

## *Episode 8: Tempting Fate*

### ***TEASER/INTRO***

A streetlight blinked erratically, accompanied by a violent hiss as it struggled mightily to remain lit, only to lose its battle moments later. The resulting darkness, however, was only temporary; the brightness of a full moon shone down on parked cars and buildings nearby and illuminated the area in a soft glow. With dogged determination, the moonlight continued to spread to every nook and cranny, fighting its way through the dense branches of an old oak to cast a single ray into a half-circle window forgotten over time.

Once inside the vacant room, the moonlight slowly crept along the walls, taking its time to inspect the area as if stunned by what it had uncovered. Newspaper clippings hung haphazardly along almost every square inch of the walls, even taking up space on the supporting beam and ceiling above. Article after article mocked the San Francisco police department, criticizing their ineffectiveness of capturing a serial killer gone wild. Gruesome photos of the victims accompanied the media blitz and completed the picture – a shrine erected in the name of the killer.

A pair of muffled voices disturbed the silence of the macabre scene, and the moonlight fled the room when a single bulb, fastened on a plain white porcelain fixture, flicked on, highlighting the room in artificial light.

“I need to show you something,” said Lindsay in a soft voice, struggling to keep the nervousness from creeping into her tone. The reassuring touch of Cindy’s hand against her lower back grounded her, and she continued her journey up the makeshift stairs.

“What? You got bats in your belfry?” teased Cindy, sensing her girlfriend’s edginess. When she’d suggested they put up a few Christmas decorations and asked if Lindsay kept them stored in her attic, the color had drained from the other woman’s face. She’d been just about to propose that perhaps it would be better to wait until the weekend when Lindsay suddenly grabbed her hand and pulled her to her feet. She’d just followed along blindly.

“Not even close,” whispered Lindsay, taking a deep breath and stepping up onto the attic floor. She hesitated momentarily, but finally moved to the side and allowed Cindy a full view of the room. The young reporter’s foot had barely touched down on the wooden floor when she caught her first glimpse at the attic walls. Biting down on her lower lip to keep a gasp from escaping, she forced herself to walk closer to the newspaper clippings and then moved wordlessly along the wall, her eyes scanning the dozens and dozens of headlines and photos. Lindsay’s obsession with Kiss-Me-Not had been much worse than she could ever have imagined.

“Why haven’t you taken these down?” asked Cindy softly as she stopped in front of a set of photos push-pinned into the wall, the faces of the victims with their mouths sewn shut

displayed prominently before her, bringing back what memories she had of the crimes to the forefront of her over-active imagination. She couldn't keep the shiver from running down her spine.

A low voice near her ear made her jump.

“Dad died,” mumbled Lindsay, pausing briefly to gather herself. She swallowed the lump that had formed in her throat and eased her arms around Cindy's middle, relieved when the younger woman leaned back against her without a second's hesitation. “Then the murders started, and I got caught up again.”

Cindy tilted her head to the side and rested her cheek against Lindsay's, the familiarity of her lover's skin against her own giving her the courage to move forward with her suggestion.

“How about now?”

“Now?” Lindsay crinkled her brow in question. The warmth from Cindy's body was both calming and soothing, and she wasn't about to surrender her current position to make eye contact with the reporter.

“To take all this down.” Cindy turned in Lindsay's arms. “Let's take it down together.”

Lindsay looked down at Cindy and smiled.

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Click...

A hooded figure froze in place and spared a glance over his shoulder. The normally soft sound of a key, worn with age, sliding into a deadbolt echoed loudly in the small confines of the hallway. Dividing his attention to either side of him, he slowly turned the key until the mechanism eased into place. Pausing momentarily to ensure that his actions hadn't garnered anyone's attention, he opened the door and stepped inside, immediately surveying the layout of the spacious room.

