic.

"Hey!" Lisbon huffed and followed him immediately. "Wait, Jane! You can't just leave like that..."

XXX

"I want you to tell me what I said while I was asleep," Lisbon demanded when they arrived at the break room.

"Relax, Lisbon, everything is fine. It was only me, who heard it." As if having all the time in the world he refilled the kettle and turned it on.

"Well, *that* makes me feel better...Heard what, Jane?" Her stern voice did nothing to ruffle him as he leant against the counter.

"Oh, you know...this and that."

"You should put my name on that list, seriously."

"By the way, you look particular cute when you're sleeping. So peaceful and innocuous."

Lisbon snorted and leant against the counter right next to him, shoulder to shoulder. She could feel his warmth even through the layers of fabric. She shifted her weight against him, just a tiny bit more.

"You're a jackass."

He smiled while both of them were staring at the heating kettle. "And yet you love me."

"In your dreams, Jane, in your dreams."

"In *your* dreams to be exact, my dear."

Lisbon felt her cheeks growing warm. "Shut up." Without looking she knew that he was grinning like the Cheshire Cat now.

"I thought you wanted to know..."

"I said, shut up!"

"..."

"And stop grinning."

She felt the back of his hand shifting against hers, but she wasn't able to tell whether it had happened by accident or intentionally. Either way it caused a soft tingling on her skin.

"Do you want to know what I think, Jane?"

"Always, my dear."

"I think that you have no idea what I said in my sleep." Lisbon felt him stiffening against her and continued. "What I said either was so mumbled that you couldn't understand it or it simply made no sense at all."

He was silent for a few seconds until he stated, "Well...If you need to take the easy way out...Keep believing that if it makes you feel better."

Lisbon laughed softly and nudged his shoulder. "That was a feeble attempt, even for you, Jane."

Jane glanced at her, smiling again.

With a sigh Lisbon felt a hint of melancholy sneaking into her mood.

"I missed you," she said quietly and bit her lip right afterwards. Actually she had wanted to say '*I missed this*'. The light bantering. Even though she had indeed meant that she had missed *him*, she had had no intention of admitting it. Well, it was too late for that now.

Jane fondly twisted his hand around hers, slowly entwining their fingers.

"I've been here, Lisbon." His voice was just as low. He certainly got the meaning.

When she didn't answer he slightly turned towards her, waiting for her to mirror his position. She did so and allowed him to lock their eyes.

There was no need to explain that she hadn't meant his physical presence. She had missed this Jane. The bantering Jane. The talking idiotic stuff Jane. The honestly smiling Jane. Her Jane.

Lately he had almost always been the possessed Jane. Red John's Jane. The one who got darker with every passing day. It was a part of him, Lisbon knew that. She even loved both of his sides. She simply couldn't help it. What a fool she was.

"It's okay..." he whispered. It wasn't. But that on the other hand was okay.

Lisbon smiled sadly. They were close, their eyes still holding the gaze, their finger still entangled. They could feel each other's breath on the own skin. Without thinking Lisbon shifted closer and he didn't back off. She tilted her head and could feel his breath hot on her lips now. Lisbon swallowed, her own breath becoming erratic, and she saw through her lashes that his lids were just as halfway closed as hers.

Almost. The moment was almost perfect. Until somewhere in the empty bullpen a forgotten phone started ringing, and destroyed it.

Nearly at the same time they released some air while the tension faded away. Lisbon had to smile and Jane chuckled. It should have been awkward, but it wasn't. Their foreheads met in a gentle touch and Jane squeezed her hand softly.

"My tea water should be hot by now."

"Indeed."

After they stayed like this for a few more minutes they let go without another word. Jane moved away, bringing some distance between them, to actually prepare some tea for them.

When both of them held a cup of steaming liquid in their hands they walked together towards Lisbon's office.

"So, do you still wonder about the confession you made in your sleep?"

"No, I don't. I already know what I said."

"Really? Then please enlighten me."

"I complained about my consultant who actually thinks that he could be in charge when we visit crime scenes."

"Oh come on, Lisbon, you secretly liked it."

"No, I didn't!"

"Yes, you did. As a matter of fact you like to imagine me taking over the reins."

"But only in my worst nightmares..."

The End

Kapitel 11: Christmas Wish

Christmas Wish

(Secret Santa für den The Mentalist-Zirkel☐)

It was a Sunday in December, the last one before Christmas.

CBI consultant Patrick Jane was strolling towards the park. All his colleagues from Serious Crimes Unit were at home – or elsewhere. They weren't at work, that is. And for a change Jane himself wasn't in the mood to brood alone in the CBI attic. He liked his dusty place of refuge, dearly, but sometimes it felt like a cage.

Besides, it was a chilly but sunny day in California, absolutely meant for a decent walk.

Jane breathed the fresh air and roamed past some playing children. They were completely caught in their game, screaming and laughing. A little boy almost ran into him and called a breathless "Sorry!" over his shoulder before he rushed back to his friends.

Jane shook his head with a smile and was about to go on, when a sudden voice stopped him.

"Kids, huh?"

Turning around he found an old man sitting on a bench by the wayside. He had a cozy big belly, a fluffy white beard and his wrinkled face was framed with white curls. He wasn't the youngest anymore, undoubtedly, but his expression was vivid and his wise blue eyes gleamed impishly.

He obviously had been the one talking and judging by his eager look he had obviously addressed Jane with that.

"Yeah." Jane frowned and scrutinized him.

"Come on, son, sit by me." The old man patted the empty space next to him.

Jane wanted to refuse but the man smiled so warmly and friendly at him that Jane couldn't deny him that.

As he sat down, the old man introduced himself as Sanson.

"But feel free to call me San. Everybody does that," he added.

"Patrick." They shook hands.

"So, tell me, Patrick, what brings you here?"

Jane relaxed against the backrest and watched the playing kids.

"Well...I've nowhere else to be," he answered vaguely.

San eyed him from the side and uttered a musing sound.

"Hmm...I see."

They stayed silent for awhile until the silence was broken by San.

"Sounds like a good thing...not having to be anywhere."

Jane gave him one of his small fake smiles. "Not so sure about that."

San nodded thoughtfully.

"What about you?" Jane wanted to know politely.

San blinked. "Oh you know...Christmas is near."

Jane furrowed his brow in wonder. Not even he was able to tell what the other one meant with this cryptic reply.

San sensed the question in the air and turned to the consultant completely, giving him his full attention.

"Tell me, Patrick, do you have a wish for Christmas this year?"

"Uhm..." Jane was taken by surprise.

His need for revenge hardly was an appropriate Christmas wish and definitely the wrong thing to tell a stranger, so he answered evasively.

"Not yet."

"Then you better hurry, son." San slapped him firmly on the shoulder. "There isn't much time until Christmas anymore. And fulfilling a wish takes some time, you know."

"Excuse me?"

San waved his hand soothingly. "Don't worry, it's not too late, yet." With a groan he pushed himself off the bench and muttered under his breath, "Holy sh...I'm getting old. Ah well."

He smiled fatherly at Jane. "You still have time to think about your wish, Patrick. Just let me know as soon as you find out."

"Why?" Jane couldn't help asking. This old man was kind of weird. Or just...old, and

confused, even though he didn't seem to be.

San beamed at him like the afternoon sun and spread his arms. "Because that's what I'm here for."

He winked and started to move. "Goodbye, son." With that he strolled away, humming loudly *'We need a little Christmas'* and leaving a confused-looking consultant behind.

XxxChristmas WishxxX

"Hey, Jane. ...Jane?"

"Hm? Oh hey, Lisbon."

Lisbon raised her brows as she eyed him meaningfully. It was Monday morning, the morning of Christmas Eve so to say, and her consultant had just come into her office, tea cup and saucer in his hands, and stood still in the middle of the room, obviously being deep in thoughts.

"Everything all right?"

"Yeah, sure...I just...I had a strange encounter yesterday." Still musing he sat down on her couch.

"Strange? How so?"

"Ah, I don't know. I guess it was just a strangely confused old man."

"You know, most of the people you piss off on a daily basis would describe *you* in the same way." Lisbon smirked.

Jane looked at her, eyebrow raised. "That's neither very nice nor true, Agent Lisbon."

"Whatever you say, Jane, whatever you say." She bit her lip to stifle her laughter. Her green eyes glimmered teasingly.

He couldn't help it, his lips twitched into a smile. To see her in such a relaxed and amused mood had been a rare thing lately. The past months had been tough on her. Mostly because of him.

His smile faltered. A sudden feeling of guilt banged into his gut – and for once it wasn't because of his family's tragedy.

Lisbon saw how his expression abruptly turned serious.

"Jane?" There was only a hint of unease in her voice, as if she wondered whether she had offended him – even though she knew better.

He blinked and gathered the control over his mask.

"You wounded me, Lisbon, deeply!" He gripped his chest in mock sorrow.

She snorted.

"Poor baby. Has your big bad boss offended you?"

"Yes," he answered with a sad sigh.

She tried to stay serious but failed and chuckled. "Well, then, please tell me how I can make it up to you."

His eyes lit up immediately and he sprang to his feet to walk over to her.

"I've got the perfect idea, my dear!"

"Oh no..." She looked at him with pure horror.

"Nah, don't worry. You'll love this one, I promise. ...Would you stop looking at me like that?"

"Sorry, can't help myself. So what's this great idea of yours?"

"Around the corner a new ice rink has been opened a few days ago. So we're going to go ice skating, you and me."

"What? No way!"

"Don't be afraid, it'll be fun. And this way *the old man* can show you how fit he actually is."

"I'm not sure I'm willing to risk that. It's my job to protect you from physical harm."

Jane pouted. "You know, more insults are not making it up to me."

Lisbon bit her lip again. He could see she was considering it. Her inner turmoil was mirrored on her face. Jane was pretty sure, that she secretly loved to go ice skating. So he pushed just a little bit more.

"Well? Please, Lisbon? What could possibly spread more Christmas spirit than ice skating?"

"Do you want a list?"

"Come on! You don't have any other after work plans anyway. And this way both of us would be in nice company this evening."

They stared at each other for another minute until she huffed in resignation.

"Fine!"

He grinned triumphantly and returned to her couch to sink down on it with a satisfied moan, while Lisbon muttered some curses under her breath.

XxxChristmas WishxxX

They arrived at the ice rink in the late evening. Since it was Christmas Eve there weren't many people in the hall anymore.

Despite her earlier hesitation Lisbon had some difficulty to hide her excitement. During the whole day at work and after releasing her team into their well deserved holidays she had been looking forward to that. The truth was, while she was expecting her brother Tommy, his daughter Annie and Virgil Minelli for Christmas Day, Jane had been right about her plans for tonight. And eventually his idea had sounded much better than the few unspectacular ones she had thought of.

While Jane put some lent skates on Lisbon eyed her own critically.

"I haven't used them for years. I think they need to be sharpened."

Jane nodded towards the skate renting. "I'm pretty sure they can do it. You just have to ask nicely."

She rolled her eyes at him, but agreed though. "You go ahead. I'll meet you on the ice in a few minutes."

"Sure. I'll be the gracefully slipping one."

Lisbon looked at him as if to say '*Can't wait to see you trying*' and turned away.

When she reached the renting service no one was in sight. She leaned over the counter.

"Hello?"

There was a muffled sound and then a paunched old man with white hair and beard appeared in front of her. "Hello, young lady, how may I help you?" He smiled friendly and revealed some perfect white teeth.

Lisbon was about so say something because of the form of address but then she just smiled back instead.

She explained her request and handed her skates over.

He took them and examined them through his half-moon glasses.

"Ah...I see. That won't be a problem, my dear. Good old San will have it done in no time."

"Thanks."

After sharpening the blades and returning the skates to her, he watched her putting them on.

"So Christmas is coming very soon, huh?"

Lisbon looked up and smiled. "Guess so."

"Do you have a Christmas wish, my dear?"

She blinked in confusion and eyed him with furrowed brows, biting her lower lip unconsciously.

San tilted his head, scrutinizing her, and then his smile brightened. "So you do have a wish for Christmas...but you're not ready to admit it yet."

In a comforting gesture he put his huge warm hand on top of hers. Lisbon looked down on their hands and back to his face. Under usual circumstances she would never allow a stranger to invade her personal space, but she simply couldn't help it. He was like the grandfather she never had, with the air of mystery and magic around him, and hypnotic blue eyes.

"Don't you worry, young lady, you'll get to that. Soon." San squeezed her hand softly and let go afterwards. With a last smile and a conspiratorial wink he waved and disappeared into the backroom.

"What the hell was that?" Lisbon wondered. Weird. It definitely was weird.

Shaking her head she walked towards the ice. When she stepped onto it and looked for her consultant, all the wonder vanished from her mind.

An unbelieving laugh escaped her throat as she caught sight of Jane.

With a smirk she slid towards the point where he all but gracefully stumbled on the frozen water.

She stopped next to him and pointed at his shaking legs. "That's the way you wanted to impress me, Jane?"

"Oh hey Lisbon." His smile was only slightly distraught while he clung to the boards. "Yeah...well, it's been a while, I guess. Ice skating obviously isn't as simple as I remembered it to be."

Lisbon grinned mischievously and just to rub it in she glided around the ice skillfully.

Jane raised an eyebrow when she came to a halt next to him again.

"Why, Lisbon, I'm impressed now. That looked pretty graceful to me. You're quite good at this."

She shrugged. "I taught my brothers how to skate. I had to be good."

"Well then" He let go of the boards and grabbed her shoulders instead. "You can help me not to fall on my behind."

Instinctively Lisbon reached out to steady him.

"Oh you mean, because I'm the one who saves your ass all the time anyway?" she asked dryly.

He grinned. "Exactly."

Lisbon rolled her eyes in mock annoyance, but tightened the grip around him nevertheless.

She took some powerful steps forward and pulled him with her. Jane shrieked in a very unmanly way and clung to her even more.

"Not so fast, Lisbon!"

"Oh boy, would you just relax?! I hold you."

He stayed quiet for a moment before he turned his head to hers.

"Yes, you do."

It was only then that she noticed how close they actually were. She glimpsed at him and felt a soft blush creeping over her cheeks.

"Concentrate on the task at hand, Jane."

"Sorry."

For awhile Lisbon led him safely across the ice.

Step by step he became better, his feet finally remembering how to do it. He felt safer and could walk freer with every move – as long as Lisbon was still holding at least one of his hands.

After half an hour Jane decided to take a break and give Lisbon the chance to skate as she pleased and without a clinging consultant.

She felt his eyes on her while she slid away, but she didn't care. They were the last ones on the ice now so she could totally enjoy the cool wind in her face, caused by her fast and precise movements.

"Do you know any jumps?" Jane called, when she passed by him backwards.

"I used to do Axels. Actually I managed the double Axel, but that was twenty years ago."

Jane waved reassuringly. "You're in top condition, Lisbon, I'm sure you can still do it."

She only hesitated for seconds, checking if they were indeed alone, and then she sped up, turned forwards and jumped.

Jane clapped his hands when she landed safely on her foot again. "See?! I knew it!"

"Yeah..." she replied a little out of breath, adrenalin pumping through her veins. "But that was just a simple Axel. I was too slow and not high enough." This time she didn't hesitate. "I want to try the double again."

She started again.

Lisbon didn't know that Jane was so fascinated by her actions that he made a few steps to get a better look. And she also didn't know that he suddenly wasn't able to stop himself on the ice just when she landed after a successfully completed double Axel.

It happened what had to happen due to Murphy's Law. They were the only ones on the huge frozen surface and yet they managed to collide. Lisbon had no chance but to crush into Jane with a surprised yell and both of them went to the ground, moaning painfully.

"What the hell, Jane?" she panted breathlessly. She had fallen on Jane and was currently partly lying on him and partly sitting between his legs.

"Sorry," he whined while he clung to her once more - even if for a different reason now, since his intention had been holding *her* this time. Not that he had succeeded, obviously. "My feet had been faster than my rational mind."

"Well, that's a first! Under usual circumstances your feet only are faster than your mind when you outrun a person you insulted."

"What can I say..."

"Do me a favor and say nothing at all," she retorted dryly and tried to push herself from his chest. "Give me your hands, Jane, I'll pull you up."

His hands slid from her arms so that he could do so and she climbed to her feet. However, when Jane put his blades on the ice his feet immediately slipped away and he slumped on his buttocks again, pulling her with him again.

"Ouch!"

"Seriously, Jane?" Lisbon shook her head but then paused when she saw Jane's terrified expression. She followed his look and understood what got him pale. Her knee had landed very close...between his thighs this time. That could have ended pretty badly.

There was silence for a moment. When their eyes met Lisbon felt *it* - the increasing prickling in her throat. She simply couldn't help it and started snorting with laughter.

"I'm glad my pain amuses you," Jane commented dryly but grinned nonetheless.

"I'm sorry," she replied between two chuckles. "Are you okay?"

"Yeah, but this is getting really humiliating."

She burst out laughing again even though she tried to stifle it. This whole moment had been so hilarious and simply laughing hearty felt so good that she wasn't able to stop.

Jane watched her with a smile. The cold ice was wetting their clothes already but neither of them made another effort to get up.

"You should have seen your face!" Lisbon pressed through her teeth, shaking and almost crying with laughter.

She was so caught in the memory that she didn't notice Jane's hand until he put it softly on her cheek.

Lisbon looked at him and the laughter slowly died in her throat as he held her gaze. His palm was cold and yet it burned her skin. His eyes were as deep as always, but it was the first time she lost herself in them in an instant, suddenly feeling like falling in a very different way.

There was this look again. The same expression he had worn in her office earlier that day. It was so full of...regret? No, it was guilt. And something else. Something so deep and meaningful she almost couldn't bear it.

And all of a sudden she wondered if she was the reason for it.

"Jane?" she whispered a little helpless, his intense stare making her feel all exposed.

Instead of an answer he let his fingers stroke her face fondly.

Lisbon swallowed while her heart hammered in her chest with a surprising passion, she noticed and it made her shivering. Beyond that she wasn't able to move a single muscle. She had been in love with her consultant for years but she had never lost control over her body like this before. Even the jealousy she had felt because of Lorelei hadn't paralyzed her that much.

He was so close...

She smelled his cologne. She saw the tiny green speckles in his eyes. She felt his warmth beneath her fingers. Not only beneath her fingers! His warmth was surrounding her, making her dizzy.

She tasted his breath on her tongue.

And she heard his voice which had never sounded affectionate like this before. It was almost like a verbal caress.

"You should laugh more often, Lisbon...I wish I could...For once I really wish I could..." His voice broke.

Lisbon wanted to say that it wasn't his fault, but when his thumb touched her upper lip the words got stuck on her tongue.

An unbearable longing pulsed through her veins and she inched forwards, but that little movement did it. Jane finally came back to his mind and averted his gaze, letting his hand fall down and thus breaking the spell.

Lisbon blinked, found herself back in reality and blushed.

"Sorry." She didn't even know what she was apologizing for.

After taking some deep breaths she stood up a bit shakily, and this time she succeeded in setting Jane back on his feet.

"I don't know about you but I have had enough skating for today." She attempted to make her voice sound normal and bring them back to familiar territory.

"The bruises on my back are giving me the same thoughts," Jane agreed – both to her suggestion and to the normality.

Lisbon nodded in sympathy. "Come on then, old man."

And while they were finding back to the usual light banter on their way to the exit, both of them refused to let go the other one's hand - silently agreeing that Jane's insecurity on the ice was the perfect excuse.

XxxChristmas Wishxxx

After exchanging the skates for their shoes they left the ice rink and strolled towards Lisbon's car.

"You sure that I shouldn't give you a ride?"

"Yeah, don't bother. I'm going to take a walk and return to the CBI afterwards."

Lisbon hesitated and glanced at him. "You know, you're not supposed to be at the CBI

on Christmas Eve, Jane."

They stopped next to her car, unconsciously standing way too close.

He eyed her while she firstly opened her mouth again but then closed it without a further word. She was struggling with herself, he could tell. There was something she wanted to say. Urgently. But she wasn't brave enough yet.

It was unusual behavior for Lisbon, but since he had a hunch about what was in her mind, Jane understood her hesitation. He had disappointed her so often this year – and even worse, he had rejected her many times, had hurt her badly, even though she would never admit it. However, Jane knew. Whenever he had looked into her brave eyes during the past months, he had noticed that.

There was only that much even a strong woman like Lisbon could take. And on the other hand she also was a woman who was *especially* protective of her heart.

So he totally understood, but it made him sad somehow. A part of him longed for her to simply spit it out while another part was afraid that she would indeed pick up the courage.

Finally, the coward in him won this round, so he interfered before Lisbon had the chance to say anything more.

"Don't worry, my dear, I'm fine." He squeezed her elbow in a soft touch and stepped back. "Good night, Lisbon."

Lisbon furrowed her brows and nodded slowly with a hint of disappointment. Whether she was disappointed in herself or him, he couldn't tell for sure, but it didn't matter. Bad enough that he had made her feel this way again.

"Good night, Jane."

He watched her getting into her car and driving away. He even stood there motionless when she was long gone.

It was not until his fingers felt like freezing that he turned away with a sigh and started his walk.

Jane had barely made a dozen steps when someone called his name and stopped him.