It was perfect - a one-room apartment, unfurnished save for a single 3' x 6' folding table that had been set up against the far wall. He shifted his gaze to the center of the room where light from the morning sun had forced its way through a small opening in the drab-looking curtains. Drawn to a single ray of light, showcasing dust particles normally invisible to the human eye that floated lazily in its path, he couldn't help but smile at the ironic correlation. More times than not, for some reason or another, people chose to ignore what was right in front of their faces, even if their well-being depended on their attention to the smallest of details. Their lack of notice had boded very well for him in the past, and he could only hope it would continue in the future.

Pushing his deep-seated thoughts aside for later reflection, he refocused on the task at hand and returned to the hallway to retrieve a dolly he'd left just outside the door. Placing his foot on its lower metal bar, he pushed it forward while easing back on the handle as he rolled the cart inside and closed the door behind him.

Edging near the table, he returned the dolly to its upright position and carefully removed the top box from the stack, placing it in the center of the table. Then, retrieving a hidden knife from his boot, he slid the sharp blade through the packing tape and lifted up the cardboard edges, taking just a moment to grab hold of the hard plastic sticking up from the Styrofoam that offered protection to the box's contents. With a soft grunt, he lifted the object free of its container and gently set it down next to the empty box, and after removing the plastic tie that bound the electrical cord, he positioned the closed circuit television monitor nearer to the wall outlet. Pleased with its location, he reached for the next box.

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A flash of bright red hair went unnoticed by the usually observant inspector who sat hunched over her desk poring over the files of the recent murders attributed to the Hallelujah Man. Her gaze moved across the pages laid out in front of her, the lines of text blurring together until a virtual sea of black swam before her eyes. She blinked to clear her vision and moved her focus to the gruesome photographs of the various crime scenes, hoping to spot something – anything - that would jump out at her and scream the killer's name across the vast space of the room. But the photos remained silent, just as silent as the victims who stared unseeingly back at her, their 'sins' laid out in vivid colors for all to bear witness: gluttony, wrath, greed, and pride. Lindsay swept her hand through her hair in frustration, her mind conjuring up the remaining deadly sins not yet addressed by the killer. Which one would show up next?

Keeping an eye trained on the bowed dark head, Cindy slinked past the maze of desks scattered around the bullpen. Her expression – normally a tell-tale sign of her mood – showed a myriad of emotions, mostly uncertainty. She wasn't sure whether to be proud of her stealth skills or hurt that her lover hadn't noticed her presence. Lindsay always seemed to have a sixth sense for knowing whenever Cindy was anywhere in her vicinity, but today, the reporter slipped by without so much as a blip on the inspector's radar. The lack of awareness only further added to her worry that Lindsay was straying dangerously close to the point of no return as her current obsession threatened to grow by leaps and bounds, despite the progress they'd made together. There was no way she'd allow Lindsay to erect another shrine to another killer.

Cindy was eager to catch the psycho religious zealot too, but she wasn't willing to sacrifice the woman she loved in the process. There had to be a way to keep a balance between their personal and professional lives, and after what she'd seen last night, she knew she'd need help in finding and maintaining that delicate balance. With a determined stride, she rounded the corner and turned toward the elevator on her way to meet Claire and Jill in the morgue. They'd need a united front to keep Lindsay from

straying too close to the edge. So focused on her mission, she narrowly missed running smack dab into a coffee-carrying Jacobi.

“Whoa,” said Jacobi, stepping neatly to the side and just managing to keep his cup and its contents from hitting the white tiles of the linoleum floor. “Where you headed in such a hurry?”

“Oh, hey Warren,” Cindy gestured to the few drops of coffee that had barely escaped its container to land on the inspector’s hand. She looked up at the expressionless man and smiled sweetly. “Sorry about that. I don’t always pay attention to where I’m going.”

“Yeah, I’ve noticed that,” the older man answered in a gruff tone, keeping his true feelings about the reporter to himself. He really liked the vibrant young woman, especially since she’d not paid any attention to his partner’s current case of perpetual grumpiness either. She’d just flash that cute little smile of hers, and he’d watch in amazement as Lindsay’s bad mood would melt before his very eyes. Yes, Cindy Thomas was the best thing that had ever happened to his partner.