"Hello Patrick!" Old San caught up with him and Jane greeted back politely but a little bit startled.

"Do you mind if I accompany you a short way?" San asked while he still shook Jane's hand fatherly.

"Not at all." The CBI consultant would have preferred to be alone, but then again he was tired of brooding about something he couldn't change at the moment – although

he wanted to.

After walking in comfortable silence for awhile, San turned to Jane.

"So tell me, son, have you thought about the question I asked you yesterday?"

"What question?"

San looked at him with indulgence. "I'm pretty sure, you know what I'm talking about," he said softly.

Jane remained quiet during the following minutes and his older companion let him, just walking next to him and leading the way.

Honestly, Jane hadn't pondered over a suitable Christmas wish at all. When his mind hadn't been on Red John, it had been full of thoughts about Lisbon. And while being honest, during the past twenty-four hours thinking about Lisbon had even been prevailing.

Jane put his hands into his jacket pockets as the wind freshened up and finally, just to give the nice old man an answer, he confessed, "I don't have a wish for Christmas."

"Hmm..." San hummed and glanced at him. "You sure about this, son? You know, a Christmas wish doesn't have to be about you. You can also use it for someone else. For someone who means *something*..."

The wind around them increased until it was whistling in Jane's ears and he had some difficulties to understand San.

"You might want to think about it again, Patrick," he heard him saying as if he was speaking through a wall of cotton. With the howling wind becoming so strong that it brought tears to his eyes, Jane had to close them tightly.

"Think about it, son, we still have time..."

And suddenly as though something deep inside him had been touched, Jane's mind started to wander on its own.

Someone who means something.

All of a sudden he remembered the moment on the ice not even an hour ago – when Lisbon had sat on his lap after the collision. He remembered her hearty laughter, pictured her sparkling green eyes and saw the lively red cheeks. She had looked so beautiful – she was a natural beauty anyway, but that very moment had been special – and even the memory of it warmed his heart.

"I wish I could...For once I really wish I could..." he heard himself saying and only when he felt his lips moving he noticed that the memory became one with reality. "Instead of making her sad I wish I could make her happy for once. Truly happy. I want her not

to worry so much but to find some peace."

And without thinking he knew – he felt – that it was true. He had caused so much pain, so for a change, he wanted to make her happy, make her laugh like he did unintentionally earlier that day. It was almost Christmas after all.

The wind decreased and Jane blinked as if he was awakening from a dream. Confused he gazed at San who returned the look warmly.

"This is a very nice wish, Patrick. I gladly accept it."

"But what should I do to fulfill it?" He wondered more to himself.

"By making her Christmas wish come true, son," San answered helpfully.

Jane blinked and examined him with a mixture of awe and skepticism. "What is it?"

But San only smiled and when Jane averted his gaze and looked around, he suddenly found himself standing in front of Lisbon's apartment. His eyes widened in shock.

"What the-...How is that possible?" They hadn't even been on the way to Lisbon – at least that was what he thought. It wasn't possible, was it?

"San?" But when Jane turned around, the old man was nowhere to be seen.

For awhile he simply stared at the empty space next to him.

Did he finally lose his mind?

Well, Lisbon would have agreed to that, undoubtedly. Jane smiled but then his expression turned serious.

Talking about Lisbon...what now? He could hardly just stand here – on her doorstep, in the middle of the night. But now that he was here already, he couldn't just leave either, right?

That was ridiculous! Since when was he such a coward? When it concerned really important things by all means.

With a Christmassy bravery washing through his body and making his heart beat faster, he stepped forwards and knocked.

XxxChristmas WishxxX

"Jane?" When Lisbon opened her door, she was all but surprised to see him – Jane was the only one who dared to come over just before midnight. "What are you doing here?"

Even though she obviously was suspicious, she stepped aside to let him into her warm

and welcoming home.

"Uhm..." he started sheepishly and by way of exception had no idea what to say. "I forgot to wish you merry Christmas." It was a miserable attempt but he wasn't able to come up with anything smarter for once.

Lisbon raised her brow. She didn't believe him. "You did?"

"Yeah."

"Ah."

They stared at each other in silence, waiting for him to get his act together.

Eventually, after some hesitation, Jane asked, "What do you wish for this Christmas, Lisbon?"

She looked at him in surprise. "You're the second, who asked about my Christmas wish today."

"I am?"

"Yes."

"So...what did you reply the first time?"

"Nothing at all."

"Oh."

Their eyes met and Lisbon was startled when she found hope in his.

"So...you want to know what I wish for...?" Now she was the one hesitating.

Jane nodded. "Please."

"I..." She swallowed and crossed her arms. "I can't tell you."

"Why not?"

This time her answer was merely a whisper. "I don't want to offend you."

And I don't want to hear you refuse – but she didn't say these words out loud.

The agent saw his tense expression softening and then he came closer, catching her hand with his cold fingers. "Listen, my dear, there's no way you could possibly offend me. Please tell me!" he almost begged now.

"I..." She took a deep breath and told herself *'Oh, screw it, you chicken!'*

"I wish for you to take a break...from Red John, Lorelei and everything. Just for now. I would like you to...stay with me for the holidays. I wish that for a moment – even if only for a blink of time – you could relax. I wish for knowing you save and not on a crazy suicide mission. And some peace...for both of us."

Unconsciously she lowered her gaze to the floor, but then she forced herself to look back at him. She was Teresa Lisbon for God's sake!

Jane had obviously guessed that she had wanted to invite him for the holidays but he seemed somewhat surprised that this actually was her *wish* for Christmas.

Lisbon wasn't sure what reaction she had expected but she hadn't anticipated that look full of true affection he was giving her now. He stared at her as if his own feelings became almost too overwhelming, so that he only managed to nod. Her already pounding heart became erratic in her chest.

Somewhere outside church bells started ringing softly.

It was midnight.

And they were still standing in her dimmed hall, looking into each other's eyes and holding hands.

"I'd love to stay with you for Christmas, Lisbon," Jane whispered and brought her hand to his lips.

Lisbon felt burning warmth sneaking not only into her heart but also on her face. "Okay..." she answered with a small smile. "You know...I was about to go to bed when you knocked. You...want to come, too?"

Jane nodded with a smug grin which made Lisbon blush even more. She rolled her eyes at him and swiftly turned away, but then he called her name.

"Yeah?" She expectantly looked over her shoulder.

"Merry Christmas, Lisbon." His voice was soothing and full of fondness.

"Merry Christmas, Jane." Still not sure whether she was dreaming or not, Lisbon entwined their fingers and dragged him softly with her towards the bedroom.

XxxChristmas Wishxxx

When Jane awoke in the early morning of Christmas Day he needed a moment to recognize his surroundings. Right, he was in Lisbon's bedroom. In her bed to be exact. Under her warm covers with Lisbon herself snuggled against his back, her arm around his waist.

There wasn't anything sexual about it and they were both fully clothed. She hadn't

wanted him to sleep on her couch and he hadn't cared to share a bed with her. They knew each other for nine years and had even been close friends for almost that long. There was nothing to think of it.

Lisbon sighed in her sleep and nestled the back of his neck with her nose. Jane couldn't help smiling. He always knew she was the cuddly type behind her hard cop shell and he dearly loved (not only) that soft side of her. Mother bear was in protection mood, even in her sleep, and that was way too sweet.

Jane wondered what had woken him up, since he had slept surprisingly well in her arms. Maybe it had been this strange dream which he just remembered. Instead of his usual nightmares that dream had been oddly Christmassy.

"Hey Lisbon..." He nudged her softly with his shoulder.

She moaned and tightened the grip around him.

"Lisbon!"

"What?" she murmured against his neck without opening a single eye.

"I just had a really weird dream I want to tell you about!"

"...And that can't wait for some more hours? It's my first day off!"

"Meh, you can go back to sleep afterwards."

"How unbelievably generous of you."

"Yeah, I know. Anyway, do I have your attention now?"

"No."

"Very well. Okay, I dreamed that I was in the story of 'The Nutcracker and the Mouse King'. Do you know it?"

"I think I watched this animated film called 'The Nutcracker Prince' many years ago." Lisbon yawned and wished she could simply drift off again. "I always wondered why they called that creature Mouse King since it obviously was a disgusting rat."

"Well...I never thought about that. Anyway, I dreamed that we, you, me and the team, were living said story. I played the main role of course, you were the nutcracker, Grace was that Trudy-doll, Rigsby the old soldier Pantaloon and Cho was Uncle Drosselmeier."

Lisbon snorted. "Let me guess, the Mouse Kind was Red...wait, what? I was the nutcracker?" Now fully awake she pushed herself up to look at him over his shoulder. "Are you telling me that you were Clara and I was the prince who had to save the girl? Well, that sounds familiar."

"Kind of...despite the obvious gender confusion."

"Ha!"

He ignored her sarcasm and went on. "Additionally, my dear Lisbon, in *The Nutcracker Prince* the nutcracker might have tried to fight the evil, but actually it was Clara who saved the prince at the end."

"There's something wrong with your story. It doesn't fit reality."

"That's a question of interpretation and I – did you hear that?"

"What?!" Lisbon let her head fall into her pillow and groaned in frustration.

"There was a noise! Now I know what woke me up. I heard a noise from your front door...There it is again! Did you hear that?"

"The only noise I hear is the one my annoying consultant makes."

"Not nice! There's someone! Come on, we have to check if it's an intruder!"

"No way." Lisbon shook her head firmly. "Do it yourself if you have to, but for me it's way too soon to get up!"

"Lisbooon!" Jane whined and turned his head to look at her.

"What?! You need me to have your back?"

"Yes?!" He stared at her as if she had stated the obvious.

"A man only is brave with a woman covering his back," she murmured into his neck.

Jane smirked at her meaningfully. "Just like now, you mean?"

Lisbon flushed and tried to hide her face between his shoulder blades. "Oh shut up, smart-ass!"

XxxChristmas WishxxX

Lisbon felt truly ridiculous when she followed Jane downstairs. He had even insisted that she should take her gun with her. Ridiculous, really, but if it made him happy... And honestly, she had her fun too, as she watched him tiptoeing towards the door.

With a grin she stepped beside him while he looked through the peephole.

"So?"

"Shhh- What the hell?" Throwing all caution in the winds Jane pushed her aside and

opened the door.

Lisbon blinked and found herself just as surprised as Jane. Right on her doorstep was a pile of fluffy white snow and on top of it they found a white box with a red bow.

"Is that...real snow?" Lisbon bent down to check and immediately became startled when some white crystals melted on her palm. In the meantime Jane had picked up the box and pressed his ear against its white surface now.

"I don't think it's a bomb."

Lisbon rolled her eyes. "Why would anyone put a bomb on a pile of snow? By the way, where did that snow come from? It's too warm for a natural thing."

Jane just shrugged and read the card next to the bow. "To Teresa Lisbon and Patrick Jane."

"What?" Standing up she looked over his shoulder and tried to get a glimpse of it. "From whom is it?"

"Doesn't say. Should I open it?"

"Uhm, I guess." They returned to the hall and Jane undid the bow. As soon as the box was open, both of them gasped in surprise.

On the bottom was a beautiful Christmas cake, covered with snow white fondant, and red and green mistletoes made of marzipan. Additionally, there was a note, written in red icing.

Lisbon read out loud,

"Merry Christmas, Teresa and Patrick!

I hope you got your wishes fulfilled.

Santa Claus

PS. It's Christmas, Patrick, just do it. 'What the hell does that mean?'

When she looked at Jane again she expected him to look as puzzled as she did, but to her great astonishment he looked...thrilled? He even flushed!

"Jane? What is this about? Who sent this box?"

"Well, Santa Claus, apparently."

"Come on, there's no-"

He raised his hand to silence her. "I know, spare me this discussion, please. Do you

have a better explanation?"

"Several, actually."

Jane shook his head and mumbled in wonder, "But who could possibly know...?"

Lisbon's expression became worried because he suddenly looked so serious. Softly she touched his arm. "Know what? Do you mean the postscript? What does it stand for?"

"Fulfillment of an unspoken Christmas wish." Still absent-minded he carefully put the cake on a cupboard and turned to Lisbon.

"Wha-" But Jane didn't allow her to finish her question. With a smooth movement he pushed her against his chest, grabbed her face with his warm hands and pressed his lips softly on hers.

Lisbon gasped in pure shock, growing stiff against him while her vision became blurred. Her heart hammered so loudly in her chest that even the angels in heaven must have heard it. Hot desire, being suppressed for far too long, flooded through her veins. When he gently parted her lips and sneaked his tongue into her mouth, she sighed and finally relaxed in his embrace. Closing her eyes she put her arms around Jane's neck and started to return his loving kiss. She felt him shivering when she allowed him to plunder her mouth, to deepen the kiss, to heighten the passion. Lisbon herself felt goose bumps spreading over the whole body and her knees becoming weak. All the nerves, every fiber of her was exploding with pleasure. What had she missed all these years?!

However, she knew this kiss – and whatever also was about to happen during the holidays – wouldn't change a thing. Not on the surface, that is. Maybe it would change those intimate moments, they shared sometimes. Though they won't act any differently at work and it certainly won't change the whole Red John topic. Or maybe it would make it even worse.

Maybe it would complicate everything.

*But for now...*she thought, while Jane pressed her against the nearest wall, his lips placing hot, open-mouthed kisses on her face and his fingers clinging to her waist.

For the time being...it would simply represent some fulfilled Christmas wishes.

The End

Kapitel 12: New Year's Nonsense

New Year's Nonsense

"Hey Rigsby, where's Lisbon?"

"She offered to stay with Ben in her office." Rigsby bowed his head sheepishly. "I feel bad about this, but she insisted."

Jane waved his concern aside. "Don't worry, I'm pretty sure she was glad about the opportunity."

Rigsby shrugged. "I hope so. Anyway, I'm on my way to the roof. You coming, too?"

"Nah, I'm going to stay with Lisbon."

"Okay. See you later."

Jane nodded and strolled towards his boss's office, while his colleague went to the place, where every other CBI employee had already gone to – the roof to watch the fireworks.

Lisbon and her team had been late, since they had arrived at the headquarters only one hour before midnight. The disadvantage of a CBI party was that, while every single cop and attorney of the CBI was present, *somebody* had to be on call duty. Unfortunately, it had been the job of Serious Crimes Unit this year.

So when the phone had rung with a murder just a few hours before the start of the CBI New Year's Party, they had had no choice but to throw their plans to the winds. It had been an easy case, indeed, but it took them some time to sort out the important facts nevertheless. Afterwards they had rushed back to the CBI with no time left to change their clothes. It wasn't that bad for the men since they had been wearing suits anyway, and Grace had even found a skirt in her locker.

The only one, who was kind of out of place with her jeans, sneakers and a leather jacket between all the suits and dresses, was Lisbon. Though she wouldn't have been Teresa Lisbon if she had really cared about it. And honestly, Jane truly admired her for that.

So when he reached her office door, he stopped silently to simply enjoy the picture in front of him for a minute.

Lisbon was sitting on the white couch with Benjamin Rigsby sleeping in her arms. She was humming while gently stroking his dark haired head. She wasn't wearing her jacket anymore – probably because her blouse was softer and therefore cozier for the toddler. The light in her office was dimmed and the chatter and laughter from the roof were only low background sounds in here. All of it made it a pretty adorable and

peaceful picture.

"Hey, Lisbon," Jane whispered and felt a shiver of attraction flowing over his body, when she looked at him with sparkling green eyes.

"Hey." She gave him a warm smile, but then turned her attention back to Ben. "Isn't he cute?"

"I presume that's a rhetorical question." Smiling himself Jane sat down right beside her, with his knee touching hers. There was plenty of space on that couch, but today he needed some closeness – and he knew that Lisbon wouldn't mind at all.

"Yeah..." Lisbon placed a peck on Ben's forehead and nestled him fondly against her chest. "I'm happy that Sarah brought him along."

With a grin Jane nudged her shoulder. "Because now you have a perfect excuse to hide in here while the crowd is squeezed upstairs."

Lisbon smirked at him. "You just have to know how to do it."

Jane chuckled and was satisfied when his friend didn't move away and was simply leaning against his shoulder now.

"Honestly, I wasn't in the mood for a party," she confessed with her voice low after a moment of quiet. "And I truly adore this little man. It's a win-win situation, you know."

"I see." Jane smiled fondly at her and added, "I'm getting the feeling that I'm disturbing you two. Maybe I should leave you alone with the womanizer." He made no effort to get up though.

"He is a womanizer, isn't he?" Lisbon sighed and as if Ben had heard her, he sleepily opened his eyes and yawned heartily. "Aw, hey there, my little boy!" She kissed him again and Ben gave her a bright grin in return, reaching for her face.

Lisbon chuckled and let him touch her. He was too cute, a dear little boy, everyone immediately felt in love with.

"Well, obviously, *he* does know how to do it," Jane commented dryly, but the delighted shimmer in his eyes gave him away. He had been sad at first, Ben's birth reminding him of his daughter's, and yet he had fallen for him in no time, too. "It's unbelievable, how easy he wraps every woman around his little finger – especially you and Grace. I think you even are his favorite women beside his mother."

With her eyes never leaving the baby boy, she replied, "You're just jealous, Jane."

"Meh, why would I be jealous?"

"First of all, you are worried, because we love him more than you."

"Hey, that's not-"

"And second, you're sulking, because our clever boy here is picky. He clearly prefers women over men. He's not into men at all – apart from Rigsby, of course. That's why you and Cho are sulking."

Jane raised his brow. "You can tell that Cho is sulking?"

"Yes, it's kind of obvious."

Ben added an approving squeak and cuddled his head against Lisbon's chest, staring brightly at Jane, as if to say, *'Look what I can do!'*

Now pouting for real, Jane grunted under his breath and stuck out his tongue. With a thrilled giggle Ben immediately tried to imitate him.

"Jane!"

"What?" He raised his arms in defense. "He started it!"

Lisbon rolled her eyes but wasn't able to hide the laughter in them.

"You're such a child sometimes!"

"That's it! I'm leaving you alone with that heartbreaker. And I mean that literally." With mock hurt in his expression he poked the snickering toddler and made an attempt to get up.

Lisbon's hand was on his leg to stop him on an instant.

"No. Stay."

"Why?"

"Because I say so. I'm your boss, remember?" she teased. "I simply want you to."

She tried to mask it, but Jane knew, she meant it. Sighing excessively he sunk back and let her snuggle against his side again. The kid on her lap definitely made her cuddly.

"Right. And of course I'll listen to my boss as always."

Lisbon snorted. "Finally, Ladies and Gentlemen, the joke of the year."

Jane grinned and placed his arm affectionately around her shoulders – an unusual intimate gesture, but neither of them cared.

Somewhere in the building a drunken guest yelled, "Five minutes, everybody!"

"So, five minutes left," Jane repeated and Lisbon nodded in agreement.

"Do you have any resolutions?"

Lisbon blinked. "Actually I do."

When Jane looked at her expectantly, she continued, "I want to reunite my brothers. I'm sick of them fighting."

"That's a good one. I'm sure you'll succeed."

"Thanks...What about you, Jane? Do you have a resolution?"

He was about to answer, when she interfered.

"Apart from catching Red John!" He closed his mouth again, without having said a word. "You have to name at least one other point!"

With any other person he would have been angry, but her warm gaze was so heartening that he couldn't be angry – even if he had wanted to.

"Uhm...I want to close cases?"

"Oh come on, you can do better than that. Besides, it's part of your job description, you will be paid for that!...Can't you think of anything else?"

He was silent for a second and looked at her, his eyes suddenly deep and serious. "Apparently, I do think of something else."

Even though it was half dark in Lisbon's office, he was pretty sure to see a hint of red on her cheeks.

"Well? Do tell!"

"I'll fight for our men's honor and try to win back the women's hearts from this little charmer – and since I think that Grace is a lost cause already, I'll put my concentration on you, my dear."

Now Jane knew for sure that Lisbon was blushing.

"Ah...well, then, good luck with that," she murmured utterly bashful.

They heard increasing bawling from the roof and then they were listening how the party guests started to count down.

Finally, when the turn of the year was done after seconds and the fireworks begun, Jane propped his forehead against hers and whispered,

"Happy New Year, Lisbon."

"Happy New Year, Jane." With these words and without thinking she tilted her head slowly and kissed him gently on his mouth. Her lips were warm and soft against his, and they made him shivering all over. Jane wasn't aware that he was holding his breath, but all he needed for now, was Lisbon anyway. Carefully he leaned more into the innocent but intimate touch. A sigh escaped her throat and he answered with an encouraging move of his lips.

Suddenly each of them felt a small hand on the cheek. With a little smack they parted only a few inches and looked at Ben. However, while he was bracing himself on their faces, the little boy stared past them through the window, wondering about those colorful lights, which where exploding into the dark night.

"Uhm...I can't move," Jane stated smiling.

With an amused whisper Lisbon answered, "Then don't." And while closing her eyes, she kissed him again.

The End

Kapitel 13: Moonlight Serenade

Moonlight Serenade

"This is ridiculous!" Lisbon huffed.

"I'm pretty sure, 'ridiculous' is the last word they wanted this event to be associated with," Cho answered beside her, but she could hear the agreeing grin in his voice.