“Well, I’d better get going; Jill and Claire are waiting for me.” Cindy made a show of checking her watch, before pointing toward the nearby elevator and taking a few steps back just as a soft ding signaled the car had arrived. Jacobi watched as the doors to the elevator had yet to open wide enough to allow the young woman to slip through, but her impatience to see her friends had her leading with her shoulder and turning almost perpendicular to the doors as she eased into the car to stab at the button that would take her to the floor that housed the morgue. Minutes later, she burst into Claire’s office and quickly closed the door behind her, placing her full weight against the wooden and glass structure. She didn’t waste any time getting to the heart of the matter.

“Okay, I know I wasn’t around years ago when the Kiss-Me-Not killer first came onto the scene, but I’m very concerned that the Hallelujah Man could be well on his way to surpassing Harris as number one on Lindsay’s hit parade of serial killers.” The thought terrified her, especially after witnessing firsthand how truly obsessed Lindsay had been with Kiss-Me-Not. It’d taken the pair almost two hours to box up all the clippings, photos, and files the night before, and she was going to do everything in her power to make sure the attic walls remained bare. Even the coolness of the window blinds pressing against her shoulders and soaking through her thin cotton blouse did little to ease her tension. It continued to roll off of her in waves.

Perched on the edge of Claire’s desk, Jill turned to face the reporter. She tilted her head slightly and folded her arms across her chest. “Trust me. Lindsay is a long way from replacing Harris from her top spot.” She held up her hand to stop the protest before it could escape Cindy’s lips. “But you’re right; she’s definitely falling into the same pattern.”

Leaning back in her chair, Claire folded her hands across her middle. “So – what are we going to do about it?” Vividly remembering Lindsay’s downward spiral the last time, she

knew they had their work cut out for them and had even entertained the idea of drugging and kidnapping Lindsay and then whisking her off to someplace quiet and relaxing for a few days if need be. In fact, she'd suggest the very idea if one of the other women didn't come up with something less drastic. Although, if truth be told, she believed the answer to curing Lindsay's obsession lay with the young woman directly across from her.

Cindy pushed away from the door and shuffled over to the worn leather couch, snatching up one of the throw pillows and holding it against her stomach as she plopped down rather ungracefully in the center of the sofa. With the soft pillow cushioned in her lap, she leaned forward and placed her face in her hands. Her words were mumbled out from between the small space formed between the edges of her palms.

"She promises that she'll try harder not to become so invested in these cases, but then the next murder pops up, and she's right back in the thick of things, spending almost every waking moment at the station and sometimes not bothering to come home at all. I'm at a complete loss as to what to do. I'd hoped you two would have some ideas." Cindy had seemed to have all the answers before she and Lindsay had become romantically involved, but now, she constantly worried that she'd do something stupid that would drive the other woman away.

"You could always handcuff her to your bed," said Jill teasingly. "That should distract her for awhile." She winked at Claire, mistaking the other woman's wide-eyed look as shock at the suggestion that Cindy hold Lindsay captive as her sex slave, instead of an instinctive reaction of worry of how Cindy might react to Jill's words.

"I think that may be a bit too drastic," Claire chided, wondering if she was the only one who'd noticed that their young friend hadn't seemed too comfortable discussing her sex life lately.

Cindy, on the other hand, was eternally grateful that her face was still buried in her hands. Being bent over at the waist in the classic 'hyperventilation treatment position' was rather fortuitous as well. It was just too bad that she hadn't been able to stifle the high-pitched squeak that had escaped.

"Oh," offered Jill, once again misreading the situation, "so, you *have* thought about it." She gave Claire another wink. "Honey, it's okay. We've all thought about it at one time or another."

"Um, Jill, ixnay on the andcuffshay," warned Claire, knowing full well Jill had actually done much more than just think about Lindsay's handcuffs, but right now her focus was on thick red hair carelessly strewn across denim covered knees. Pushing to her feet, she gave Jill one of her patented laser looks as she walked past on her way to the couch. She continued her line of thought as she placed a supportive hand on Cindy's back. "I think we need to concentrate on more conventional means of distraction." Conveniently, her own rather unconventional idea of drugging Lindsay had been completely forgotten when the handcuff idea had been suggested.

“We’re talking Lindsay here, Claire. Unconventional distraction is the way to go, and bondage may be just the ticket. I don’t think she’d be as upset as you’d think if she found herself handcuffed to her bed.”

Wide-eyed, Claire glared at Jill and gestured forcefully toward the back of Cindy’s head. As if trying to dodge the unseen finger aimed her way, the reporter burrowed further into the pillow, and Claire responded with a gentle pat. “I wasn’t referring to Lindsay’s reaction.”

“Huh? . . . Oh!” Properly chastised, Jill crossed the room and took a seat on the other side of the reporter. She placed her hand next to Claire’s and began to rub soothing circles on Cindy’s back. “What do you suggest then?” Her gaze moved across the back of the bent over woman and focused on Claire, but before the other woman could formulate an answer, the door to the office swung open and a dark head poked inside.

Lindsay frowned momentarily at the sight of Cindy being comforted by her friends, but she shoved her concern to the background to relay her news. She made a mental note to question Cindy about it later.

“There’s been another murder. Apparently envy now has a name - Charles Moore.”

## *ACT I*

Claire frowned as she circled the antique rocking chair, once said to be one of John F. Kennedy’s favorites according to the victim’s housekeeper, who’d somehow managed to offer the tidbit in between crossing herself and muttering prayer after prayer. Figuring Charles Moore hadn’t had any idea that he’d meet his end while sitting in the priceless chair, Claire was certain its value would be greatly depreciated now that it was stained with blood and bits of grey matter, the gruesome scene looking strangely out of place in the tastefully decorated study.

“Something’s not right,” she muttered under her breath, making another pass on the custom-designed Italian marble floor. The bruises on Moore’s face appeared to be as fresh as the single gunshot wound at his temple. He hadn’t been tortured and toyed with like the other victims; instead, it appeared he’d been pistol-whipped a couple of times and then shot – quick and easy – not at all like the previous Hallelujah Man’s victims. However, the wire threaded through the skin of the man’s eyelids had definitely been the work of a madman, despite the fact that it appeared to have been performed postmortem.

“Okay, it’s more than a little creepy how the victim’s eyes being sewn shut so closely resembles the Kiss-Me-Not’s method of sewing his victims lips together, but tell me again why this murder is being linked to the Hallelujah Man?” asked Claire, gently lifting the victim’s head and turning her attention to the exit wound. She spared a glance at Jill

who was standing several feet away, the ever present white handkerchief covering her nose and mouth.

“The responding officers found a Bible with a highlighted verse,” said Jill, her gaze shifting to the various groupings of paintings on the mauve-colored walls. She concentrated her focus on the victim’s collection of art and refused to look at the display of metal artwork in, around, and through Moore’s eyelids. “I don’t get the envy reference though. This guy appears to be loaded – huge house full of priceless antiques and art, a garage full of vintage automobiles, a beautiful fiancée, judging from her photo, and I’d imagine a very healthy bank account. What could he possibly be envious of?”

“He’s not,” Lindsay’s voice floated from over Jill’s shoulder, the inspector’s attention on a clear plastic evidence bag that she held in her hand. She lifted it up for her friends to see and explained her reasoning. “I think we’ve got a true copycat this time. Someone’s got their signals crossed when it comes to how the Bible verses have been used.”

Jill stepped closer and squinted through the thick plastic barrier at the highlighted verse of the encased Bible – specifically, the bright fluorescent yellow that sloppily showcased each line of the verse – as she lowered her handkerchief. “Hmm, this does look amateurish, especially when you compare it to the horrific manner he used to showcase his chosen ‘message’ in the Watkins murder. And whenever he’s left a Bible behind at the scene, he’s always used a red marker to circle the reference to the passage.”