"Oh, come on, Cho, a masked ball? Those people definitely live in the wrong century."

Cho shrugged. "I guess it's supposed to be romantic."

"Yeah, right," Lisbon replied with a snort, "A hall full of high ups, who butter each other up all through the night – I can't think of anything more romantic."

"You do look great though, Boss."

Lisbon turned to him and smiled softly. "Thank you. You don't look so bad yourself."

"Except for the mask."

She grinned. "You've got it."

They shared a moment of fellow suffering until Rigsby appeared in front of them. Just like Cho he was wearing an expensive looking black suit with a bow tie. However, while his friend wore a blue mask, his own was green.

"This sucks!" he complained. "I already had to dance with Brenda three times!"

"For what it's worth, you looked very harmonious together," Cho dead panned.

"I stepped on her feet...repeatedly." Rigsby bowed his head sheepishly, while his colleagues could barely hide their amusement.

"And yet she wanted to dance with you three times? Oh boy, what's in that champagne?" Lisbon smirked while looking at the crowd. "Where's VanPelt?"

"I'm here, Boss." Grace stopped next to her, clinging to a glass of said champagne. Her long dress was colored in a deep red, which was even matching her ginger hair. A delicate golden mask was completing her outfit.

"Alright, guys! Go and mix with the other guests. Director Bertram wants us to chit chat with the most important people of California. So smile nicely and try to have some fun. Oh and try not to break any bones." For the last part Lisbon threw a pointed look at Rigsby, who blushed and nodded slowly.

"Yes, Boss." Cho and Grace answered synchronously and with the same smirk on their lips.

With a small grin Lisbon watched her team strolling away and then sighed gravely, when she saw the Chief of the Sac PD walking towards her. She groaned under her breath.

She truly was no fan of excessive and fancy high-up parties.

XxxMoonlight SerenadexxX

If someone had asked her, Lisbon would have firmly denied the fact that she was hiding. A Senior Special Agent of the CBI didn't hide. Especially when currently the greatest danger emanated from dance willing men.

Nevertheless she was in no mood to throw herself back into their arms. She had already done her duty anyway! She had danced with every important man Bertram would have wanted her to – and she had even danced with the CBI director himself. And with Rigsby, even though he had stepped on her feet as well – but she had rather danced with him than with that old unsympathetic ex-politician, who had stared at her décolleté while talking to her.

Lisbon moaned and leaned against the wall next to a heavy red curtain. A pillar in front of her was shielding her at least a little bit from the crowd. Her feet felt like burning – not only because of Rigsby but also because she wasn't used to dance in high heels all night long.

"I could show you a hideout, which is way more effective."

Lisbon almost flinched when a male voice interrupted her musing.

"I'm not hiding," she said automatically and twisted her head, only to find a man in a black tux leaning on the pillar. He wasn't looking at her, but it was obvious that he had addressed her.

"Sure you are. Well, at least you're trying to." He smiled impishly and finally turned to face her. Lisbon held her breath without noticing, when a pair of deep blue eyes met hers and captured her gaze. His blond hair was short and curly, and his face was partly covered with a mask in black and silver. Even so she could tell that he was her age – perhaps a few years older. And those eyes...they nearly glowed in the shadow of the pillar.

She swallowed and started breathing again. He wasn't Lisbon's preferred type but somehow – she had no idea why – he was tempting. And she had no idea, who the hell he was. Even with them wearing a mask, it was possible to identify people. Unless you simply didn't know them, of course.

"I was just taking a break," she evaded lamely.

He gave her a soft chuckle and stepped closer. "Or fleeing." He made no secret of scrutinizing her and she felt self-conscious all of a sudden, though there was no reason for it. Her strapless dark blue dress was long and adorned with lots of tiny jewels, which were looking like stars in the nighttime sky. Her dark hair fell in soft waves to her shoulders and her blue and silver mask fit her dress perfectly.

"A beautiful woman shouldn't be forced to hide, but I understand. The company hasn't been very thrilling yet."

She raised her eye brows. "And I assume it's getting better now?"

"Of course!" He flashed a sweet but mischievous grin at her and exposed his perfect white teeth.

"That's very self-confident, Mr...?"

"Nice try. May I remind you of the fact that this is a masked ball? Forget about the names."

While Lisbon rolled her eyes, he grabbed two glasses of champagne from a passing waiter and offered her one.

"As I said, I know the perfect place to hide. Are you interested?"

She eyed him skeptically for a second, but finally reached for the glass. "I'm listening."

"I'll tell you if you take me with you. I'm tired of this...masquerade."

Lisbon lifted a single brow at this condition and yet the opportunity of escaping was way too tempting. "Fine. But no funny stuff, I'm carrying a gun."

"I figured that, Agent, even though I wondered where you're hiding it. No gun would fit into that small purse of yours."

"How do you know that I'm an agent?" She looked at him suspiciously, while she purposefully avoided adding something to his suggestion.

He smirked and turned to stroll away.

"Hey, wait!" Lisbon hissed and followed him – without hesitation but with a careful look around to check if anybody was paying attention to them.

XxxMoonlight SerenadexxX

"So this is your perfect hideout?"

"Why, of course! It *is* perfect. No one will find us here."

"Unless someone is looking for, I don't know, some fresh air?" was Lisbon's dry reply.

Her companion shook his head. "They won't look for that here of all places. You didn't know that there is a balcony behind that curtain either, did you?"

She bowed her head and admitted, "I didn't, but that doesn't mean..." Her voice died when he tenderly took her hand and breathed an old-school kiss on its back.

"Just trust me...okay?" he whispered while looking straight into her eyes.

Lisbon could only stare back and nodded slowly. When he finally released both her hand and her look, she needed to take a deep breath. Damn, this man was charming, handsome, hard to resist and pretty aware of it – in one word: dangerous. Very dangerous.

To distract herself from him Lisbon decided to take in her surroundings. They were on a broad balcony with an ornate railing made of stone. The view from it was not only breathtaking but also very romantic. Beneath them was a beautiful English garden, softly lit with lanterns, and over their heads was the nighttime sky with its stars. The house wall next the balcony was covered with deep green ivy and made it look as if had arisen from a Romeo and Juliet movie.

The air was cool but not too cold and from inside they could hear the muted laughter and music, but the red curtain in front of the door was shielding them from prying eyes.

"This is...really nice." Lisbon smiled in wonder and he answered with a proud grin.

"I thought so."

They were silent for a moment, simply watching each other.

Then he suddenly tilted his head and smirked. "Go ahead, I don't mind."

"Excuse me?" Lisbon furrowed her brows in confusion.

"Take your shoes off. You've been probably thinking about it the whole evening. And since we are the only ones out here, by all means, don't let me stop you."

Lisbon was stunned. "How do you know...?"

He shrugged. "You're obviously not comfortable wearing those heels. It wasn't hard to figure out."

"What are you, a psychic?" Lisbon snorted defensively, while feeling a bit awkward in account of getting caught.

"Nah, there's no such thing as psychics. I'm just being observant."

"Okay..." Lisbon hesitated, but then shrugged and placed her champagne on the

railing to get rid of her shoes. As soon as her tights covered feet met the cold ground Lisbon sighed in pure relief.

He chuckled and put his glass next to hers. "Better?"

"You've no idea!"

When he laughed out loud at her emphasis, she decided that she liked that warm, slightly vibrating sound – and suddenly she noticed that it had broken the ice between them.

XxxMoonlight SerenadexxX

During the following hour he entertained her with witty anecdotes – she learned that he used to be with carnies – and his simply natural, somewhat old-school gentlemen charm. She didn't know if everything he told her was true, but he made her laugh, so she didn't care. He was a surprising pleasant company and they even developed kind of banter – hard on the edge between teasing and flirting.

Right now she was chuckling at one of his remarks, when he stepped to the balcony door and opened it a crack. Immediately the music became louder and while he strolled back to her, the band just started to play Glenn Miller's *Moonlight Serenade*.

She eyed him curiously as he stopped in front of her and offered his hand.

"Dance with me."

"That's not a question."

He smiled. "No, it isn't."

Lisbon scrutinized him for a few seconds, considering if she was ready to give him so much control.

Finally she reached for his hand – she just couldn't resist. She had already sneaked and hidden out with a foreign man, what harm could be done when she also danced with him?

"Fine, but don't step on my toes." Barefooted as she was, that would hurt without any doubt.

However, he didn't seem to be insecure. "I won't," he even promised, when he gathered her into his arms.

"We will see..." she whispered and to her own surprise she relaxed against him. Her head naturally found a place on his shoulder and while they started swaying, she didn't mind him hugging her closer.

XxxMoonlight SerenadexxX

Time passed by without her noticing. Their dance was slow and neither of them had said a word for awhile, but the silence wasn't awkward or unwelcoming. On the contrary, Lisbon was enjoying herself pretty much.

The wind had become chillier and made her instinctively seeking his warmth. His nearness and even his warm hand on her back effectively kept her from feeling cold. He also smelled very good, she had to admit to herself sheepishly.

She was about to bury her face into the crook of his neck, but with still wearing the mask it was a quite inconvenient task.

When she grumbled, he stated casually, "You can take it off, you know."

"*May I remind you of the fact that this is a masked ball?*" she repeated his earlier words with a smirk in her voice. "Wouldn't that destroy the spell?"

"It was worth a try." He laughed softly into her ear, leaving a small, but pleasant shiver running down her spine. "But I agree with you, of course. We can't have the magic ruined. However, I don't want you to feel uncomfortable."

"So what do you suggest?"

"Hm...ah, I know! Close your eyes."

"What?" She blinked and looked at him.

"Well, we'll close our eyes and *then* take off the masks. I'm sure, we'll manage the swaying without seeing," he explained, obviously proud of his idea.

Lisbon hesitated doubtfully. "But how do I know that you won't cheat and peek as soon as I close my eyes?"

Her partner shrugged. "How do *I* know that *you* won't cheat, my dear?"

Lisbon gave him an unladylike snort. "I don't cheat!" she said with emphasis.

"See? Neither do I. We simply have to trust each other's honor."

She eyed him suspiciously, while he waited with the patience of a saint.

Finally she nodded slowly. "Okay, but you go first."

"Fine. Close your eyes then." While his were already shut and he reached for his mask, she allowed herself some more seconds before she complied eventually.

She felt him moving until his hands brought her back into his embrace. "Done," he murmured. "Your turn."

Lisbon raised her hands to her mask and tried to untie the ribbons, which were holding it to her face. Unfortunately it wasn't as easy as she had thought.

"Dammit!" she cursed under her breath.

"What's wrong?"

"Uhm, it's somehow entangled with my hair, I can't get it off."

"Wait, let me help you."

"Without looking?" She lifted a brow.

"Oh believe me, I've successfully freed things without looking before."

"I really don't want to know what...things...what..." Lisbon became silent when his hands trailed over her arms upwards to her shoulders and finally to her neck. She bit on her lip to keep herself from shuddering because of the sudden electrifying sensation. Though there wasn't much she could do about the goosebumps, which were dancing over her skin.

He let his fingers carefully wander to her face and along the mask towards the ribbons. It took him a minute till he indeed succeeded in untying them.

"Thanks." She smiled softly, even though he couldn't see it.

"You're welcome..." His whisper suddenly sounded distracted. She would have wondered about that, but right now she was more confused, that he didn't lower his hands after taking off her mask.

Instead she could feel his fingertips tracing her facial features in a very fond and sensual way.

"What...are you doing?" she breathed helplessly, with heart clearly pounding faster all of a sudden.

"I can't see you anymore", was his husky answer. Warm fingers were feeling their way from her temples to her cheeks, then a little further to her nose and down to her dimples until they finally moved to her lips.

Lisbon swallowed hard.

"That's cheating...Looking with your fingers." Her voice was barely a whisper now, but he heard her nevertheless.

"It's not cheating..." He was touching her lips in a tender caress, but then she could also feel some hot puffs of air joining it. "...But if you're complaining, I can even do this without them."

And with that the fingers slipped back to her cheeks and a pair of warm lips was pressed to hers.

Lisbon inhaled sharply and for a second she instinctively wanted to push him away and kick him to the ground. However, before she could do that, her mind stopped working completely.

XxxMoonlight SerenadexxX

From the moment she relaxed in his arms and opened up for his passionate kiss, she was lost.

His lips were moving against hers in a slow, sensual way that made her toes curl, while his arms were encircling her small frame firmly, but in no way threatening. Starting to feel dizzy and with a sudden weakness in her knees she brought her arms around his neck to get even closer.

When she clawed her fingers into those smooth blond curls, he moaned and angled his head to have an even better access to her lips. Lisbon sighed and it was just then, that his tongue slipped into her mouth curiously. She didn't mind at all, just freely parted her lips even more. The tip of his tongue met her own and started to challenge her with sinful movements to join his game. She gladly accepted it on an instant.

If Lisbon had been able to still think straight, she would have wondered when she had been kissed like that the last time.

Actually, the moment right now could have been a scene from a romantic movie: With soft, slow music playing – an old song with character – the dark sky with thousands of stars and a bright crescent giving some glowing light to a historic balcony. Two glasses of champagne were waiting long forgotten on the railing and right beside it was a couple, tightly embraced, with the woman shivering against her partner because of the chilly air and his hot kisses.

They *made* a beautiful picture, alright, but frankly, Lisbon wasn't giving a damn about her surroundings just now. All she could care about were his demanding lips, his playful tongue and his wandering hands. His fingers were stroking along her spine and towards her sides in repeating circles. Though he wasn't touching any inappropriate territory – being a gentleman to the core – he was leaving inflaming trails on her body, which were burning through the thin fabric of her dress and making her panting into his mouth.

Simultaneously also his breath became more and more erratic, not just with all the passing seconds and minutes, but also with every single stroke of her fingers through his hair. And he was trembling whenever she was snuggling into him a tiny bit more.

With a raw sound escaping his throat he pressed her against the railing and Lisbon had to break the kiss for a small cry of pleasure. That however brought some clarity back to them and Lisbon coughed in slight embarrassment. When he immediately joined their lips again, she could feel him smiling.

And she simply couldn't help smiling back.

Their passionate kissing slowed down bit by bit and became a soft and loving caress. Lisbon knew – he probably did know either – that this was neither the right place nor time to go any further – even though every nerve of her body was tingling with longing and lust.

There was a little smack audible when they finally parted, only to be mixed with the sound of their fast inhaling.

Their foreheads meeting in a tender touch, they tried to compose themselves.

"I think I should go...for reasons of safety," he whispered, his hot breath caressing the sensitive skin of her face.

"Okay," she managed to reply, but neither of them moved.

"Hm..." He hummed, still clearly enjoying her closeness. "Shouldn't you be asking me whether we will see each other again?"

Lisbon barely shook her head. "That would be way over the top."

"Huh...right. If faith is willing, we'll meet again."

She groaned and commented dryly, "I correct, *that* was way over the top."

He laughed with a low, hoarse voice and slightly pulled away. Lisbon felt his fingers trailing back to her cheeks and then her mask was gently placed on her face again. Carefully he fastened the ribbons around her head.

"Good bye, my dear..." he breathed and before she was able to answer, he pressed his lips fervently on hers for the last time, forcing just another jolt of fluid electricity into her veins.

And then, just like that, he was gone.

Lisbon blinked and stared at the open balcony door, leaning on the railing for support.

What the hell had just happened? She shivered and it was only then that she noticed how cold the air had become. How chilly it truly was without his warm body pressed against hers.

She sighed, still being shaky and breathless, and bowed down for her shoes.

It wasn't very common for her to have a make-out session with a stranger on a balcony, but she couldn't bring herself to regret it. Her body was still humming from the pleasure his kisses and touches had caused. And despite her earlier statement she wondered if she would indeed see him again one day.

XxxMoonlight SerenadexxX

The following morning Lisbon was strolling with Virgil Minelli towards his office.

"So...why am I getting a consultant again?"

"Well...the governor is a huge fan of him and suggested to me, that Mr. Jane would be a great asset to my team." Minelli shrugged apologetically when she gave him a quizzical look. "I'm sorry, Teresa," he added empathetically, "I have complete faith in you, but...you know...if the governor is happy, I'll be happy."

"I understand." She grinned.

Minelli raised his brows meaningfully at her. "You'll lose that urge to laugh soon, Agent, when you understand in what you got yourself into."

"In what *you* got me into, actually," she corrected him dryly.

He shrugged again. "What can I say, I'm the boss."

These words made Lisbon chuckle, but then she smiled softly. "Yes, you are."

He twinkled at her when they arrived at his office. "Anyway, Agent Lisbon meet...Where is he?" Both of them peeked into the room only to find it empty. "Huh, he must have sneaked out."

"Oh great, that's a good start." Lisbon rolled her eyes. "A consultant who hides from me – I wonder how I could have survived without that until now."

"No need for sarcasm, Lisbon." Minelli scratched his chin with a puzzled expression. "Well, we'll take a rain check on the introduction."

Lisbon nodded and stopped herself from replying '*No need to hurry.*' She simply answered "Sure. See you later, Boss" instead and turned to head to her own office.

"A consultant..." she murmured under her breath when she reached it, "how ridiculous."

"Actually I thought that it could be kind of fun."

Lisbon stopped dead in her tracks and even if the familiar male voice hadn't been an indication, she would have recognized him immediately because of the blond curls, which were currently burrowed in the cushions of her office couch.

The not so strange man pushed himself up and walked towards her, gleaming at her with those blue eyes.

"It's a pleasure to *finally* meet you, Agent Lisbon. My name is Patrick Jane and I'm your

new consultant." He smiled brightly and shook her hand with a barely noticeable caress of his thumb.

Lisbon felt a blush crawling over her cheeks and the only thing she was able to think was, *'Oh boy, that's going to be interesting.'*

The End

Kapitel 14: Before the Hunt Came to an End

Before the Hunt Came to an End

The attic was almost dark, only lit by a small touch of the setting sun.

Yet the two people standing closely in front of each other couldn't care less. The darkness even fitted the moment, surrounding them in a comforting and protecting embrace.

They were staring at each other - both well aware of the fact that the end was near. The end of a decade-long hunt. There was no doubt that it would be over soon. Very soon. However, neither of them was able to tell how the end would look like. If they would succeed. What they would lose.

Lisbon sighed deeply and blinked. Buried deep inside she felt a nearly unbearable longing radiating to every fiber of her body, her heart and her mind. Fear, worry and love were fighting a ruthless battle under her surface.

She had never felt as raw and vulnerable as she did now while she was standing in front of her consultant.

Her looks were caressing the curves of his face, tracing every line to memorize all of them, before she let them return to his currently green gleaming eyes.

"Can you tell me that everything is going to be fine?" Her voice wavered slightly and she cleared her throat quickly to cover the slip. A waste of effort.

Jane watched her intently, not answering right away. He took his time to savor her sight, to drink it in. The dusty air of the attic was thick with tension and unspoken feelings.

"No."

She nodded. That was the answer she had expected. It hurt nevertheless. The pain felt like a knife cutting through her gut. And when he briefly closed his eyes, she knew that he felt it too.

"Jane..." She whispered his name, not trusting her voice anymore, and waited for him to look at her again. Holding the intimate eye contact she lifted her hands around her neck and unclasped her golden chain. They were already standing close and yet she took one step closer. So much closer. Almost, but not quite touching him, though she could already feel the warmth of his body. When she raised her head, she tasted his breath on her tongue. Her mouth went dry and she swallowed, then nervously moistened her lips. For a second she forgot what she wanted to do.

He was waiting, patiently, curious even, with a hint of amusement that vanished as fast

as it had appeared.

Lisbon inhaled deeply, trying to clear her head, and then, as if in slow motion, she brought her hands around his neck and re-clasped the chain. Her fingertips lingered on his warm skin longer than necessary; the temptation to touch it and bury her fingers into his golden curls was way too strong. On impulse she stretched her fingers, her nails slightly scratching the back of his neck, until she finally got hold of his hair. She caught her breath and when he did a sharp intake of his own, she almost missed the shiver he couldn't suppress. When he placed his hands on her hips and she was able to feel his hot palms through the thin fabric of her blouse, she couldn't help shuddering on her own.

Neither of them dared to move. For a long time.

Only when the tension became all but painful Lisbon broke the moment by lowering her head and her hands. Yet she refused to step back – and he obviously didn't mind.

"You know that I don't believe in God" he said softly and carefully touched the cross, which was hanging around *his* neck now. While eyeing the pendant his expression was a mixture of wonder, pain and pure affection for the woman in front of him.

"Yes, I know." She waited once more until his gaze was back on her and added quietly, "But I do."

Jane gave her a small, sad smile and reached for her hand to entwine his fingers with hers. There was so much he wanted to tell her but couldn't. He also knew that there were similar things *she* longed to say. Or to do.

He saw her swallowing hard and her eyes were large and watery, but apart from that nothing gave away that she was afraid. Afraid of what the near future would bring. Afraid of losing the man she loved. Or losing anyone else she cared about, for that matter.

Beside the fear, however, the light green eyes of hers also promised endless strength to fight for those people. She was afraid, yes, but she was nowhere near the point where the panic would paralyze her. She would fight. No matter what.

And even though he knew about her character, her strength and her love the realization of what that truly meant hit him with full force just now.

A raw sound escaped from his throat, and all of a sudden she was buried in his arms, her small frame pressed against him. His hands grasped the back of her blouse, holding her as close as possible, while he almost violently crushed his lips against hers.

Lisbon moaned, completely caught off guard, and helplessly sunk into him when he took the chance to enter her mouth with his tongue. After the initial moment of shock she clung to his vest and started to kiss him back. With all the passion she could afford. With all the passion she had stifled during the past several years.

Their lips parted with a smack, only to meet again. The contact was a bit softer, tender this time and yet still passionate. Lisbon sighed and opened her mouth again to invite him in, to let him plunder it in a mind-blowing deep kiss.

It was only when both of them felt dizzy through the lack of air that Lisbon slowly let go of his lips. Even though she didn't want to, and if his groan was anything to go by, Jane didn't want to either.

"I shouldn't have done this but I..." he whispered out of breath and leaned his forehead against hers, "I needed to...you know, just in case I wouldn't get the chance again."

She nodded, her eyes closed, panting just like he was. "I know."

A few moments of nearly-silence passed, before Lisbon slowly freed herself from his embrace and brought some distance between them.

"I...uhm...should go home." She looked at him with a hint of unease in her expression.

Jane gave her an absent-minded nod and ran his fingers through his hair.

"You want to come...?" she added after a short pause, her voice low and careful.

When he glanced at her with his eyes shattered by pain, Lisbon felt her heart breaking.

"I'm sorry, Lisbon, but I can't."

She managed to give him an encouraging smile that couldn't quite hide the disappointment. "It's okay, I understand." She reached for his hand and squeezed it soothingly.

"Good night, Jane. See you...tomorrow."

"Yeah. Tomorrow." With her heart heavy as stone she turned away and left the attic, while he watched her go.

He couldn't be with her, no matter how much he wanted to. How much it hurt to let her go. He needed a clear head. He needed to prepare himself for tomorrow when the hunt would finally come to an end. He needed...

"Lisbon, wait!"

Her. All he needed right now was her.

Because no one knew what tomorrow would bring.

The End

Kapitel 15: Call Me Maybe

Warning: Lime

Call Me Maybe

"This was the worst idea you *ever* had!" Lisbon shouted breathlessly to be louder than the heavy drumming rain she and Jane were currently running through.

"Come on, Lisbon, how is this my fault?" Jane dared to ask while he hurried after her.

She sent him a death glare over her shoulder. "Are you kidding me? It was your stupid plan to chase after the suspect without back-up, because 'he is most likely innocent anyway'. And now we're stuck in the middle of nowhere while it's raining like hell, because Mr-Most-Likely-Innocent STOLE MY CAR!"

"Yeah, there's a certain irony behind that, isn't it?"

Lisbon actually growled. "Not funny, Jane, not funny."

He ignored some promising threats of pain she muttered under her breath and he said, "I think we should look for protection against the rain. It's getting worse."

"No kidding?!" Lisbon snorted, her voice dripping with sarcasm. "That thought never occurred to me! I actually like swimming through mud and rain with my clothes still on!"

"You could simply get rid of your clothes if that's what is bothering you?" he suggested and glanced around in hope to find a shelter.

"I hate you."

"No, you don't-AHA! Found something! Come on!"

"Wha-Jane!" He gave her no time to object. Instead he simply grabbed her hand and pulled her with him.

They had run a few more meters when Lisbon realized what they were heading towards.

"That's a freaking telephone booth, Jane!"

"Do you have a better idea? That's what I thought." They arrived at the classic red telephone booth and Jane wrenched it open before he ushered Lisbon in. Following her inside he let the door fall shut with a loud thud.

It was just then that he realized how small that booth actually was.

"Jane..." Lisbon started, still trying to catch her breath, "we can't stay here. There's no space for both of us."

He couldn't help admitting to himself that she was right. Her back was intimately pressed against his front so that he was able to feel every breath she took. Swallowing hard he let his eyes wander over her frame. Despite the rain it had been a hot day, so Lisbon had left her jacket in the car just like he had done it with his. The white – and now wet – blouse she was wearing had become translucent, and allowed him to see the white straps of her bra.

"Uhm..." Jane cleared his throat, "you're probably right. You know what, I'll just wait outside. You can stay here and try to...call...Cho...to..." he trailed off. During his suggestion he had pushed the door with his back, but nothing had happened. No matter how hard he pressed his weight against it, it didn't move an inch.

"Uh oh..."

"What's wrong?" Lisbon was alarmed immediately, obviously well aware of the dread in his voice.

"You're not going to like it..."

"You don't say."

"I can't open it."

"What?"

"The door. I can't open it. It's stuck."

Lisbon groaned in desperation. "Please tell me, you're making a really bad joke!"

"Sorry to disappoint you..."

"Not the first time today."

"Hey!" Jane's protest was only half-hearted, but that changed as soon as Lisbon brought one of her feet between his legs. "What are you doing?!"

"Shut up, I'm trying it myself. I'm stronger than you." Bracing herself on the opposite wall, right above the phone, she pressed her foot against the door. When still nothing happened, she started kicking against it.

"Jesus, could you stop that, woman?!" Jane hissed, because she was pushing her buttocks against the center of his body. Lisbon froze in realization and complied instantly.

"Sorry..." she muttered and he saw her ears reddening.

"Never mind. Do have your mobile phone on you? Mine is lying in your car."

"Great! Yes, I do. It's in my back pocket."

Despite this helpful news Lisbon made no move to get it. Jane furrowed his brows. "Lisbon?"

"It's in my *back* pocket, Jane!" She sounded annoyed and a bit embarrassed, and it took a moment for Jane to understand what the problem was.

When he finally did, he could help grinning smugly. His fierce little firecracker didn't dare reaching between their touching bodies. *How sweet*, he thought with a chuckle, only to earn a grumble from Lisbon.

"Hold still," he said amused, taking the matter literally in his own hands.

Touching her butt hadn't been Jane's intention at all, but when he accidentally did, Lisbon startled so badly that she fought with every power she had to turn around in that very tight booth. Jane winced in pain, when she repeatedly stepped on his feet and rammed her elbow in his gut.

"What the hell, Jane?" she gasped as soon as she was facing him.

His response was a whining. "I didn't do it deliberately, Lisbon! Besides, I already got your phone!"

The agent murmured something under her breath and grabbed it from his hold, completely ignoring her sulking consultant for a moment.

"It's not working. I think it might be wet." Lisbon sighed.

"Let it dry, maybe it'll work again."

Lisbon shrugged. "We have no other choice anyway."

"What's with that phone?" Jane nodded to the telephone of the booth behind Lisbon. "Wait, don't move!" He interjected reproachfully when she was about to turn around again. "I get this!"

"Fine," Lisbon rolled her eyes and let him reach around her. "Try to call 911."

There was a moment of silence while Jane did as told.

"I can't, it's dead."

"What do you mean it's dead?"

Jane shrugged. "I guess no one needs telephone booths anymore."

"Well, apparently we do. Okay, let me get this straight. We're stuck – not only in the middle of nowhere but also in a telephone booth with a not-working telephone. My car has been stolen, my mobile phone is wet and nobody knows where we are. We have a cloudburst outside and something that feels like a sauna oven in here. Was that it?"

"Pretty much."

"Great!" Lisbon groaned and ran her fingers through her hair. The thought that it was a beautiful sight flashed through Jane's mind, even though her hair was wet and curly. Or maybe even because of this fact.

"Relax, Lisbon. We'll get out of here somehow. You'll see! Besides it could be worse, right?"

His partner took a deep breath and was about to say something agreeing, when she glanced outside. Or more precisely, she *tried* to glance outside. The glass of the telephone booth was fogged. Completely. It was impossible to see anything of the clouded, rainy afternoon.

Lisbon frowned at Jane and he raised his hands in defense.

"That's *really* not my fault!"

"You're breathing, aren't you?" Lisbon stated dryly.

"Well, yes, but–"

"Oh, shut up, Jane!"

xxx

They had been stuck in that nice red cage for almost an hour and slowly but surely it was getting uncomfortable. Just out of sheer frustration Lisbon wrote 'Help' in the steam on the window.

"Now, don't be ridiculous, Lisbon. That's a little bit over-dramatic, don't you think?" Jane shook his head, still being able to find a certain amusement in this situation.

"No," she replied defiantly. She was looking at everything but him, obviously not being used to be in physical contact with her consultant.

Jane scrutinized her for a moment while trying to figure out how to cheer her up – even though he kind of enjoyed her embarrassment regarding to their closeness. When he glanced at her finger-painted cry for help a grin lit up his face.

"Hey Lisbon, look at this!" He pressed his hand against the fogged glass for a moment and then removed it so that his hand print remained behind. "Cool, eh?"

She rolled her eyes at him. "Nothing in here is cool anymore! Besides, we're not on the Titanic and we are *especially* not having..." It was just then that she realized what she was about to say. "Uhm...you know..." she stammered, blushing furiously.

"Having what, Lisbon?" Jane wondered innocently with a smile so leering that it would have shamed the devil.

"Shut up, Jane," was her growled response. She tried to distance herself from him, but there simply was no room for that. The huge phone device bumped into her back and made her jerking forwards, actually bringing her even closer to him.

"Careful, my dear," Jane warned right into her ear, with his voice still amused and also low all of a sudden. As his arms sneaked around her middle to pull her away from the pain causing danger, he thought he felt her shivering slightly.

"Jane..." Lisbon's breath got caught in her throat, but she had no idea what to say, her brain probably suffering the sudden loss of reasonable thoughts.

"Yes, my dear?" This time it was just a hoarse whisper that reached her sensitive ear, while his hot hands were burning her skin on the small of her back, right through her wet blouse. This time he made her trembling violently.

"What are you doing?" she almost moaned.

"I'm keeping you from hurting yourself."

"Ah okay. Thanks," was her bewildered answer.

Jane smirked at her irritation, but that grin vanished suddenly while he was watching how Lisbon's gaze wandered downwards. A flash of heat floated his body as he realized what she was staring at. He had tried to ignore it – actually, he had pushed it far, *very far*, into the most distant corner of his mind – but now he couldn't escape the fact any longer, that she was enticingly pressed against his body.

He was feeling her every single piece of his senses. Because of the high temperature he had opened his vest a while ago, so where Lisbon's breasts were pressed against his chest, there were only her underwear and their drenched shirts between them. All of it hiding practically nothing.

Jane almost groaned. Once started he wasn't able to stop his mind from taking in everything else about her. How the centers of their bodies were touching intimately. How one of her legs was caught between his.

That was bad, really bad. (And it felt *so good*).

Just when he decided that they had to bring some distance between them – *no matter how* – Lisbon lifted her head slowly and let their eyes meet. Jane felt his knees getting weak on an instant. Her green eyes were gleaming in the half-dark light – clear as a

sea in the forests and deep as an ocean. Her cheeks were painted in a soft pink and her red lips just had been wetted by her lounge. The breath escaped her mouth in chopped, hot puffs.

And in addition to all that she brought her palms to his chest, right above her breasts.

"Jane..." she sighed, and he was pretty sure, that she was trying to stop what-ever-was-happening. However, it sounded so sensual, that it kicked the last rational thought out of his mind.

"God, Lisbon!" he groaned for real this time, his voice hoarse with desperation and desire. His hands on her lower back pulled her closer.

The air was thick and hot, and they were covered with a film of rain and sweat. Yet it seemed that both of them needed the proximity of each other more than ever.

Jane let one of his hands trail over her back upwards over her shoulder and neck, until he could cup her cheek gently. Lisbon's eyes were swimming with affection, longing and lust, so she closed them as a desperate attempt to hide her feelings.

Compensating the loss of her eyes on him, Jane bent down in slow-motion and allowed his lips to whisper over the skin right below her ear. Lisbon tilted her head to both nestle her cheek further into his huge hand and give his lips more space. While pressing a warm kiss on her neck he caressed her cheek with his thumb before he moved his hand a bit to bury it in her wet hair.

When he teasingly nibbled at her earlobe Lisbon gasped his name again and lifted one hand around his neck while the other one was clutching his shirt. Jane shuddered as her fingernails were scratching his skin on both places. Encouraged he left open-mouthed kisses on her skin, kissing a way from her ear down to her collarbone. Lisbon threw her head back and her lower body arched against his.

Still holding her close he only hesitated a second before his lips placed longing kisses on her sternum. He was about to move even lower when a throaty moan escaped Lisbon's mouth.

"Jane...", she breathed helplessly and carefully grabbed his head to pull him upwards. With a sensual sigh she pressed their lips together for their very first kiss. Finally getting what he had been longing for during all these years, it felt as if his senses were exploding. He responded to her kiss in an instant, his mind and body inflamed with the need to never let her go again.

Their kiss was a back and forth between *fast and fervent* and *heated and slow*. They completely forgot about the time and their surroundings.

The consultant didn't even know if he was doing it intentionally but when she arched her delicate frame against his body once more, he shifted his weight and slightly lifted his leg which was captured between her thighs. The low cry of pleasure he got from her was music to his ears, while he couldn't stop his own gasp of arousal, because she

definitely had to feel how much he wanted her right now.

"Oh God, Jane, please stop..." Lisbon whispered desperately, but kissed him again almost at the same time.

"You first," he breathed into her mouth and deepened the kiss passionately.

His partner whimpered but wasn't able to break it either.

xxx

They were so caught in each other's presence that neither of them heard the thud.

"Boss?" There was the sound again. "Boss, Jane, you in there?"

Lisbon tore her eyes open and pushed away as far as she could without hurting herself. (Therefore not very far). Jane merely blinked, not even moving his hands a single inch. Both of them struggled for air while staring at each other dumbfounded.

"Cho!" It was Lisbon who recovered her voice first.

"She's in there," they heard him say, probably to someone else. "Boss, are you okay?"

"Yeah...uhm...we...we're stuck. The door jammed."

There was a short pause on the other side of the door and Lisbon pressed her eyelids shut in embarrassment and annoyance. Jane chuckled.

She opened her eyes again and glared at him, but with her face flushed like this, she looked simply adorable.

"Okay, hold on. We'll get you out of there."

"Thanks, Cho," she sighed in defeat.

They heard footsteps fading away and Lisbon glanced at Jane.

"We, uhm, should probably try to pull ourselves together. Quickly."

"That's an easy thing for you to say," he replied dryly and got the chance to enjoy her blushing all over again.

"Sorry," was her mumbled reply, but he shrugged it off.

"I think we were equally involved in...that."

"Should I...?" She started to move away. However, she didn't get very far. Jane was still holding her in his embrace and made no effort to let her go.

"No, don't move." He shook his head. "Experience has shown that it won't work like this anyway."

"You're probably right. How do I look? Decent enough?"

Jane took his time to gaze at her, noticing her swollen lips, the red cheeks surrounded by disheveled hair, and her white blouse which he had pushed out of his way earlier. He groaned from the bottom of his heart and answered, "Definitely not."

Lisbon looked at him with a mixture of annoyance, pride and amusement.

"You're not any better, you know, Jane?! Especially since I can actually *feel* it."

Jane grunted. "Not fair."

They could hear Cho and the other person return and soon working on the door to free them.

In the meantime Lisbon's consultant tried everything possible to gain back the control over his body. However, his try to distract himself backfired. Gently he helped Lisbon with straightening her hair and adjusting her shirt, but as soon as she began to do the same for him, it became only harder for him to concentrate.

It was just when they were looking nearly decent enough – at least considering their situation – that there was the loud sound of yowling metal audible. A few seconds later the door of the booth sprang open and Jane almost lost his balance, keeping himself (and Lisbon for that matter) from falling just at the very last moment. Both stumbled outside and exhaled with relieve to fill their lungs with cool and fresh air.

"Don't say anything wrong!" Lisbon warned her second-in-command, being both happy and ashamed to see him.

The corners of Cho's mouth twitched. "I wouldn't dare, boss."

"How did you find us?"

"The sheriff", Cho nodded to the other man who tipped his head, "found your car left on the sideway a few miles from here and called it in. We have been looking for you since then. What happened?"

Not willing to share *anything* that had happened, Lisbon speechlessly stared at him for a moment, before she brought herself to say, "I'll...tell you later." With that she turned to the sheriff to thank him properly, and to head for Cho's car afterwards.

As soon as she was out of earshot, Cho's look found the consultant and then Jane's hand print which was still slightly visible on the glass of the booth. He raised his brows in question and gave his colleague a pointed stare.

Jane grinned like a Cheshire Cat. "A gentleman never tells," was all he said, before he

strolled past Cho to follow Lisbon.

The brows of Lisbon's second-in-command were almost reaching his hairline now. Looking back at the telephone booth he realized that it was really small in there. Especially for two adults.

A gentleman never tells, Jane had said.

'Well,' Cho thought with a smirk as he turned around to set off for home as well, 'I hope he sticks with that, because I really don't want to know that story.'

(In Lisbon's explanation, however, he was indeed downright interested.)

The End

Kapitel 16: Red Raspberry Jello

Red Raspberry Jello

"Okay, seriously, where's my jello?" Rigsby grunted in pure frustration while he rummaged through the refrigerator.

Cho, who happened to pass by just now, replied dryly, "Maybe you ate it already."

"No, I didn't!" After closing the door in a huff, the tall agent raised his hands in defeat. "That's the fifth day in a row! I bring jello in the morning, put it into the fridge, and when I want to get it for lunch, it's gone. Seriously, what kind of person steals a man's jello?!"

"A hungry one?" Jane offered helpfully as he strolled into the break room to get himself a cup of fresh hot tea, but Rigsby ignored him.

"That's simply not done! I was looking forward to that the whole day – or for the whole week for that matter."

Grace rolled her eyes at him with an amused smile on her lips. "Oh, relax, would you?"

"You didn't take it, did you?" When her boyfriend threw a heartbreaking gaze at her, the redhead couldn't decide whether to laugh or pity him. In the end it was both.

"Oh honey, of course not!" She patted his shoulder and linked her arms with him. "I have no idea what happened to your jello, but I'll buy you another one when we get home, okay? Now cheer up."

"Fine." Rigsby sighed and actually smiled when Grace placed a sweet peck on his cheek.

"Get a room", Cho deadpanned on his way back to the bullpen.

"Has anyone seen Lisbon?" Jane's questioning look met some shrugs and headshakes, and the consultant furrowed his brows in confusion.

xxx

A few hours later Jane was returning to his attic after Lisbon had sent him and Cho to question a murder suspect. The guy had been a promising lead back then, but they had learned soon that he had an alibi he just had been too ashamed to tell them about. On the one hand that meant that the Serious Crimes Unit was back at square one with this case, but on the other hand Jane wasn't sorry to be back earlier than planned.

He was even humming when he reached the heavy door and pulled it open – only to

stop dead in his tracks, when he found Lisbon standing on the other side of it, flinching and staring at him with huge eyes.

"Jane!" she choked out startled.

"Why, Lisbon, what a nice surprise!" Jane said when he finally regained his control, feeling more than intrigued to find out what was going on. Like a tiger on the hunt he approached her slowly, and he noticed with satisfaction that she made a half step backwards.

Lisbon tried to straighten up defensively, to maintain her composure, but she still looked like a kid who got caught with the hand in the cookie jar, especially since she kept her hands behind her back.

"Oh hi Jane, you're back already?"

"Yes, as you can see." He made a few more steps towards her and almost smiled, because it was obvious that she desperately fought the urge to retreat. "We were able to rule the guy out as a suspect."

"Oh that's great, good work." Lisbon assured with a nervous hint in her voice. Jane raised his brows.

"Really? Although it does mean that we're back where we started?"

"Uhm..."

"Anyway, what did I do to earn the pleasure of your welcome company in here?"

"Uh...I...I was waiting for you," she stuttered, avoiding eye contact.

"Oh?"

"Yeah, I...I just wanted to know what's new on the case."

"Ah, so you were waiting for me all the time, even though you couldn't possibly know that I would be back so soon?"

"Yeah...?"

He moved even closer and now she stepped back. However, she didn't get very far, since her legs bumped against the table in front of the window.

There was a soft clinking when whatever she was hiding met the wooden surface, and it gave him the final hint about what she was doing here, confirming the hunch he had already gotten earlier. Jane made no effort of hiding his grin any longer. It was time to proof his theory.

"Interesting," he hummed and stopped right in front of her, not caring that he was

invading her personal space.

"Wha-What are you doing?!" The color of her cheeks turned into a cute shade of pink as she glared at him, while she strictly kept her hands behind her back – even though it was a vain attempt in the long run.

Jane gave her no more time to plan her escape. Without warning he lifted his hands, placed them gently on her cheeks and pulled her towards him. Seconds later his lips were pressed on hers.

Lisbon gasped in shock and her consultant took the chance to slip his tongue into her mouth.

Both of them moaned in pleasure when this first intimate physical contact set their bodies on fire, but Lisbon came to her senses all too soon.

"What the hell, Jane?" she panted as she pushed him away. However, she hadn't expected him to catch her hands with his.

"AHA!" he triumphed, "I knew I tasted some raspberry aroma!" He raised her hands and revealed a spoon and a half emptied tub of Rigsby's raspberry jello.

Lisbon blushed furiously and tried to free her hands from his grasp. "Jane, let me go!"