With a latex covered finger, Lindsay pointed to the yellowish-colored passage. “James, chapter 3, verses 14 through 16: But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such wisdom does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.” She paused dramatically. “This idiot has confused the whole Bible reference idea. He’s killed the person he’s envious of, instead of the other way around.”

“And he didn’t make this guy suffer either,” said Claire, pointing to the bullet hole in Charles Moore’s temple and then the barely visible bruising around his wrists. “The killer just tied him to the chair – loosely at that – hit him across the face a couple of times, and then blew his brains out.” She gestured to some grey matter that clung to the arm of the wooden chair’s surface, causing Jill to slam her eyes closed and turn a lighter shade of pale as she swiveled around to face the opposite wall. She took slow, deep breaths as the handkerchief once again found its way to her mouth and nose.

Not fazed in the least by the gore, Lindsay stepped closer and tilted her head, her line of sight following the path Claire’s finger had just taken. The Hallelujah Man had always made certain his victims received his ‘message’ loud and clear. Whoever killed Charles Moore definitely hadn’t done his homework. She moved to inspect the victim’s wrists, but a noise from the hallway broke her concentration.

“Psst!”

Three heads swiveled as one toward the source of the sound, each woman reacting differently at the sight of the individual who'd caught their attention. Lindsay sighed audibly, Claire lifted one corner of her mouth in a grin while simultaneously shaking her head, and Jill frowned slightly.

"How does she do that?" whispered Jill, easing closer to Claire and gesturing toward the redheaded reporter who kept glancing back over her shoulder, splitting her attention between her 'co-club members' and the area behind her.

"Do what?" asked Claire, watching as Cindy nervously shifted her weight from foot to foot as if expecting someone to take her by the arm and forcibly escort her from the crime scene.

"Get by the officers." Jill was truly amazed how Cindy managed to sweet talk her way past the yellow crime scene tape time after time. But this time, the reporter had made it into the inner sanctum of the actual murder without any assistance from a certain inspector.

Lindsay sighed once again as she finally took her first step toward her girlfriend. "She can be quite persuasive."

"I'll just bet," muttered Claire under her breath as she and a chuckling Jill followed in their friend's footsteps. The trio had barely reached the door when Cindy began to rattle off the findings of her most recent research.

"Charles Moore is a saint. He gives to charities all the time, especially local ones. Last week, he gave a million dollars to a home for battered women." Tilting her head and pushing up on her toes, she attempted to peer past her friends to get a good look at the crime scene as she unknowingly repeated Jill's earlier words. "I just don't get the envy reference though. People who commit the sin of envy resent that another person has something they perceive themselves as lacking. This guy doesn't seem to be lacking anything." Her gaze zeroed in on the victim's face. "Hey, what's that on his eyes?"

Lindsay glanced back toward the body slumped down in the antique rocking chair. "For some reason, the killer sewed the victim's eyes shut. We're not exactly sure why." When she'd first seen the threaded wire, a cold chill had slowly made its way down her spine. Her first thought had been that the Kiss-Me-Not killer had somehow found a way to taunt her from beyond the grave.

Cindy nodded in immediate understanding of the wire's significance. "Like Dante's Purgatory."

The three other women shared a quick glance and then crowded around the reporter.

"What do you mean?" asked Lindsay, her focus back on the victim's eyes.

“In Dante's Purgatory, the envious were punished by having their eyes sewn shut with wire because they were seen to have gained sinful pleasure from seeing others brought low, in reference to Saint Thomas Aquinas' description of envy as 'sorrow for another's good'.” She paused momentarily, the wheels almost visibly turning in her head - it always reminded Claire of Nate's hamster running around and around the wheel of its cage. “Moore wouldn't have anything to be envious of. In fact, he's almost too good to be true. Is that a sin?”

Her rhetorical question still lingering in the air between the four of them, Cindy scanned every inch of the crime scene and continued her train of thought, “Looks like the Hallelujah Man messed up big time... unless...” her eyes widened dramatically at her own implication, “Oh my God, this is a copycat!”