"Not until you explain yourself!" His eyes gleamed mischievously and with pure elation. His grin got even brighter when his boss actually growled at him.

"There's nothing to explain!" she hissed between gritted teeth. "You already caught me, so you can let go of me!"

He shook his head tenaciously and looked at her full of expectation.

"Fine!" Showing him her best death glare, she gave up fighting and started with the utmost reluctance, "On Monday I needed something sweet, but all I could find just then was Rigsby's jello. No one was there and I was truly desperate. So I ate it. End of story."

Jane threw her a look and waited, not saying a word. Lisbon stared back at him, but eventually she realized that he wouldn't let her get away without the whole story. She sighed in defeat and continued sheepishly, "It was really good. Satisfying. Then I heard Rigsby saying that he brought another one on Tuesday, and for hours it was all I could think of, so I took it as well, right before they were about to head out for lunch. The same happened the day after, and the following one, and today. I don't want to do it, but then I always reach a point where I'm not able to stop myself."

"And eating it in your office would have been too dangerous, so you looked for places to hide and enjoy your stolen goods," Jane finished the story. "You even sent me away with Cho so that you could sneak into my attic, probably because your other hideouts were not save enough."

"I didn't..." she started to protest but then surrendered. "Oh well, yes."

"Hm...I never knew you could be such a criminal, Agent Lisbon!" Jane gloated with delight, finding himself beyond amusement.

"Well, now you do," Lisbon grumbled. "Let me go!"

"Fine." She was so surprised about his easy complying that at first she didn't noticed how he snatched both spoon and tub from her hands. When she finally did, it was too late already, and the rest of the jello had vanished into Jane's mouth.

"Wait, what are you doing? That's mine!" Now it was her chasing after his retreating form.

"No, actually it is Rigsby's" Jane swallowed the sweet treat. "Hey, it is good!"

"How dare you!" With two huge steps she had him cornered and completely caught him off guard as she grabbed his collars and pulled him down to kiss him fiercely on his lips.

Jane froze on the spot and gave her the perfect opportunity to enter his mouth for a deep and mind blowing kiss. While his mind still tried to catch up, he automatically kissed her back with equal intensity. It left both of them with no air to breathe and their hearts pounding heavily.

However, the kiss became slower, more sensual after a few more moments. As she put her arms around his neck, Jane simply let spoon and tub fall down and neither of them cared. Lisbon sighed in bliss, when he sneaked one arm around her waist to get her closer, while burying his other hand in her wavy hair. Taking his time, he rubbed his tongue against Lisbon's and moved his lips with hers in a longing, passionate way. She tasted sweet like raspberry, probably just like he did, and it drove his senses into overflow.

He felt his whole body responding to her, enjoying what he had dreamed of for so many years. Arousal flooded his system, electrifying every fiber of his body, and made his knees buckling. With a hoarse moan he stumbled backwards until his back hit the wall, but he never let go of his partner. Lisbon tilted her head, deepening the kiss, and nestled her attractive frame on him – forcing him to let a groan escape his throat, animalistic, raw and deep.

Lisbon shivered helplessly and clung to him for dear life, while her fingernails scratched his sensitive scalp and the skin on the back of his neck. It sent both agent and consultant into several more minutes of heavenly pleasure.

Eventually giving his hair a soft tug, Lisbon slowly broke the kiss though and gazed at him with a dazed expression and her eyes full of lust.

"I'll take this as the pay off for my treat," she whispered and reluctantly pulled away.

"And I guess I should buy some candy as an apology for Rigsby."

"Uh, yeah, probably," Jane managed to say. He watched as Lisbon picked the remains of her thievery from the ground and it was only when she was about to leave, that his mind started working again.

"Hey Lisbon?"

"Huh?" She turned and looked at him quizzically.

He cleared his throat, but his voice sounded husky and hopeful nevertheless. "I'll get you some jello so that you won't have to take Rigsby's anymore. Tomorrow, same time and place?"

Her lips opened to the most beautiful and enticing smile he had ever seen on her.

"I'll be there," she promised, and it didn't even matter that tomorrow would be Saturday.

The End

Kapitel 17: How Things Should Be

Warning: Lime, Spoiler for 6x08 "Red John" (from sneak peeks and interviews only)

How Things Should Be

When she wakes up, she is disorientated. Her body feels weary, her muscles are heavy in a way they haven't been in a while. It should be a good thing, and somehow it is. However, the deep sadness in her heart paralyzes her soul.

Slowly she tries to sit up, but she doesn't get very far. She glances down, then to the man who is lying next to her, with his arm possessively around her waist.

Jane.

Somehow she still can't believe that he is here. In her bed. Naked. Just like her. For a blink of time there creeps a soft blush onto her cheeks. Just for a second. Then it's gone, replaced by an expression of pain.

Everything has changed. The CBI is gone. Her team is gone. Even Red John is gone. Which is good. It should feel like a good thing, and somehow it does.

Jane is still here. To be honest, she is surprised. She has expected him to sneak out during the night, but he hasn't. However, she is no fool – okay, yes, she is, big time in fact. But not when it comes to this. She is realistic. She knows he has to leave. She has known from the moment he showed up at her doorstep the previous evening...

XXX

When Lisbon opened her door she wasn't surprised that it was *him* per se. His appearance though was a bit disturbing. His jacket was gone, the vest open and the rest of his clothes was dirty and wet. His hair was a mess and his expression wasn't the one of a sane human being. She didn't ask where he had been. She didn't even want to know where the blood on his shirt had come from.

He just killed Red John.

It was the wrong time to ask questions like these.

Wordlessly she stepped aside to let him in, and then led him into her living room. He headed towards her couch, but he stopped himself – right on time before he could mess it up with his dirty clothes.

The glance he gave her was too helpless, too overwhelmed to bear. Snapping out of her thoughts she stepped closer.

She didn't care that she wasn't wearing much more than an oversized shirt and that her hair was bound in a loose bun. It wasn't the time to feel awkward.

"You want to take a shower?" she asked softly.

"Please," Jane said with a nod, his voice oddly hoarse.

It weren't the words which needed to be spoken out, but neither of them was ready to voice them anyway. So she just nodded in return and waved him to follow her.

Her bathroom was small; there was hardly enough space for both of them. She didn't even know why she hadn't left yet. Maybe it was because he was just standing there,

frozen in place since he had stepped in front of her mirror several minutes ago.

"I can get you some of Tommy's clothes," she offered, but she didn't get an answer. It was just then that she noticed his shivering. Without another word she closed the gap between them and grabbed the hem of his vest. Gently she removed it.

Jane looked at her, watched her, but he didn't complain. Not even when she started to open his shirt to strip it off as well.

Not even when she – after a hesitant pause – turned her attention to the zip of his trousers.

The rest he did on his own.

Yet, when he was standing under her shower, she was still there. She was still looking at him, captured by his staring gaze that seemed to glow in the steam. He re-opened the shower door and held out his hand as a silent invitation.

Lisbon reached for it. Without hesitation.

The need for each other, the attraction between them, had never been stronger.

Her shirt was wet on an instant, but all she could do was looking at him.

They were so close. Closer than ever before. Physically and mentally.

Lifting her hand she gave in to the urge to touch him. *For the very first time.* Softly she put her palm on his cheek and when he closed his eyes, she moved it upwards. In the tenderest gesture she pushed his wet curls out of his face. Then she placed her palm on his cheek again, mirroring the pose with her second hand on his other cheek.

When her thumbs started to caress his skin, he opened his eyes to watch her anew.

She felt tears prickling in her eyes as love, fear and longing welled up in her heart. All of it also visible in his face.

Or was it just water?

His gaze softened, right before she noticed his hands on her waist. Carefully and slowly he pulled her soaked shirt up and over her head. It landed on the ground with a loud splash.

He must have expected it, but to her own amazement she got the chance to watch his eyes darken over her exposed chest.

She stepped closer at the exact same time as he wrapped his arms around her and crushed her against his body. Both of them gasped at the long overdue touch.

Pressing her face in the crook of his neck she hugged him tightly while he started to roam his hands over her gentle curves. He seemed to enjoy it immensely – only stopping to untie her bun and free her curly hair – and so did she as she finally closed her eyes and allowed herself to simply live the moment.

Ten years of waiting were totally worth it.

They stood under the shower for a very long time. Doing nothing more than touching, caressing and breathing in the other one's presence. Their bodies were separated only by a tiny pair of panties.

But they had to get out eventually.

Lisbon was reluctant to let him go; fearing he would leave right after, but Jane surprised her once more.

"Do you want me to stay for the night?" he whispered.

She needed no time to think.

"Yes."

And so he stayed.

XXX

She remembers very well what happened afterwards. Dried but still naked they settled in her bed, lying next to each and facing the ceiling first, until the urge to touch again became too powerful. However, it was different this time. They explored each other rather shyly, like a teenage couple in their first night.

It certainly was just as exciting.

Especially when he finally kissed her. Oh yes, she remembers the kiss. Their *first* kiss. She remembers *everything* of that very moment.

How his damp hair felt between her fingers.

How he smelled of her fruity body wash.

How one of his hands stroked the skin of her lower back while the other one was buried in her own hair.

How his gentle and *oh so soft* lips danced against hers, and every now and then allowed their tongues' tips to get a peek at the sweetest hidden taste.

How he made her toes curl just by being *him*.

How their breaths got simultaneously caught in their throats as they realized that *this moment* was finally there.

From then on everything became something very much dreamlike...

XXX

The moon, choosing the right seconds to shine through the open curtain, painted a beautiful picture when Jane moved his body above hers and never stopped kissing her. Lisbon blinked to drink it in for a moment or two, but then Jane turned her attention back to her body's needs.

His talented long fingers moved over her skin like a bow caressing its violin.

He filled her heart, her soul, her whole body with such intense want she didn't know she would be able to feel.

When he finally sunk between her thighs to join their bodies as one, Lisbon couldn't help but sob against his lips.

Muttering and humming in return with his soothing bass composed a sensual but sweet contrast to the enticing movements of his hips.

It nearly made her lose her mind. Maybe she did lose her mind.

And it didn't take long for both of them to reach salvation – almost at the same time.

XXX

Lisbon smiles despite herself at this memory.

After panting and trying to catch their breaths for a while she muttered something about him not being the youngest anymore.

He actually gave her that sexy smile of his.

"Cut me some slack, would you?" he said and added without thinking, "It's been awhile. It's been the first time since..." He stopped abruptly, his facial expression full of pain again.

The conversation changed from this point. She asked if he was okay, and he waved her off.

Teary-eyed. Trying to compose himself.

It took a moment until she was brave enough to mention Lorelei.

He was almost angry when he responded, "Lorelei doesn't count, Lisbon! It was just sex."

He didn't say it. The implication, however, was obvious.

This is not just sex. This is making love.

Lisbon still feels the pang in her chest she felt back then. It should make her happy, and somewhere in her cracked heart it did. Yet she couldn't help but wonder who he saw while sleeping with her, *making love to her*.

Would she be able to stand a comparison?

His look turned horrified as he guessed her thoughts.

Immediately he pulled her into a hug – so tight it hurt. But she didn't care. It felt so good.

It eased her pain, she remembers.

He apologized a hundred times, even though neither of them knew what for exactly.

XXX

She fell asleep in his arms, while his steady heartbeat made her dream of a wonderful non-existent world of peace and love.

Just for one night. Maybe not even that.

Because she slept till the small hours and when she awoke, the happiness from her dreams was gone. Getting up to use the bathroom and therefore leaving the warmth of her partner, she almost stumbled as the realization hit her full force. She barely made it into the small room, where Jane and she had found each other only a few hours ago.

She clung to the sink and stared helplessly into the mirror. Her eyes were huge with shock and sadness and panic. Tears were blurring her vision, while she relived the moment when she had walked through the empty hallways of the CBI. It had been surreal.

It still was. It was nearly impossible to believe that it was all gone. For good. Everything she had worked for during the past decade.

She just had lost so much – and she was about to lose even more.

Glancing at the closed bathroom door she stifled her sobs with a towel. Hopefully Jane was still asleep. He wasn't supposed to see her weakness during the few hours she probably had left with him.

Breathe in and breathe out, calm your nerves. It took a long while.

Shivering with cold she finally grabbed her bathrobe and slipped into it, though she didn't bother with tying it. She was too sad to care about her nudity. Checking her reflection for the last time, she hoped the darkness outside would hide her sudden surge of emotion.

When she returned to her bedroom, it was lit by the small light on her bedside table. And Jane was awake, waiting for her. Of course. She should have known, and somehow she had.

"Come here, my dear," he said very softly and with his expression full of sorrow. She complied, walking to his side of the bed and stopping right there to look down on him.

To imprint the image of the man she loved on her mind.

He reached for her hand and clasped it safely with his much warmer one.

"You're cold, my love...Let me warm you," he suggested almost pleadingly, while he lifted the blanket to invite her in.

The bathrobe glided from her shoulders and he braced her when she climbed gracefully on top of him.

Jane shivered when he came in contact with her cold skin, swiftly pulling her closer and the blanket tightly around them.

Lisbon sighed. It felt amazing. *Skin on skin*. She needed to savor this feeling as long as it lasted.

As well as the burning traces his caressing fingers were leaving on her bare behind. They helped her to relax into a puddle of sentimental pleasure – as much as they renewed the hunger, the desperate need, the excitement to become one with him again. With another sigh she stretched on him, wanting to snuggle as close as possible.

Jane groaned under his breath and craned his neck to steal a kiss from her. Eagerly she followed his lead and deepened it, while his fingers sneaked to her buttocks to pull her nearer.

She whispered his name with longing as she could feel his own excitement against her abdomen.

"I'm completely at your mercy," he murmured against her lips before he allowed her to plunder his mouth with her tongue.

"That you are!" she growled and arched against his body.

After a few moments of fervent kisses Lisbon retreated to move her lips along his features and down to his neck.

He used the chance for a delayed answer. "Hum...I did tell you that I like it when you get all authoritarian on me, didn't I? Ouch!"

With a small smile on her lips she placed a kiss on the skin above his collarbone, where she just had bitten him.

"Jane?" With her hands on the pillow beside his head she braced herself and pushed her torso upwards.

"Yes?" His eyes gleamed with lust as he watched her being enthroned above him.

Rolling her hips against his lower body she whispered, "Just shut up."

He moaned, but then he smirked mischievously and moved his hand teasingly along her sides. "Yes, ma'am," was all he said as he gently cupped her breasts.

Lisbon gasped and closed her eyes to enjoy the soft massage of his fingers.

When she looked at him again, his expression had turned back to serious. Laden with passion, but serious nonetheless. Their eyes locked while she opened her thighs to let them feel how much they wanted each other.

Oh, how much they wanted each other!

She saw him swallowing, and then he sat up as well to meet her halfway for another kiss.

Bracing himself with one arm on the mattress he wrapped the other one around her to help her as she slowly sunk down on him. They sighed in unison when they were joined once more.

And Lisbon realized that Jane had been right. This wasn't just sex.

This was making love.

With the emotion bursting in her chest, she released a sound of pleasure and grief, before she started moving. She welcomed the enticing fog that was pushing the pain into the farthest depth of her heart, and completely gave herself to the man she loved.

And while neither of them would need much more to get lost, she knew that he was doing the same.

After she collapsed on him with a forlorn but sensual cry a little while later, he gave her exact ten minutes to rest before he put his plan into action to make her fall apart under his tender lips and fingers again.
Until she finally was exhausted enough to sleep a few more hours.

XXX

Lisbon rubs her eyes, angrily trying to stop the tears that were teasing her once more. The arm around her waist tightens its grip and she feels a pair of lips on her bare shoulder.

It's not fair, she thinks. We should be celebrating.

But she can't voice these thoughts.

He whispers her name, wants her to look at him. She does.

The pain she finds in his gaze matches her own perfectly. She swallows hard and chokes out, "If you want to leave, Jane, you should go now."

She won't ask him to stay, but there's a tiny spark of hope in her words. *If...*

Seconds later that spark is crashed as he averts his eyes and nods.

Lisbon bites her lips until she tastes blood.

She is so much in love it hurts.

He looked at her again. "Don't...!" he breathes. Then he leans to her. For one more kiss. It's tender, desperate and passionate. She pours all her feelings into it, kissing him back with all intensity she can afford.

His hold is tight, her grip so firm that her nails are buried in the skin of his back.

All too soon it's over and reluctantly they let go.

They get up and after she brought him some of Tommy's clothes, they dress without another word.

It is only when she walks him to her door that he speaks again. She wishes he wouldn't.

"I'm sorry for everything..." He looks at her once more, before he adds hoarsely, "Goodbye, Teresa."

And all she can do is nodding.

He manages a teary smile, and then he's gone.

Just like that.

Lisbon leans against the door for support.

It shouldn't hurt so much, but it does.

It shouldn't be this way, but it is.

It should be different, the better new, but it isn't.

And right now there's nothing she can do about it.

The End

Kapitel 18: Hugs

Hugs

She has no idea what's going on with him. Honestly. Something is wrong. Well...maybe not *wrong* in the proper sense. It's not that he's behaving strangely in particular – not more than usually, that is – but *something* is odd.

Not that she's complaining! God knows, she's not complaining at all! But to be honest, she is confused. And a bit shocked at how intensely he's affecting her.

He has started hugging her. Out of the blue. He hugged her in the past, alright, he did so now and then, occasionally. But now he's doing it frequently. Daily to be more precisely. Twice a day to be exact.

He hugs her, when she arrives in the FBI bullpen in the morning; and he hugs her, when she calls it a day in the evening. She remembers feeling startled on the first day. Back then she brushed it aside as a strange whim.

However, to her greatest surprise, he's kept doing it. Every morning and every evening. Every day.

He always manages to get her alone. Early in the morning, there hardly is anyone else around just yet, and when she is about to leave, he uses his closeness to her desk to his advantage – or he simply catches her in the break room or in front of the elevator.

His efforts to keep these moments between them somehow make his hugs way more intimate.

After a few days she couldn't help herself and finally confronted him about it. *That's what friends do,* was all he said, *friends exchange hugs as a greeting and to say goodbye.*

She looked at him quizzically, but he just shrugged with a roguish glint in his eyes. She hasn't bothered to question him again since then. The easiest way to survive one of his pranks is to just go with the flow.

Besides, she does enjoy *flowing* with this one. She's already used to it – it was a matter of only a few more times – and she actually looks forward to his new way of greeting and saying goodbye.

She enjoys the way he approaches her with a big, happy smile gracing his face. His look is open, honest and mischievous, but also lit by affection.

And when he wraps her into his engaging bear hug – he's like a huge cuddly teddy bear, the old softie – she finds herself surrounded by warmth and his very own, fresh and manly scent.

His hold is firm, but not too tight, he tucks her safely under his chin, and he always takes his time – until she nearly starts to question his intentions. It isn't inappropriate. Not yet. He's stretching the boundaries, though; blurring the lines.

She doesn't mind – but she wonders if she has the right reasons not to mind. Maybe that's why she's never the one to initiate the contact. It can't be helped – she's feeling insecure, not only about her own motivation, but even more about his.

She's not daring to hope. At least that's what she's telling herself. Maybe she's in denial and lost already. The way her body is on fire, whenever he touches her and holds her close, has nothing to do with friendly fondness. She shouldn't feel the urge to grab him, tear his clothes apart and throw herself at him.

She shouldn't, but she does. As soon as she is in his arms again, all she wants is to be closer, longing to learn his passion and how far he can push her own. His hugs are torture. Sweet and painful. Mostly they are sweet. And oh so tempting!

It's a tough job to keep a friendly yet neutral expression. Hiding her wants is twice as hard since he can read her like an open book most of the time.

However, it seems that she's getting better. Maybe she's gotten *too* good.

Because suddenly he stops. Why would he stop?!

After weeks of shared hugs, they're gone. Just like that. When he skips his greeting on a crime scene, simply sending her a friendly nod from the other side of the room, she's disappointed. She understands, though, with their colleagues around them and the body on the ground. Hopefully he'll take a rain check.

But then, in the evening, as she comes from a too long meeting with her boss, getting her purse from her desk, she notices with a sinking feeling that he's nowhere to be seen. Hoping for an unhappy coincidence, she leaves the building and tries to ignore how bereft she feels out of a sudden. She's not getting much sleep that night.

They are just hugs, dammit! It doesn't mean anything!

Although the pang, which hits the depths of her chest the following morning, speaks a different language. They are alone, but his hands are busy with cups of coffee and tea. Too occupied to engulf her in a desired embrace. Minutes later the bullpen is filled with life and yet another opportunity wasted.

She manages to conceal her frustration over the day and stays professional, but at a late hour her mask cracks, as she learns about the new lead he's following with someone else.

The next time he still is sound asleep on his couch and she doesn't want to wake him. Then they have that big meeting about a too important case that requires one hundred ten percent of their attention. Afterwards it's a spilled cup of coffee on her blouse, followed by a foaming suspect chasing her (ex-)consultant over the hills.

Apart from the missing hugs everything's just normal; no other behavior is out of place. It's all fine.
How she hates *normal* and *fine*.

It takes two more days until she reaches her breaking point. It's late and they are alone, when she finally snaps.

She's done with this shit, done with missing his closeness. She doesn't want to miss his large hands on her body anymore, wants them on her back again, where they were burning their heat through her clothes. She longs for the feeling of hot breath against her ear and beard stubbles tickling her cheek. She needs his warmth, his scent, and the butterflies he causes to dance funnily in her belly. His strength, no one else knows he's hiding beneath layers of mischief, tricks and flippancy.

She's desperate for him.

Planting herself in front of his couch, she glares down on him.

"I want them back!"

"Huh?" With a sleepy blink he sits up, preparing for the storm.

"I want my hugs back!" She resists the childish urge to stamp her foot. "You can't take them away after you spent week after week getting me used to them!"

His facial expression lights up like a Christmas tree, when he fully understands the point of her protest.

"Finally!" he exclaims, "Thank God! I've started worrying you would never say it!"

Her eyes go round.

"You did this on purpose!" she accuses him, but he shakes his head.

"Not at first. But then I needed to know if you need them as much as I do." To her surprise, he's being honest and serious.

"You couldn't tell?!" she wonders with hope sneaked into her words, while she's unconsciously taking a step forward.

Shaking his head again, he gets off the couch and slowly invades her personal space.

"With you, my dear Lisbon, I feel like a clueless boy again." His voice is just a whisper that sends a shiver along her spine. He gives her no time to react at all – in fact he only needs a split second to wrap her into his arms and crush her against his firm chest.

She sighs in pure ease and relaxes in an instant. Without truly realizing it, she returns the embrace and buries her face into the crook of his neck.

Oh yeah, that's what she was talking about! Her wishes and fantasies are coming back with full force, making her shudder in anticipation. This time, she doesn't fight them, though. Instead she allows them and enjoys the thrilling electricity jolting through her veins. She sighs again with pleasure and feels him tightening his grip.

Then his fingers softly trace her facial outlines, bringing goosebumps to her skin, until he gently tilts her head.

Without a warning he places a sweet but lingering peck on the corner of her mouth. "That's your idea of saying goodnight to a friend?" she gasps against his lips and swallows.

He smirks and winks at her, while slowly retreating.

"Maybe not to a friend...but with a soon-to-be-lover that would be an entirely different story."

"Jane!" She blushes furiously and with a slap against his shoulder she chases after him. When she hears his heartfelt laughter and feels the sparkling love bubbling in her chest, she thinks that he might not be wrong after all.

The End

Kapitel 19: Photo Finish - Episode tag for "Black Helicopters" (6x13)

Photo Finish

"So...?" He tries to show patience, that much is obvious – even though he is eager to get her opinion.

"Hum..." The noncommittal sound she makes isn't much help, despite the fact that she is clearly enjoying this.

"What do you think?" He tries again, putting just enough hope into his voice.

Lisbon rolls her eyes, seeing through him in an instant. He can't fool her anymore. Not always anyway.

She smirks and finally returns his expectant look. For a moment or two she is tempted to joke around, but then she settles for a warm, "It's lovely, Jane."

He relaxes with a goofy smile, radiating proud satisfaction as he answers, "I knew you would like it eventually."

"Well, it's not as roomy as the attic back at the CBI, but it's definitely much cozier," she admits, looking around in his Airstream again.

"It is, isn't it?" Jane eyes his surroundings lovingly, enjoying them even more now that *she* is here with him. "Don't you just want to snuggle in and hit the road into the sunrise, seeking adventures and all?"

"I don't know..." Feigning doubts she sits down on one of the couches and leans back with an audible sigh. "One might think, I've had enough adventures for a lifetime."

"Meh, you can't have enough of those. Tea?"

"Sure." She sinks further into the cushions and closes her eyes.

It is late and they are alone, enjoying the company after the time they spent apart over this case. For an outsider it wouldn't have been *so* much time after all, but both of them haven't responded all too well to the lack of each other's presence lately.

While preparing their tea, Jane brushes her knees and apologizes with a gentle pat on her thigh. She merely hums in acceptance. The space in here is limited after all.

Not that they would mind.

"Any news from the Rigsbys?" He carefully takes her mug and settles beside her, tapping her wrist to get her attention. As soon as it is safely put into her hands, he reaches for his own cup. She blinks absently and thanks him with a smile, but then her expression becomes pensive.

"Not yet," she informs him, while lifting the tea and blowing on the steaming liquid. She adds with a frown, "I hope they are all right."

Jane can't help but share her worry, but it is not what he wants to see in those beautiful eyes of hers right now, so he changes the subject.

"By the way, I've got something for you."

Taking a sip, she eyes him warily over the rim of her mug. "So it's my turn now? I thought you'd forgotten me."

"Don't look so scared, Lisbon, it's nothing precarious."

"You always say that..."

He ignores her and goes on, "Besides, how could I ever forget you, my dear? You're my most favorite person."

"To be fair, right now, I'm the *only* person here." It is a dry response, but the fine blush on her cheeks gives away that she has misunderstood his words on purpose and feels flattered by them.

"Just finish your tea and I'll give it to you." He hushes her gently, hiding his grin, when she rolls her eyes again.

"What am I? Five?" However, it doesn't escape his notice that she empties her mug a bit quicker than usual.

xxx

"Here you go." He hands her a gift bag with a flourish and hardly conceals his excitement as Lisbon unwraps her present.

"What...?"

He manages to surprise her again, of course, even after all these years.

"Is that a Polaroid camera?"

"It is. And a classic one, too." Jane beams at her, when an amazed smile blossoms on her lips.

With fascination she turns it in her hands. "I can't believe it...I had one as a kid, but it got crushed during a fight with my brothers. It survived for...no more than ten pictures, I think. My Mother refused to buy a new one after that." She chuckles wistfully and looks at Jane, with her cheeks rosy-tinted and her eyes large and gorgeous.

"I don't even know why I bother to ask, but *how*...?"

He just winks at her and reaches for his tea again. "Come on, give it a try!" he encourages her and leans back with satisfaction.

It takes her a minute until a *click* is audible in the otherwise quiet Airstream. Lisbon bites her lip in anticipation while she is waiting for the photo to become visible. Finally she snorts with laughter and her knee touches his leg as she turns to show him

the picture.

"This is so *you*." she snickers, and she is right; the photographed Jane, grinning complacently and sipping tea, couldn't have been more apposite.

"What can I say?" His amusement is lightening his voice and when he watches her unconsciously glancing at her purse, he knows that this photo will end up in her wallet. It warms his heart almost painfully and he presses his thigh a tiny bit more against hers.

"Let's take one together." He suggests. He hopes she doesn't notice the hoarse edge in his words.

"Okay, but no funny faces!"

After he put away his cup, she leans against him and releases the shutter. Soon enough the picture reveals that both of them did the exact opposite of her demand. Lisbon laughs heartily at their silly expressions and nudges him with her elbow.

"What?!" He smirks. "You did the same!"

"All right, all right! Another try?"

"Fair enough. Come here." Jane lays his arm around her and pulls her closer. Contently she rests her head against his shoulder and raises the camera anew. Just when it *clicks* again, he turns his head and presses a tender kiss into her hair.

Lisbon gasps in surprise, but the picture is already taken.

"Jane..." Her whisper sounds puzzled and when she glances at him, he finds her face adorably flushed.

"Sorry," he replies, not even bothering to feign sincerity. She smells so good, so *Lisbon*, and her warm body against his own simply feels *right*. And it also does funny things to his stomach.

Jane takes the photo from her hand and they look at it together. Lisbon is smiling into the camera, an honest, affectionate smile, and Jane's face is partly hidden in her wavy hair – but the gesture still displays his obvious fondness for her.

"I like this picture." He says quietly, and for once he doesn't dare look at her.

She remains silent for a moment and then reaches for the photo.

"In that case," she gets up – even though he is very reluctant to let her go – and pins it to the Cork Board above their heads. "You should keep it."

He blinks with surprise, and then offers her a smile, which she returns without hesitation.

"Thanks, my dear."

Lisbon nods and to his pleasant astonishment she settles back next to him, automatically slipping into his arm again. He doesn't think; instead he simply puts it around her shoulders once more.

"Thanks for the camera, Jane." Her voice is low, soft and sends shivers down his spine, and all he can do is tighten his grip and pull her even closer.

"You're welcome." He whispers, and with his free hand he reaches for her arm, trailing it down to her wrist. He can feel her pulse jumping erratically beneath her skin and her

hand twitches as a reaction to the tickling sensation. When she raises her gaze to meet his eyes, her pupils are dilated and matching his own.

With his fingertips he draws invisible patterns onto the back of her hand, and after gently caressing her knuckles until she bites her lower lip, he gently loosens the camera from her grip.

She barely takes notice of his action if her unsteady breathing is any indication. Jane finds it impossible to avert his gaze. He is caught up in hers; her stunning green eyes are keeping him imprisoned. Hot puffs of air escape her mouth and softly graze his lips. He can almost taste her on his tongue and wants to kiss her so badly that it hurts.

She must have read his thoughts, because she nearly whimpers and grips his lapels. It is more a reflex than a conscious decision as he pushes the release of the camera. *Click.* The soft noise startles them both and Lisbon blinks in confusion.

Taking advantage of the moment, Jane presses a lingering kiss against her cheek. He feels the hot, smooth skin beneath his lips, and suddenly he is very glad that he is sitting. The touch sends a sweet numbness to his knees, makes him shiver all over, and when he feels her shuddering against his body, it enralls him with need and longing. He senses her moan more than he hears it and it costs him every power in his limbs to pull away.

Not that he gets very far.

Absentmindedly, the two of them glance down at the camera, where the photo is still captured but already visible.

With shaking fingers Lisbon reaches for it and swallows. Hard. And Jane knows that she can see exactly what he can read from their faces on the photo. The way they look at each other can only be described as flooded with the most honest, deepest and purest love. Mixed with unbearable longing and humming sexual tension.

It is a slap in the face, but at the same time it is thrilling in a very good way.

"I should go..." Lisbon stammers, her voice raw with emotions.

He tightens his embrace in disagreement, but then realizes that it is probably for the best right now. With an unhappy, murmured "Okay" he lets go of her and watches her collecting her photos and her purse.

Her movements seem frantic, but as he gets a closer look at her face, her expression isn't as distraught as he had feared. There is an excited glint in her eyes that gives her away, and she is not very successful in biting back a smile that is constantly tugging at her lips.

"Lisbon..." Her hand is already on the door handle as she stops and turns her head towards him, right on time to meet the flashlight.

"Hey..." she protests only half-heartedly.

"You forgot something." Jane holds the picture as he offers the Camera to her. She shakes her head and he can't help feeling a pang of disappointment in his gut.

"Don't look at me like that, Jane!" she chides, "I'm just leaving it to your care. For the times, when we...you know, *hit the road* and all that."

"Oh!" is all he can say, his heart beating faster with delight, and she winks at him, smirking.

"Good night, Jane."

"Sleep well, my dear."

With a last look over her shoulder she opens the door and leaves the Airstream.

xxx

Jane sighs. He has no idea how long he has been staring at the door, irrationally waiting for her to come back. Finally, he looks down at his hands, still tightly clenching the latest picture.

The figure on it is Lisbon; her shy smile revealing her cute dimples and prettily colored cheeks.

He considers putting it next to the other photo on the pin board, but then he changes his mind.

With great care he slides it into the inside pocket of his jacket, right above his heart.

You know, just in case they have to work separated from each other again.

The End

Kapitel 20: Adjustment - Episode tag for "Grey Water" (6x14)

Sequel to Photo Finish

Adjustment

With an exhausted sigh she collapses into her couch, dumping down her purse right beside her. She slips off her shoes, not caring where they land, and slumps against the backrest.

This case is a sheep-dipped son of a bitch, really.

Lisbon groans. She could be enjoying a good drink with her old team right now, but she is sitting at home instead. Alone. *Great!*

She sighs again.

Watching the reunion of the people she once called family had been bittersweet. The circumstances couldn't be worse, but for a moment or two she felt indescribably happy. All of them being together and unharmed is all she has ever wanted for a life past Red John.

Realizing just now how much she has wished for that to happen, she chides herself for being so selfish. The great danger lurking in the dark aside, she finds herself being unbelievable proud of them. They are going the way they have chosen to find happiness. She couldn't wish for more – but it makes her just a bit melancholy nevertheless.

Maybe it's because she isn't quite as satisfied with her own choices, although she has no reason to bewail. She has a respectable job, which she likes just fine. Grace and Wayne aren't unreachable, and she still has Cho and Jane within range. Something she is grateful for. *She is.*

However, it seems as if she's still struggling to find her place in this Red John free world. And it's not just her, but Jane as well. They are still trying to adjust. It doesn't feel one hundred percent right just yet.

As if having a mind of their own, her hands reach for her purse, pulling out the wallet, where she's hiding his photo – the one she took with the Polaroid camera he had bought her.

She can't help smiling as her gaze trails his features. Sparkling eyes, a roguish grin, golden locks, and, what is more, a relaxed posture accompanied by a cup of tea. She was right, it *is so Jane.*

It's still him, but in a new setting.

Like his beard and the absent vest, as well as a fading burden. Him sitting in his brand-new Airstream trailer. He is still the same, but at the same time he's completely different. Something that also applies to her.
It's the perfect symbol.

Due to the reunion of her team she finds herself recalling the past, where Jane and her interaction, their deeply caring friendship, had been as easy as breathing. Now they seem to be gasping for air. Something in their relationship has shifted. Something has changed – and it's still in progress.

It scares her.

She puts the photo aside and bends towards her coffee table, where another one is hidden beneath a stack of catalogs. *This* picture is too dangerous to be carried around. It shows both of them – being so very close. They are staring into each other's eyes, and even though it's just a photo, she can feel the tension simply by looking at it. It never fails to shock her how obvious her feelings are displayed in this picture. Her fondness for him is unmistakable. (On the other hand, she doesn't dare taking a closer look on *his* expression – feeling unsure if she could handle what she might or might not find there.)

It had also been the moment right before he kissed her cheek. Lisbon bites her lips in suppressed excitement as she relives that moment. Damn, she still remembers the caressing touch on her heated skin. The memory is still lingering there.

Lisbon moans loudly in frustration and rubs her palm over her cheek. *Damn that man!* She should be over him by now! She had been so sure she had passed that point somewhere along the road!
But fact is that she is still not even close.

XXX

"Oh, hey Lisbon!"

"Hey...may I come in?"

He's moved aside before she can even finish her question.

While settling down on his couch again, she wonders how she has ended up in Jane's Airstream in the first place. On her arrival a part of her hoped he wouldn't be home just yet – and she almost turned around to run for the hills when she found it well lit. *Almost*. In the end it seems like she is unable to stay away.

"So...How was it with the boys?" she asks causally, as she accepted a cup of his tea.

"Oh, you know how those things work." He shrugs nonchalantly. *"Just hanging out, drinking beer and so on. Men stuff."*

She smirks. "I see."

"Here, I took a picture."

"What?" To her surprise he pulls a Polaroid photo out of his jacket pocket and hands it to her, grinning at her puzzled expression.

"Yeah, I thought I could take your camera out for a nice evening."

He sits down himself, but it doesn't escape her notice that he chooses the other couch and not the space beside her. That and the hidden reproach she thinks she detected in his voice distract her from answering right away.

Blinking a bit bewildered, she looks down on the photo and can't help but chuckle. It's slightly dim, but Cho's raised eyebrow and Rigsby's awkward grin are still clearly visible.

"Looks like you guys were having a wild night."

"Certainly," Jane replies with amusement.

"Well..." She put it next to her cup on the counter and warily glances at him. "You're back pretty early though."

"Yeah, well..." He makes a pregnant pause and leans back. "As much as I enjoy *hanging out with the boys*, it lacks one essential thing."

"What is it?" She knows she will regret the question.

He didn't answer, simply sends her a pointed stare instead.

Without realizing she holds her breath and feels a blush heating her cheeks. She can all but return his gaze, with her skin starting to tingle and her fingers itching to reach for him.

She misses him so much.

Jane slowly bends forward, resting his elbows on his thighs while his eyes are never leaving hers. His voice is low and warm, yet somewhat urging. "You couldn't know that I would be home by now, but you came nonetheless... *Why?*"

"I..." Lisbon finally remembers how to breathe and tries to swallow the lump in her throat. "I felt a little restless." While there is genuine truth in her words, they also couldn't be more understated. She had been pacing her living room like a lioness her cage.

"It's this damn case, you know?" Nervously she rubs her palms against her jeans.

He nods in agreement and thoughtfully sucks his lip between his teeth.

It sends her down the memory lane with a jolt; *those lips* pressed against her cheek and *his body* against hers.

Why is he so far away? She needs him!

"I just...I needed a little confidence, I guess." She keeps talking, simply to stop her mind from racing.

"I get it, Lisbon." He smiles softly and, bending further towards her, he places his hand gently on her knee. Her stare flickers down to where she feels the heat of his palm

through the thin denim of her trousers, and then back to his eyes. She doesn't know *what* he can see in hers, but when he voices the words, "Don't worry, my dear, it's going to be fine!" rather hoarsely all of a sudden, she suspects that it's not all too different from what she exposed on that hidden picture beneath her catalogs.

Since she is watching him like a hawk, Lisbon catches him, when he finally glances at her lips. Out of reflex she wets them with the tip of her tongue and witnesses with exhilaration how his pupils dilate. Something deep inside her snaps irrevocably.

She wants him. She wants him so much that it's downright painful.

She needs to know. He kissed her on the cheek not long ago – he had *no right* to rekindle this well concealed desire – and now she yearns to know!

"Jane..." It's supposed to sound like a whisper, but his name escapes her throat as a sensual sigh.

Without thinking any further, she slides from the couch and sinks down on her knees. He doesn't back off, so when she freezes in front of him, there are only inches left between them. The gaze they keep exchanging is almost too intense to bear, and the breath gets caught in her throat before it picks up again, in an irregular, chopped rhythm.

I love you. Forbidden thoughts.

She feels his hand moving upwards along her arm which makes her shiver in anticipation, until it's pressed against her neck. He plays with her hair, entangles his fingers in her open waves. The buried grip is tender, but she can't escape the feeling that he's holding her in place. It's as if he tries to keep her from moving away or too close. Maybe it's both.

Her frustration with him reaches the breaking point. The sometimes mixed, sometimes vague signals he's sending irritate her beyond words.

Growling under her breath, she reaches for his collar, spans the distance and crushes her mouth against his.

Initiating the first contact of their lips is probably the stupidest thing she has ever done. Kissing Jane of all people is wrong in every sense of the word. It's a story – doomed to failure from the beginning.

And yet, as the adrenalin rushes through her veins, she simply can't bring herself to regret it. Especially not when he hesitates only for seconds before he suddenly wraps his arms around her waist and pulls her flat against him. Lisbon gasps against his lips, as she somehow ends up halfway between his legs and halfway in his lap. Bracing herself on his thighs, she trembles in his arms, and then, *finally*, she feels him plunge into the kiss completely.

It's careful and sweet at first, but it gets urgent and passionate very soon. He trails her lips like a desperate man, never breaking the contact. The gentle pressure is filled with longing, and even when she pants for air, he maintains the touch.

It drives her crazy and sets her nerve endings on fire. The urge to get closer fogs her

mind and she sighs with lust, when he dips his tongue into her mouth. She shudders and sinks even more into his tight embrace, when a deep-throated moan escapes his lips and causes goosebumps all over her skin.

Lisbon arches against his firm chest, but then a sudden ringing cuts through the thick air that had been filled only with heavy breathing, gasped names and noises of pleasure before.

Lisbon blinks as they break away, feeling very disorientated and dizzy, while Jane at least has the presence of mind to pick out the cell phone from her back pocket. He checks the display, glances at her and when he obviously decides that she's not decent enough yet, he answers the call. Just for once she doesn't mind, not trusting her voice one bit.

"Hey Cho, what's up?" She has no idea how he manages to sound only slightly hoarse and breathless, and she discreetly clears her throat while she listens. "Yeah, she's with me, why?"

All the excitement she had been enjoying with Jane only seconds ago is forgotten in the blink of an eye, as Lisbon watches with a sinking feeling how he blanches.

"All right, we'll be right there!"

"What is it?" she asks with dread as soon as he has hung up. Jane runs his fingers through his hair and exhales audibly, before he finally faces her.

"It's Grace, she's missing."

Lisbon gasps and immediately feels panic rising in chest, choking her, withdrawing her ability to fill her lungs with air, until Jane grabs her wrists and locks her eyes with his. "Calm down, Lisbon! Come on, deep breaths! In and out. Calm down, my dear. We will find her! Everything will be fine, okay? Listen to me, Teresa."

She follows his lead, breathes in and out slowly, seeking comfort in his words and in his touch. And just like she used to do it in the past, she eventually finds confidence in his calming presence. Allowing him to help her up, she entwines their fingers and clings to his hand.

Just before they leave his Airstream, he offers her one last encouraging smile and a quick hug – and she realizes that she actually starts to believe in his words.

Everything is going to be alright, because in the end she can still count on him.

The End

Kapitel 21: A Game For Two - Episode tag for "White as the Driven Snow" (6x15)

2. Sequel to Photo Finish

A Game For Two

It's late when she finally gets home. She's exhausted, but the relief she feels after the emotional rollercoaster of the past few days keeps her awake; and not even a long, hot bath can change it.