Quickly closing the distance between herself and the reporter, Lindsay clamped a hand over Cindy's mouth and shot a glance around the room at the various personnel working the periphery of the crime scene. “Shh... I don't want anyone to know that we're on to him. This son of a bitch isn't getting away with this.” She was determined to nail the copycat. If she couldn't get a bead on the Hallelujah Man, finding his copycat would have to do for now.

Cindy shared a knowing look with Claire and Jill. There was no longer any need for them to find ways to distract Lindsay from her growing obsession with the Hallelujah Man; the copycat had done the job for them.

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“I picked the fiancée up at the airport,” said Jacobi, gesturing over his shoulder with his thumb toward a nearby interrogation room. “She's as jumpy as a cat. At first, I thought she was nervous because she had something to do with the murder, but then I realized it was me she was scared of. She almost jumped out of her skin when I tried to take her by the arm to escort her to the car.”

“What happened to the Jacobi charm? Losing your touch with the ladies?” A teasing grin eased its way onto Lindsay's face.

“Hey, my touch is just fine,” replied Jacobi gruffly. “But seriously, that woman is more than just a little unsettled, and I'm not talking about her reaction to being driven somewhere other than home. I think maybe you should talk to her alone.”

Lindsay spared a quick glance at the closed door of the interview room and then at the stairs leading up to her lieutenant's office. “Okay, sounds like a plan.” She briefly turned her attention back to her partner. “Will you fill Tom in on what we suspect so far?”

“You just want my tired old bones to have to climb up those stairs,” said Jacobi with a soft grunt as he pushed to his feet and started toward the stairway.

Grinning widely, Lindsay waited until he’d climbed the first few steps before she called out to him. “Oh, and be sure to tell Tom that we’re treating this as a *regular* case.” With an added smirk, she headed for the interview room, hoping the fiancée could shed some light on their latest case; however, in her haste to talk to the woman, Lindsay had forgotten what Jacobi had just told her. It all came back to her when the petite woman leapt from her chair and moved against the far wall when Lindsay forcefully barreled into the room.

“Ms. Walters, I’m Inspector Lindsay Boxer. Would it be okay if I asked you a few questions about your fiancé?” Lindsay purposely kept her tone soft and gentle as she slowly eased the rest of the way into the room and motioned to the chair that had just been vacated. She offered what she hoped was a reassuring smile. “Won’t you please have a seat?”

Keeping a steady gaze on Lindsay, the woman worried at her lower lip in a sign of obvious indecision. The new inspector didn’t appear to be as intimidating as the one who’d whisked her away from the airport, but the dark-haired, leather jacket-clad woman exuded a powerful presence in her own right. A ball of energy, confidence, and a touch of cockiness flowed freely from the inspector, but it was apparent that she was making every effort to tamp down on her forceful personality. Sally Walters was certain the woman was used to getting her way. The problem was that she had no idea why she’d been brought into the station in the first place.

“Um, may I ask why I’m here?” asked Sally in a less than steady voice. It was the first time she’d spoken since she’d acknowledged her identity to Inspector Jacobi at the Continental luggage carousel of the San Francisco International Airport. She’d just gone along quietly and hadn’t even asked if she could phone her fiancé.

Lindsay was just able to hide her surprise at the question. She hadn’t realized Ms. Walters hadn’t been informed of her fiancé’s murder, and she briefly wondered what reasons Jacobi had given for her personal escort to the San Francisco Police Department. Surely the woman hadn’t come so freely without asking questions, or maybe Jacobi hadn’t lost his so-called charm with the ladies after all.

“What exactly did Inspector Jacobi tell you?”

“He just said he needed to ask me some questions.”

“And you just went along without protesting?”

“Yes ma’am, he’s a police officer.” Shrugging slightly, Sally slowly crossed the room, retook her seat, and placed her hands in her lap. Lindsay waited for further explanation,

but it soon became apparent that Ms. Walters had nothing else to offer as she bowed her head and moved her focus to her restless hands.