Afterwards she snuggles into a pair of sweatpants and a cozy, white pullover with a button border. Comfort clothes, matching the Chinese food that just has been delivered.

Lisbon hums quietly while she rummages through her kitchen cabinets. It's only when she coincidentally glances outside the window that she notices *it*.

"What the hell?!" She grabs her phone from the counter and presses speed dial number one.

He answers after the first ring. "Good evening, my dear!" Jane's voice is way too cheerful and innocent for her liking.

"Oh don't give me that, Jane! What is your Airstream doing in my backyard?!"

"Uhm, parking?"

"Yeah, I can see that! What I meant is, *why* is it parking in my backyard?"

"Because I drove it there," he explains patiently. Lisbon growls and stares at the well lit trailer with disbelief.

"*Why?*"

"Well, home is where the heart is, so I thought I could bring both of them together." The smirk in his voice indicates a joke, but Lisbon actually wonders how close it is to the truth.

"Yeah right," she scoffs while trying to ignore the pleasant flutter in her chest. "What are you doing here, Jane?"

"I...I just thought you might want some company. And I figured you would probably decline if I asked you to come over, because you're in no mood to go out tonight. So I simply brought my home to yours. I mean, if that's not the spirit of mobile living, I don't know what is."

She's surprised and touched by his honest answer, which makes her smile softly. "Oh really?"

"Yeah..." he replies slowly and adds, "Also, if I indeed guessed wrong and you're not in the mood for company, I could easily stay close without bothering you."

Call her crazy, but Lisbon is pretty sure, she hears some actual worry in his words, and the plea not to refuse his invitation. She decides to test her theory by giving a non-committal noise as a response.

"Huh..."

"So...? You wanna come over?" His question is so hopeful that she can't possibly tantalize him longer than a few more seconds.

"I'll be there in five," she promises affectionately.

And it's indeed exactly five minutes later when she knocks at his door, with only a pair of boots added to her outfit and the Chinese food in her hands.

Jane tears the door open and beams at her. "Lisbon! How nice of you to come by! And completely unexpected too!" He ushers her in while taking the bags and handing her a glass of wine in exchange. Without his jacket, but with rolled up sleeves and a carefree expression, he looks homier than she's ever seen him, and it warms her from inside.

"Knock it off, Jane!" She chuckles, but then she blinks in surprise as she finds the table already set, with two plates, a candle and wine. "How did you know I would bring dinner?"

"Please! I've known you for twelve years. You're an open book to me." He winks at her and takes the boxes out of the plastic bag.

"...Did you see the delivery guy drive away?"

"That too."

She slaps his arm playfully. "You're so full of it!"

"But you love me anyway," he warbles as she sits down.

"Shut up and serve the food!"

xxx

Except for the low jazz music coming from the radio, they share the meal in peaceful silence, occasionally glancing and smiling at each other. With anyone else it might have been awkward, but for them it just feels natural, normal even, with a spark of excitement buzzing under the surface.

A spark that starts humming even louder after dinner. By settling on the couch next to the table and folding her legs comfortably beneath her, she complies with Jane's suggestion to make herself at home while he cleans up.

"So that's how you feel when you idly watch other people doing all the work?" Lisbon grins and contently accepts her glass of wine, which he refilled on his way to the sink without being asked.

Jane answers with a grin of his own while washing the dishes. "I'm getting results anyway, isn't that all that matters?"

"I'm honestly not so sure about the balance of cost and benefit here."

"Meh, academic flimflam!"

She snorts and they keep bantering until he finishes his task. He offers her some more wine then and sits down on the chair across from her, watching the woman in front of him with contentment.

"Are you trying to get me drunk?" She snuggles further into the cushions and sips at her glass, all the while holding his gaze. He scrutinizes her closely, taking in her attire from head to toe, and smiles tenderly. She blushes slightly, but she can't bring herself to feel uncomfortable – despite the elephant with the size of a blue whale in the room. The last time they kept looking at each other like that, she ended up throwing herself at him and kissing him as if there were no tomorrow.

Her cheeks redden even more and the memory sends a sweet shiver down her spine. Jane raises an eyebrow and moves to get a blanket.

"Of course not, why would I?" is his delayed and mildly distracted reply as he unfolds the fabric over her lap. She doesn't tell him, that she isn't cold, since he probably is aware of it anyway. Instead she lets the subject drop, pulls the blanket tighter around her and gives the empty space beside her an inviting pat. He follows her lead without hesitation and sinks down on the cushion, close enough to let their knees touch.

Lisbon looks at him and shifts a bit to lean her shoulder against his while nervously fidgeting with her wine glass.

"Jane...?" She struggles. She really doesn't want to ask, but at the same time she needs to know.

"Hm?" His smile is warm and encouraging and tugs at her heart. When he reaches for one of her hands and holds it safely in his, she swallows.

"About...what happened the other night..."

"You mean, when you shamelessly jumped me and ruthlessly tried to seduce me?" He obviously attempts to lighten the mood and make it easier, which admittedly works just fine. She growls, flushing scarlet, and nudges his shoulder.

"Yeah, *that!*"

"What about it?" He becomes earnest, and so does she.

"Well...what does it mean? ... You know, for us?"

He looks into her eyes as if he's searching for something – she has no idea for what exactly – and starts playing gently with her fingers. "It can mean whatever we want."

"Come on, Jane, I'm serious. It's not that easy."

"So am I!" he says sincerely. "Why wouldn't it be easy?"

"Because..." She struggles again, confused by his soft caress and his calm posture.

"Because it's complicated!"

"No it's not. All I have to do is looking at you, my dear, and I just *know* that it's plain simple. I know, what I feel for you. And I have a very good idea about what you feel for me – even if I can't be sure. It's all that counts! And even if I'm wrong – I truly hope, I'm not – that doesn't change a thing. We can do whatever we want. We will figure it out. Together."

Why does he sound so reasonable? She had so many arguments why *they* would be a bad idea, but now she seems to remember merely one of them.

"What if it goes wrong? What if...I lose you again, just because we make the wrong decision now?"

He tightens his grip around her hand and makes sure to hold her stare. "I promise you,

Teresa, that you'll never lose me, not when I can help it! If that's what you want, I'll stay by your side till the very end."

"What is this, a proposal?" she tries to joke, but the laughter dies on her lips as he stays serious. She feels a lump forming in her throat.

"You meant what you said? You really mean that?" she whispers overwhelmed. Jane cracks a soft smile, probably feeling that she's about to freak out.

"I do. I know you're scared, but you don't have to. It's just *us*. Jane and Lisbon, as always. Just you and me. No more and no less." Someone might have understood his words the wrong way, but Lisbon finds them oddly reassuring and calming. And when he adds a dramatic, "It's us against the world, like superheroes!" she can't help but smile, feeling the tension decreasing.

"More like Tom and Jerry," she scoffs.

"Let me guess, I'm the cat that gets outsmarted by the mouse?" When she nods with a grin, he says, "Oh well, I don't mind the comparison. No matter how much they squabbled, Tom and Jerry were only happy when they were together. They couldn't live without each other, just like us."

Lisbon covers her laughter with a snort and leans her head against his shoulder, watching with a warm flurry in her chest how he starts to play with her fingers again. She wants to kiss him, wants to be as close to him as possible, but she feels shy of a sudden. Getting romantically involved with Jane has never been an option before, and now that it is, she doesn't know where to start.

Perhaps she just needs some time to get used to the idea.

She stifles a yawn. All the thinking, the cozy atmosphere combined with the wine in her veins and Jane's calming presence make her sleepy. The tender stroking on her fingers and along her arm does the rest, so she slowly dozes off. She hardly notices how Jane helps her laying down, before she finally falls asleep.

XXX

It can't be much later when she awakes, and it takes her a moment to realize why. There's a weight on her chest that makes it hard for her to breathe.

"Ugh, Jane..." she complains and reaches for his shoulder.

"What is it?" he murmurs sleepily. He's lying on top of her, with his face buried in her pullover and his back covered by the blanket. It's quiet in the Airstream and almost dark. The only light comes from a small lamp in the kitchenette. He must have decided to call it a night and simply joined her on the couch. Not that she minds in general, but she won't be able to sleep like that.

"Move, I can't breathe."

"Sorry." He shifts his weight off her and slides between her and the backrest, resting his body only partly on hers now. "Better?"

Lisbon inhales deeply and relaxes. "Yes!"

"Good," is all he says and then he places his head back into the sweet valley between her breasts, while his arms sneak around her body to hold her tight. It makes her both roll her eyes and chuckle.

"Having fun down there?"

"I can't complain." He sighs, very much pleased with the situation.

"I bet." She grumbles, but embraces him anyway, after she straightened the blanket around his shoulders. Without much thinking, she buries her fingers in his hair, playing with the golden curls like she's always wanted to, while her other hand starts stroking his back.

He makes another, rather purring sound and cuddles closer.

It makes her smile, but then a sudden thought cuts through her heart like a knife, killing the happy expression off in seconds.

She almost lost him today. And not only him, but Grace and Wayne as well. The fear is still lingering beneath the surface and it costs all her willpower to swallow it down. Her eyes become misty as she realizes how lucky they have been, and a wave of pure relief washing over her makes her lower lip quake.

Jane, who probably feels her body tensing, lifts his head and looks up at her.

"Hey, what's wrong?" he whispers with worry.

She blinks rapidly and stares at the Airstream ceiling. "Nothing...It's just..."

He carefully moves upwards to get a better look at her face and places his palm on her cheek. "Just what?"

"I'm just happy that you guys came out of this alive." She finally let their eyes meet and finds his filled with regret and affection.

When he replies, his voice is soft and honest. "I'm sorry I scared you. Please believe me that I am."

"You have to be more careful, Jane!" She urges him, her own voice thick with emotion.

"Especially now that we..." She breaks off and tightly shuts her eyes.

"Hey...Teresa, look at me." He flutters a peck onto the top her nose and waits for her to look at him once more. "I will be more careful in the future, okay? You're not getting rid of me that easily."

"Promise?" She isn't sure if she can believe him just yet, but she's willing to try.

"I promise." Hell, she doesn't have a choice anyway. Especially not when he looks at her like this and finally bends down to press a loving kiss on her lips. The touch is tender and yet driven by a long concealed hunger. And all her worries fade into the background when he plunders her mouth with longing and fervour.

After a more passionate interaction they exchange some more long and lazy kisses, until they break apart and he eventually nestles his head back against her chest. She only notices that he somehow opened the collar buttons of her pullover when he places another kiss on the inside of her breast.

She gasps and feels him chuckle against her skin.

"Stop this, Mister! We'll continue this when we're not emotionally and physically exhausted."

"Yes, ma'am!" He smirks. "But just so you know, I'll take you up on that."

XXX

When she awakes from her slumber anew, the bright morning sun glistens through the blinds. Something is lying on Lisbon's face and she grabs it a bit disorientated, before she looks around. Jane is gone and she tries not to be all too disappointed, until she remembers the paper in her hand.

She sits up and gazes at the back of a Polaroid photo, where a message has been noted down in Jane's neat handwriting.

Good morning my dear,

I hope you slept well. Judging by the soft sighs you made in your sleep, you had some nice dreams at least. Nothing to be embarrassed about, I assure you. I'm out to get us a delicious breakfast and I'll be back in a few.

*Love,
Jane*

She rolls her eyes and turns the photo around.

"What the-?!" With her eyes as big as saucers she stares at the picture. It was obviously taken in the morning and it shows her own sleeping form and Jane with his head on her shoulder. While doing the victory sign, he beams into the camera with the smuggest grin she's ever seen. However, the most scandalous part of that scene is a bright hickey in her cleavage that hasn't been there before. Frantically she rips her open-buttoned pullover aside and *there it is*.

"Oh no, you didn't, Patrick Jane!" Lisbon hisses. It is nothing that couldn't be hidden by a high-necked blouse, but *how dare he?!*

She will make him pay for this! Dearly!

Her gory gaze falls on the camera that is sitting innocently on the table. So he likes taking pictures of her, yeah? *That can be arranged!*

It probably isn't what he had intended when he brought her this gift – or *maybe it is* exactly what he had hoped for. Either way, two can play this game!

*And she will make sure that **her** victory won't be a photo finish.*

The End

Kapitel 22: Do you mind if I stay?

This is for *youmaysayimadreamer97*, who sent me a request on tumblr.

Do you mind if I stay?

This case has been a bitch from the very beginning, Lisbon reflects. Abducted girls and a bunch of heavily armed men led by a sly psychopath. Not a good combination, especially when you add a reckless FBI consultant to it.

She rubs her face and tries not to hyperventilate. Maybe she should ask a nurse to give her some sedative while she waits. It sounds appealing, but of course she won't do so. Her head already is filled with a blur of memories and visions of worst fears coming true. She doesn't need drugs fogging her mind as well.

Right now she can't even tell what happened after hell had broken loose. She remembers running right into a trap with Cho close behind her. And how she relieved she was that she had ordered Jane to stay in the car. She should have known better.

When she was standing there, her weapon drawn and with Cho's back against her own, she felt almost calm, even though they were surrounded by men with guns pointed at their heads. It seemed like a hopeless situation, because they were extremely outnumbered, but with Cho having her back, she felt a silver lining of hope.

Until two musclemen brought in a certain blond consultant whose indignant yelp she would recognize everywhere. The world stopped spinning right there and then. A sudden panic hit her like a punch in the stomach. They pushed him towards his colleagues and as soon as he was close, Lisbon shifted without thinking to shield his body with hers, just when Cho did the same on his other side.

It is an instinct they have perfected over the years. Protect to one without a gun – and without any instinct of self-preservation, obviously. Jane tried to talk them out of it, and in this very moment Lisbon wanted to kill him herself.

The next thing she knew was that everything started falling apart. Their backup must have arrived, because their opponents went wild all of the sudden. Flying bullets and raged shouts filled the air and chaos overran them. Then, the world slowed down again, everything happened all at once and in terrifying slow motion. The man, she was about to face, pointed his gun at her and due to the lack of escape possibilities she knew she literally had to take the shot. She knew it would hurt, but it would also give her the chance to knock him off.

He pulled the trigger, and suddenly, through all the din, she heard a horrified voice.
"LISBON!"

A figure that usually isn't fast at all brushed past her, just when the gunshot echoed through the air. She smelled the familiar cologne right before a warm body crushed into her and pulled her down to the ground, burying her underneath.

"Jane! No!" someone screamed, and now she realizes that it was her. She tried to free herself, whereas she clutched his cramped form against her chest at the same time. She called for Cho several times and only stopped when her former second in command appeared in her blurred vision.

Lisbon is pretty sure, he kept talking to her urgently, but all she remembers is a lot of blood on her hands, seeping through Jane's shirt at his waist, and the groans of pain from the man himself.

She doubts she will ever be able to forget how it feels to hold an injured, bleeding Jane in her arms. Or the feeling of her heart breaking into way too many pieces out of sheer fear for the most important person in her life.

"Agent Lisbon?" A gentle voice pulls Lisbon out of her memories. Somehow she's ended up in this cold hospital waiting room, God only knows how, and a quick glance to a wall clock tells her that she's been out for a while.

"Yes?" The adrenaline is back with full force and makes her jump to her feet. She turns her attention to the doctor, who smiles reassuringly.

"You're here for Mr. Jane, I take it?"

"I am. How is he?" Out of the corner of her eye Lisbon sees Cho hurrying towards them, but she can't focus on him now.

"He's fine," the doctor says. "Maybe a bit dizzy from the blood loss and the pain medication, but otherwise he's been lucky. It was just a somewhat unfavorable grazing shot, but in the end it looked far worse than it actually is. We will keep him overnight though, just to be sure."

Lisbon feels a shock of relief, which almost knocks her down, and she nearly misses Cho's supporting shoulder against hers.

"Can I see him?" She's desperate, needs to see for herself that Jane is okay.

"Sure, I'll take you to him."

"Thank you. What about you, Cho?"

He looks at her and squeezes her elbow quickly but affectionately. "Nah, I'll catch up later. I need to go back to the HQ. Tell Jane I'll kick his ass if he ever does something like this again." It makes her smile a bit. He's angry and worried, because Jane put his life at risk – a feeling she shares passionately – but she can tell that he's also glad about her being unscathed.

"I will. Thanks, Kimball," she replies softly. Cho nods and leaves after giving her one last scrutinizing look.

XXX

It turns out that physical punishment from Cho is no longer necessary.

"Ouch!" Jane whines and rubs his shoulder, which received a punch from Lisbon as soon as she entered his hospital room. "What was that for?!"

"You scared the hell out of me!" She punches him again.

"Ouch! Stop hitting me, woman!"

"You're such a baby."

"I just got shot, you know?!" He has the nerve to pout. Lisbon growls.

"Yeah, I do! I was there, remember?!" Still fuming, but secretly being exceedingly relieved, she sits down on his bed. "It was your own fault. How could you jump in front of a buzzing bullet?"

"You were about to let him shoot you!" He glares at her accusingly.

"It was a calculated risk! I knew what I was doing."

"That seems a bit like a double standard to me..."

Lisbon sighs, averts her eyes and rubs her temple, feeling worn-out and defeated all of a sudden. "I'm not getting into a cop-consultant-discussion with you, Jane." And before he can object, she adds, "I'm just... This could have ended far worse and I'm glad that it didn't."

It's quiet for moment and she wishes she could shake off the feeling of gloom, until a warm hand moves over hers to cover it gently. She looks up and meets his eyes.

"I'm not sorry for protecting you, Lisbon... But I am sorry that I scared you." When she doesn't respond, he emphasizes, "I really am."

When she still doesn't react, he starts to pull away, but just then she stops him by turning her hand and letting their palms meet in a soft touch.

"I believe you," she admits. "But..." She takes a deep breath and her fingers curl around his wrist as if she tries to hold on to him unconsciously. "You left me behind so many times, Jane. For a moment or two I thought that this time it would be forever." The pain in her voice isn't hidden well enough for Jane and he cringes.

"Sorry..."

"Just don't do it again." She glances down at their hands, where his fingertips are brushing over her pulse point. It tickles her skin, causes her to bite her lip.

"I can't give you such a promise, Lisbon, not if it's the only way to save you." He sounds sincere, and also a bit woozy. He blinks as he tries to stay focused. "However, I don't want to leave your side ever again. Not if I can't help it. Do you...mind if I stay? With you?" There is a vulnerability in his gaze that hasn't been there before. Seeing his pain, of both physical and mental nature, makes something inside her chest crack and painfully tugs at her heart. Unfortunately it gets mixed with an ache of her own.

Lisbon pulls her hand out of his hold – she tries not to feel bereft while doing so – and wants to sound cold, but it's the hurting that is audible in her voice. "That was never my decision to make, Jane." She never wanted him to go. Not for a trip to Las Vegas, not on that beach and not after he killed Red John.

"I know... but it is now."

Now that his hand is free he lifts it and cups her cheek. Lisbon almost flinches at the unexpected touch and looks at him with wide eyes. His palm is warm and comforting on her skin and she is struck by the sudden thought that she must look awful – with her hair tousled from tearing, lines of worry on her face and dried blood on her clothes. Yet his gaze is intense and so full of open affection as if he couldn't care less. He probably doesn't care at all.

"So...do you mind if I stay?" he asks again, effectively distracting her from her appearance.

"Are you asking me to stay in my life?" Her heart almost leaps into her throat and her mouth becomes dry.

"Yes. And while we're on it – forever would be preferable."

"As what?" she whispers, her heartbeat too loud in her own ears, a blush painting her skin. While never breaking their eye contact, she can't help it and presses her cheek into his hand, enjoying how he moves it caressingly along her features.

"What do you think..." His reply is also just a whisper. Under different circumstances she would have scolded him, because, honestly, *how* is she supposed to know? However, the way he lets his thumb trace her upper lip hardly leaves any room for doubt.

It's more a reflex when she nervously wets her parted lips with her tongue – and the contact it makes with his fingertip is not all intentioned. Both Jane and Lisbon freeze, gazing.

Seconds tick away until Lisbon feels him trembling. She covers the back of his hand with her palm, presses a chaste, but lingering kiss on his own and finally lowers their automatically entwining fingers.

"You should get some rest, brave man," she says fondly.

He tries to fight a yawn and fails. "You haven't answered yet," he complains like a sleepily child. "I'm not going to fall asleep without an answer."

She rolls her eyes and bends down to kiss his temple, savoring the stalling before she whispers into his ear. "What do you think?"

"Now you're just being mean." He is pouting again and she smiles widely.

"How is your wound? Does it hurt?"

"Only when I laugh. Ouch! And when you push against it!"

"Does this hurt?"

"Yes."

"And here?"

"Yes! Stop poking, woman!"

"What about this part...?"

"Woah! Seriously, stop it! You don't want to go down *that* road right now!"

"Oh I don't know... If we stay together, I'll need something to keep me occupied..."

The End

Kapitel 23: Vois la vie en rose

Warning: Lime

Vois la vie en rose

The morning was quiet and peaceful. Light was streaming through the open window of her bedroom, while the brisk wind was playing with the curtains.

Lisbon blinked sleepily and simply stared into space for a while, her mind empty in a blissful manner. She was lying on her side, the covers loosely draped around her. The crisp air raised the tiny hair on her skin, but she felt so warm and cozy that it didn't bother her. Perhaps it was because of the tailor-made shirt she had put on sometime during the night. It was too big for her; she could hide her hands in its long sleeves. The white, patterned fabric looked rough, but it was soft against her bare upper body and smelt like a soothing promise.

Or maybe it was because of the sleeping figure right behind her. How could she feel cold with a nude man enticingly pressed against her back? His elbow was resting on her hip bone and his fingers, which had sneaked beneath the shirt, were spread on her stomach, closely below her breasts. It was intimate and made her curl her lips as she sucked them between her teeth.

A quiet snoring came from where he had buried his face in her hair and she smiled. Who would have thought that she would end up in Patrick Jane's arms eventually? To be honest, she had given up hope already – until the dilemma with Jane, Marcus and D.C. had finally reached its breaking point. Her bags had been packed and she had been ready to go, more hurt than happy, but determined to make the best of the situation. Just then Jane had made up his mind and all her plans had collapsed like an unsteady house of cards.

It had been a deeply cutting downfall in more ways than just one, and not only for Jane and herself, but for Marcus as well. However, it had also united her and Jane in the end – and in more than one way, too.

Blushing she remembered how all the twirling, wearing emotions and the far too long hidden passion had gotten the best of them last night. Jane had made love to her several times, remarkably and stunningly so. Apparently it *did* make a difference when true love was involved.

However, now that she was able to think with a clear head again, she realized that life was no Hollywood fairytale. It wasn't all happy ending and rose-colored glasses. As happy and satisfied she was feeling, guilt was preying on her conscience. Furthermore, she shouldn't feel awkward, but fact was that she did. Awkward, not necessarily in a mere negative way, and insecure. Jane and she had been friends for so long, pushing boundaries but never crossing – until now. She loved him, still so very much, but finally being able to react on it frightened her a little.

Lisbon sighed. The inner turmoil made her tense and she decided to get out of bed even though it was still early. She moved carefully, not intending to wake Jane, but she didn't get very far. The arm around her waist suddenly tightened its grip and forced her to sink back with a small gasp. She grunted under her breath and tried again.

This time she almost managed it to the edge of the bed when she was suddenly pulled backwards and bumped into Jane.

"Jane...!" she complained, after swallowing a surprised laugh. "What are you doing?"

"Keeping you from fleeing the country." To emphasize his words he wrapped her into a tight embrace and pushed one of his legs over hers.

"I am *not* fleeing." Realizing that he wouldn't let her go anytime soon, she relaxed and allowed him to nuzzle the back of her neck as well as to nudge the shirt out of his way while doing so.

"Liar," he whispered and pressed a sweet kiss on a sensitive spot behind her ear. She shivered pleasantly.

"Fine," she said quietly but not without affection. "It's just...I don't know, I feel a little restless, I guess. This—" She made a vague gesticulation. "This is just... new and *bizarre* somehow."

He didn't answer right away but let his hand on her belly stroke her gently, and she suddenly was very aware of him practically surrounding her. Keeping her warm and safe.

Guiltily she added, "I'm sorry, that's probably not a very considerate thing to say after spending the night together."

"s okay," he mumbled into her hair while his teasing fingertips continued their wandering.

"You're not upset?"

"Of course not." She felt him moving behind her as he rested his head on his other hand so that he was able to look at her face. "Feeling insecure is not a shame, Teresa. Although it *would* be a shame if I let you leave without acting on it." Lisbon turned her head to meet his gaze and was rewarded with a little peck on her nose before Jane went on, "We've been comfortable in our cozy and friendly relationship for about a decade. A drastic change like this can be awkward at first. It just shows that we care. I'd like to say, *don't be afraid*—but that would be hypocritical, because I'm scared as hell."

"You are?" Relief enfolded her like a warming blanket and so did her hope not to be alone with it. "What keeps you from running?"

He smiled at her, brightly. "You."

She rolled her eyes, but blushed nonetheless.

"I'm serious!" he insisted. "It's not just because I love you. Believe me, I do! But I also have faith in you. I trust you with my heart, Teresa. And that's keeping me from running over the hills. That, and the embarrassment I would feel over leaving your house stark-naked. "

Lisbon snorted with amusement. "I'd like to see that."

"Sure you would!"

She chuckled at his smirk and after a moment of silence she finally turned in his

embrace to face him. Taking her time to settle against him, she cracked a small, rather shy smile.

"Hey," she whispered as a greeting and bathed in the beaming response, feeling the awkward tension leaving her body in refreshing waves.

"Hey yourself." Beneath the swiped shirt he let his hand move from her belly to trace her side until he ended up on her hip. Playfully his fingers tickled their way down to her bare derriere, causing Lisbon to make an abstracted noise.

She arched closer and pressed her face into the crook of his neck, inhaling deeply.

"Anything else on your mind?" he asked softly, probably already knowing the answer, but she appreciated that he left the acknowledgement to her. She sighed, trying to settle her thoughts and make sense of them.

"I don't know," she said again. "It's as if I can't believe just yet that this is *real*. The past few weeks have been..." She struggled to find the right words and Jane moved his palm soothingly along her spine. "An emotional nightmare. I've been *so* hurt that you would let me go without even trying to fight. But I also understand why you didn't and how *painful* it must have been for you."

She took a deep breath and even though she knew that it was insensitive, Lisbon needed to say it. "And when you finally did, I... I can't forget the pain in his eyes. Marcus, he...tried to conceal it, but it was obvious how much I've hurt him."

"He really is a bad liar," Jane agreed quietly. "However, he took it with far more dignity that I expected him to."

"Maybe... Still, I really wish I wouldn't have dragged him right into the middle of this mess. I have to tell him that I'm sorry."

"You already did, my dear." Reassuring her Jane gave her butt a gentle squeeze. "Several times so. And as far as I can judge he understood. Besides," he added a little dryly. "He already released some steam."

That finally induced her to look up at him. Carefully she brought her fingers to his nose. "Does it still hurt?" she wondered not without sympathy and caressed the fading bruise.

"Nah," he waved it off lightly. "I'm pretty sure he could have hit me far worse. He probably contained himself for you – which my nose and I are grateful for, even though we probably deserved more."

Not quite successful in biting back a smirk, she teased, "I'm not disagreeing on that."

"Figured as much." They shared a small smile, welcoming the familiar banter, before Jane got serious again. "Look, I know you feel guilty about him, but as reluctant as I am to admit it – Marcus *is* a good guy. I'm confident that he will find someone, who will make him happy. Truly happy."

"Maybe you're right." Lisbon knew for sure that the guilt wouldn't go for a while, but Jane had a point – and she honestly hoped for Marcus to find a woman for whom he wasn't just the *next best thing*.

Apart from that, she also hoped that the lingering ache that kept burning in her chest would fade eventually. Even though Jane had captured her in the end, it was still there, reminding her of how great idiots they had been. At least the choking uneasiness was gone now, and after weeks of tension it felt like she could finally breathe again.

Lisbon blinked to shake herself out of her nagging musing and glanced at Jane. He was still watching her and she felt a sudden urge to kiss him, so strong that heat washed around her like a wave and her heart picked up its pace. Yet, in the brightness of the morning, she hesitated, feeling ridiculously shy.

Being a little nervous and rather unconsciously she let her fingertips dance along his facial outlines. As she was tracing his cheekbones, the nose and his lips, her longing for a kiss became overwhelming, but she couldn't quite muster the courage to lean in.

Jane seemed to notice her struggling and she was glad when he started to move closer and closer until they finally met halfway. The touch was warm and innocent and sweet, and Lisbon almost light-headed with relief. For a moment or two neither of them moved, both relishing the gentle contact. Their hands, hers on his face, his against her hip, were frozen in their caress, as if both Lisbon and Jane were too smitten with each other to concentrate on anything else.

Then, while keeping the pressure soft, Jane initiated a slow and lazy massaging of her lips with his own. Motions, which made the proverbial butterflies dance funnily in her stomach until she felt warm and dizzy with bliss. It was more a *first kiss* than any other they had shared before. Last night their minds had been fogged with passion, ease and longing, they had been drunken with lust and affection. It had been wonderful and satisfying – without any doubt – but now it was different, more special and even more intimate.

When a small moan escaped her throat, Lisbon felt his fingers twitch against her skin and how their grip tightened involuntarily. However, after leaning into the kiss once more, they ended it reluctantly. Taken by surprise about how emotionally they were affected by such an innocent gesture, both of them needed to draw a calming breath. After sharing not a single word but an honest smile, however, it wasn't long before they united their lips again – more eager this time. Jane gently broke hers apart to slip his tongue into her mouth, and willingly she opened up for him while intensifying their body contact with rocking moves of her hips.

It was his turn to groan and she found him hardening against her thigh. She broke the kiss and her lips curled into a smug grin.

"Don't look at me like that," he murmured with pretended accusation. "This is *your* fault."

"It is, isn't it?" She sighed with pride and joined their mouths together again, catching his lower lip to nibble at it. He allowed her to play with him for a blink of an eye, but then he suddenly pushed her on her back and himself on top of her, burying her beneath him. Lisbon made a delighted noise and brought her arms around his neck, just as Jane started kissing her thoroughly.

Now, that was better. Lisbon's last coherent notice was about the awkwardness being gone in the end, and then only one single thought was left, consuming her mind entirely.

Jane.

Passion, fervently enjoyed the night before, rekindled and filled the air with sweet, buzzing electricity – not that there was much air left between them to begin with. Jane was heavy on her, pressing Lisbon into the mattress, his legs sneaked between hers – and she enjoyed every second of it. Her fingers had found their way into his hair, reflexively clutching his golden curls while Jane was making his kisses deep, kindly tantalizing and intoxicating. They deliciously poisoned her mind into pleasant absentmindedness, lured her heart into an erratic rhythm and caused her body to start humming with desire.

Eventually he broke the contact of their lips to trail his own down to her neck instead and she groaned both in disappointment and pleasure.

He was taking his time, placing open-mouthed kisses here and there, nipping at her skin, teasingly but not hard enough to leave any marks. And he didn't stop when he reached the button border of his shirt. Moving slowly he opened one button after another, whispering tiny pecks only on the small uncovered path. It made her squirm with every single touch. It was only when he finished the last button that he pushed himself on his elbows and reached for the loose parts of the fabric. Gently he slid them aside, not only exposing her chest but also lightly brushing her breasts in the process.

Lisbon gasped and pressed the back of her head into the pillow. It should have been forbidden how even the softest of his touches could set her nerve endings on fire. She breathed in deeply as his fingers started painting invisible patterns on her flat belly, but when they stayed there absent-mindedly, she blinked quizzically and looked at him.

Jane was gazing at her with so much wonder, love and pain, revealing so intense emotions, that she gripped the sheet and nearly whimpered. There was nothing that he hadn't explored the night before, but somehow it seemed to be different in the bright light of the morning. She wondered what he might be seeing and followed the movement of his eyes. From her disheveled hair that was sprawled on the pillow he took the path to her face, memorizing every detail from her dimples and freckles through to her laugh lines – only to linger even longer on the green of her eyes and the red of her slightly open lips.

From there he wandered along the shape of her neck, passed the collarbone until he paused on her breasts, watching the gentle but quickened up and down of her chest. Lisbon blushed fiercely, not only because of the intimacy of this particular part of her body, but also because the small pink peaks right there seemed to be yearning for his attention. And if that twitching of the corner of his mouth was anything to go by, the bastard knew exactly how accurate that was.

After savoring the sight thoroughly, he continued his journey to where his hand was still busy with caressing her abdomen. It was quite a nice contrast – his big, slightly more tanned hand against the fair skin of her dainty waist.

He seemed lost in thoughts while he was watching the movements of his fingers and learning every little contraction of her muscles as a reaction to his touch. Yet, when he didn't go on but simply kept staring, Lisbon knit her brows.

"Jane?" she said a bit self-conscious even though his expression didn't leave any room for doubt about his admiration. He inhaled slowly and lifted his head to let their looks meet again, smiling reassuringly. Lisbon gasped, stunned by what she was discovering. His smile was an honest one, she could tell, but it crumbled as soon as she noticed his watery eyes, misted by sorrow.

Now truly worried she pushed herself up to get closer to him and whispered, "Something wrong?"

"No," he breathed, his smile in place again. "Everything's fine."

She didn't believe him for a second. Lifting her hand she placed her palm against his cheek. "Then why are you crying?" she asked softly with her thumb tenderly stroking along his cheekbone.

His smile vanished and he blinked rapidly to fight imminent tears. "I feel the same, you know," he managed to admit, his voice heavy and broken. "I can't believe that this is real either. I can't believe that...that I almost made the *same* mistake again." Lisbon understood immediately and his pain – his regret – all but choked her. Before she could say anything, he closed his eyes, still struggling against overwhelming emotions, and added, "I almost missed *this*."

"Jane," Lisbon whispered urgently, because she couldn't bear it any longer. She waited for him to look at her, making sure she had his full attention before she went on. "I'm here, Jane." Her words were hardly audible anymore but firm and promising. "I'm right here. And I'm not going anywhere." She needed him to understand. Maybe she needed to understand herself – and so she said once more, "*I'm here*."

Like a drowning man reaching the lifesaving surface of the water, Jane took a deep, quivering breath and *finally* won the battle of preventing his tears from falling. He merely sniffled a few times and visibly relaxed.

"I didn't fail this time," he realized with genuine surprise and Lisbon felt a sad tug at her heart, but gave him an affectionate smile nevertheless.

"No, you didn't," she affirmed and closed the gap between them to kiss him gently on the lips. He wrapped his arms around her without hesitation and she hugged him in response, both holding on tight as they sunk back into the pillow.

They didn't let go as their kissing became impassioned and loaded with lust. There was nothing between them, no space, no clothes, and no air. It was just skin on skin, a heated contact that left both of them breathless. Since he was still caught between her thighs, they felt each other's excitement – and even though it grew overwhelmingly strong, they kept holding on, because it was such an intimate and thrilling feeling. A craving that was the sweetest ache on earth.

It was only when their arousal verged on the danger of fainting that Jane broke the kiss. He moved his lips and fingers downwards along her curves, recompensing her most sensitive spots for waiting so long. But even then he couldn't let go of her hand, their fingers entwined as if both Lisbon and Jane were afraid that one of them might vanish all of a sudden.

It wasn't something they could shake off easily, not even when they were joined together in the most intimate way possible – and not when they were moving with

shared passion and in perfect sync. As they finally reached the climax of pleasure they were close enough to feel each other's trembling as their own.

As emotionally and physically exhausted as they were feeling afterwards, it took them quite some time to catch their breath – and it was such an incredibly good feeling that they couldn't stop exchanging glances and smiles. With another, rather chaste kiss on her lips Jane slid onto the mattress right next to her and tenderly pulled her into his arms again.

Lisbon sighed contently, cuddling into his embrace, and closed her eyes. She didn't even care that Jane's hopelessly creased shirt was still hanging loosely around her arms somewhere.

They kept dozing for a while, lying on their sides, facing each other with their limbs entwined.

It was quiet and peaceful again, until Jane brought his hand to her cheek, nuzzled her nose with his and murmured sleepily, "How would you feel about breakfast?"

She smiled and his fingertips slipped towards her lips. "Isn't it lunch time already?" she wondered teasingly and felt him shrugging.

"Meh, details," he hummed and let his fingers wander to her neck and then into her hair. "So?"

"Nah, I'm good. Besides, *breakfast* means that *one* of us would have to get up to prepare something – and I'm actually very happy where I am right now." To emphasize the statement she snuggled further into his chest. It made him laugh quietly and he ruffled fondly through her hair.

"Well, whatever makes you happy, my dear."

And suddenly Lisbon realized that it was true.

She was happy.

Guilt was still lingering beneath the surface and it would probably stay there for some time. However, the ache in her heart was already fading into a warning memory and the awkwardness was gone completely, replaced by exciting sparks of a new (old) love.

In the end, everything had fallen into place.

And maybe, she thought with a smirk as she dozed off once more, it is time to put on some rose-colored glasses after all.

The End

Kapitel 24: The Voice of Night

The Voice of Night

Crisp and melodic were the tunes carried through the night, finding their way into the Airstream.

Lisbon groaned and made a childish attempt to hide under the pillow. Rather than hearing it she felt Jane chuckling beside her.

"This is no laughing matter," she whined into the mattress.

"No," he agrees. "It's a nightingale."

"Don't-"

"It was the nightingale and not the lark that pierced the fearful hollow of thine ear."

"Jane...!"

"Nightly she sings on yon pomegranate tree..."

"An oak tree moist likely."

"Believe me, Love, it was the nightingale."

"I wish I could kick your poetic ass out of the bed right now." As it became too hot and sticky beneath it Lisbon pushed the pillow aside and turned onto her side. She grumbled, "But I'm actually way too tired for that." Then she yawned and pressed her face against his shoulder.

Outside the nightingale began another act of her long, sonorous piece, causing Lisbon to whimper. Jane made no effort to conceal his amusement and reached for her ear to cover it gently with his big warm palm.

"Better?"

She shook her head, refusing to open her eyes, and sighed when Jane patted her hair before lowering his arm. Every fiber, every cell in her body yearned for deep, peaceful slumber. Her limbs felt blissfully heavy, ready to fully relax. Sleep was heaven – so close, she could almost grasp it.

If it weren't for that singing bird on its branch.

"It's louder now, isn't it?"

He ignored how seriously offended she sounded. "Why don't you concentrate on your breathing, Lisbon. Breathe in...and out. In...and out. That's good." He continued whispering soothing words into her ear and after a while he realized that it had become quiet. It was actually quiet, outside and – apart from his girlfriend's steady breathing – inside too.

Exhaling in relief he bent to brush a sweet kiss on her forehead before he closed his eyes to seek some much needed sleep himself.

Ah, yes. That was nice.

Peaceful.

Perfect.

...

Tship. Tship. Tship. Tship.

"Okay, that's it." Like a zombie drowsy Lisbon abruptly sat up, dazed with fatigue, and blindly grabbed her Glock from underneath another pillow with surprising precision. "Woah, woah!" Unlike her, Jane was wide awake in an instant as he carefully caught her hand and freed the weapon from her delicate fingers, putting it far, far out of reach. "No need for violence, my dear." He watched her for a moment, how she was sitting slumped over, with her lids still closed and the mouth wide open. She was so tired that she had no control over her body whatsoever.

A picture of both adorable and comical innocence.

"It's three o'clock in the morning, Jane," she slurred. "I have my rights!"

"I know, sweetheart, I know." Bringing his arm around her shoulders he pulled her limp body against him and softly lowered both of them back onto the mattress. "We still don't shoot at harmless habitants of the forest."

"What is it doing here anyway?" Ignoring his amused chiding, she stretched languidly like a big cat and draped herself across her lover. "There are no nightingales in Texas."

"Well, apparently there are now," he said dryly while tenderly stroking over her back. She purred into his ear and he smiled. "Something we should truly appreciate by the way. The nightingale with its modest beauty and melodious song has always been an inspiration for all the great poets. Myths and sonnets were written about it."

"Yeah, probably at night when none of your poets was being able to sleep over this din."

He couldn't help it and laughed into her wavy hair, nuzzling her fondly with his nose and making her smile against his chest.

"Maybe."

The strenuous singer outside braced itself for a *grande finale* and the pair in the Airstream sighed in resignation.

"You know, my little bird catcher," Jane said and combed his fingers soothingly through her silky mane. "I love you, despite your current aversion for the fowl."

"Hum, you too," was her sleepy reply and he hoped that she indeed was about to fall asleep again. However, after a few minutes, she added, "But I'd love you even more if you could shoo that thing away."

"How about I get you some earplugs tomorrow?" He offered instead and shivered slightly when she pressed an open-mouthed kiss right beside his nipple.

"Hmm, okay." The tiny tip of her tongue darted out to tease the sensitive pink peak, followed by a soft touch of her lips – making him gasp and feel a jolt of heat flashing down through his body. "Still need a distraction for tonight though."

"I can think of something," he grinned and with his long fingers around her chin he directed her upwards, bringing their mouths together for a slow and sensual kiss. Without much resistance he turned them upside-down to bury her small form beneath him and enjoyed the sigh she breathed into the kiss. Her posture welcoming him, he pressed himself against her, letting their legs entangle. As their kissing went on in deep, languid movements, lust sought its way into all his nerve endings, leaving a burning sensation behind, warm and pleasant, and it pooled enticingly in his lower

half.

He couldn't quite contain some quivering and sucked her sweet bottom lip between his teeth, when a silent thud made him pause.

Accompanied by a comical noise her lip slipped out of his hold as he glanced down to find Lisbon's hand fallen on the mattress.

"Teresa?" His puzzled look returned to her face and he nearly groaned out loud because she was truly and deeply asleep – her head tilted, the features adorably relaxed and some of her dark strands playfully tousled over her eyes.

Laughing under his breath he curled himself around her to cuddle her as close as possible, before he gently blew the hair from her face and a peck on her rosy cheek.

Soon he would be joining her journey into Morpheus' realm – but then, as if it tried to mock him, the nightingale continued its singsong for one more aria until it finally fell silent, disappearing into the night like it had never been there.

The End