Easing into the chair across the table, the seasoned inspector watched the nervous woman fidget in her seat, every bit as unsettled as Jacobi had described, when the expression of another woman she'd recently interviewed suddenly flashed before her eyes. Bells and whistles screamed in her head, and Lindsay sat up straighter in her chair.

“How would you describe your relationship with Charles Moore?”

A blonde head snapped up and green eyes, filled with fear, locked on to Lindsay's. It was the first time she'd made direct eye contact with the female inspector. “What do you mean?”

Lindsay frowned slightly at the sudden change in the other woman's demeanor. She'd only asked a simple lead-in question, and Sally Walters had already reacted in a way Lindsay had been expecting from her much harder questions, the ones she hadn't asked yet. Holding on to her suspicions, she studied the blonde closely as she moved ahead with her theory.

“Has he ever hit you?”

“What?” It was evident that Sally Walters was completely shocked by the question as her jaw went slack and her eyes widened. “Charles would never hurt me or anyone else for that matter. He's a sweet and gentle man.”

‘Was,’ thought Lindsay, her gaze moving to the hand Sally had unconsciously placed on the surface of the table when she'd defended her fiancé's integrity. A band of channel-set, round, brilliant diamonds enhanced by a large center-cut diamond, encased in a six prong setting, caught her eye. The ring was elegant, but not flashy, and Lindsay suspected Sally had had the final say in the style. She didn't come off as being someone who felt comfortable in the limelight.

“Ms. Walters, when was the last time you spoke to your fiancé?”

“Is Charles in some sort of trouble?” Sally eased her hand back into her lap and clenched both her fists tightly as her entire body tensed as if expecting a blow. To Lindsay, it appeared as though the physical response wasn't foreign to the woman, but she also knew she needed to push forward in the interview. She could no longer postpone the inevitable.

“Your fiancé was murdered last evening; your housekeeper discovered the body this morning.”

In hindsight, Lindsay realized she shouldn't have been quite so blunt; she was just able to rush around the table and catch Sally before she slid from her chair and onto the floor. Lindsay held on tightly and turned her head toward the door.

“Hey! A little help here, please!”

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A pair of hands flew across a keyboard as the clickety-clack of keystrokes went unnoticed by the individual responsible for the rhythmic sound. Cindy performed search after search, trying to find some background on Charles Moore that might shed some light on why someone had gone to such great lengths to kill him and then attempt to shift the blame to the Hallelujah Man. She softly muttered her thoughts under her breath.

“There's got to be someone who doesn't like this man.” She clicked on the next link, only to find more accolades, professing the charitable acts of Mr. Charles Moore. Her grandmother had always told her that sometimes there's fire without smoke, but she was beginning to wonder if, this one time, her grandmother was dead wrong.

“Thomas! What've you got on the Moore murder? Has the serial killer struck again?”

Cindy practically jumped out of her skin as she swiveled in her chair to face her editor. She really hated it when someone appeared out of nowhere. “I'm working on the story now. The police have neither confirmed nor denied whether the murder is the work of the Hallelujah Man, but I can promise you that I'm in constant contact with my source at the police department.”

Every word she'd spoken was true, especially the bit about the constant contact. She certainly couldn't have any closer contact than sleeping with her source. She bit down on her lower lip to keep a smile from escaping at the thought.

“Alright, but we need that story ASAP.”

“Yes, sir, I'll have it soon.”

Nodding his head, the editor continued on his way, his focus already on one of her colleagues as he began barking orders and demanding another story. She watched for a moment, grateful that she was no longer his main focus, before turning her gaze back to her monitor. There had to be something noteworthy among the hundreds of photos that her latest search had revealed. Determined, she moved her attention from the foreground to the background of each shot. Two hours later, she pushed from her chair and grabbed her cell from her purse as she started for the exit.

“Hey, it's me.” Cindy spoke into her phone as she stepped out of the building and into the adjacent parking garage.

“Got something?” asked Lindsay, closing the Moore file and concentrating instead on her girlfriend’s voice. She hadn’t been able to make any more headway in the case and hoped Cindy would come through with some kind of pertinent information as she often did.

“Um, maybe; I’m just not sure at the moment. I want to check a few things out first.” Cindy shifted the phone to her other ear and quickly changed the subject before Lindsay could question her further. “So, how’s your day been?”

Lindsay groaned into the receiver. “Not very good.” An image suddenly made its way into her thoughts, and she smiled mischievously. She glanced around the bullpen to make sure none of her colleagues were within earshot. “Except for the beautiful blonde I held in my arms.”

“What?” Cindy stopped dead in her tracks right in the middle of the parking garage. She was extremely lucky no one had come barreling around the corner and made her a new hood ornament. “What blonde?” Clenching her fist, she tried very hard not to imagine the same fist slamming into Jill’s face. She knew Lindsay didn’t harbor those kinds of feelings for Jill any longer, but she just couldn’t stop the little green monster from rearing its ugly head.

“Moore’s fiancé,” said Lindsay. “She fainted when I told her about the murder. I was barely able to catch her before she took a nosedive onto the tile floor.”

“Not funny, Lindsay.” Cindy breathed a sigh of relief and, once again, started toward her parking space. “So, how did the rest of the interview go?”

“It didn’t.” Lindsay fiddled with a paper clip, unbending and straightening the metal as best she could with one hand. “We’re going to continue the interview tomorrow.”

Cindy could clearly hear the frustration in Lindsay’s voice and adeptly changed the subject. “I was calling to ask if you’d like me to pick up Chinese and meet you back at your apartment around 6:00.”

“That sounds great,” said Lindsay in relief, grateful to finally have something to look forward to. Sharing a meal and quiet time with her lover was just what she needed.

“Okay, I’ll see you at six then. Bye.” Flipping her phone closed, Cindy pressed the unlock button on her remote and reached for her car door, hoping she’d have something besides Chinese food to feed Lindsay that evening. As inane as her idea was, perhaps it’d at least open other leads. Backing out of her space, she sped away to meet her source.

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At precisely six o’clock, Lindsay pulled her Jeep behind Cindy’s red Saab and smiled. This was one of the few times since she’d made inspector that she’d actually come home

when she'd planned. Stepping from the car, she spotted Cindy sitting on the steps to her building, and lengthening her already impossibly long stride, she started up the sidewalk.

"Hey," said Lindsay, a lopsided grin forming in the corners of her mouth and turning into a full-fledged smile when she caught sight of the warm and welcoming expression Cindy wore. Her policewoman's mind, however, wouldn't allow her to just enjoy the moment. "So what was it that you were checking out this afternoon?"

Cindy swooped up the bags of take-out from the step beside her and pushed to her feet. "First, we celebrate the fact that you actually showed up on time, then we'll discuss things over Chinese." She winked teasingly. "I got crab rangoon."

Leaping up on the porch in a single bound, Lindsay swept past the young woman before Cindy could blink an eye. Holding the door open, she gestured with her free hand. "Well, what are you waiting for? C'mon, the food's going to get cold."

Chuckling, Cindy stepped through the door and headed toward the stairs. She'd read once that the way to a woman's heart was through the doors of a good restaurant, but apparently with Lindsay, all she needed was take-out. That was fine with her though; she preferred to have Lindsay all to herself anyway. Her pleasant thoughts were sidetracked by the faint sound of a dog barking.

"Is that Martha?" Cindy stood alongside Lindsay, just outside the apartment door, and waited for the other woman to unlock the deadbolt.

"Yeah, I think it is," said Lindsay, hurrying with the lock, "but she hardly ever barks. Wonder what's up?" With a turn of the knob, she opened the door and stepped inside. Martha was nowhere to be found.

"Arf! Arf!"

"Martha? Where are you, girl?" Lindsay moved further into the apartment and tilted her head to listen. Another bark led her to her bedroom, but a quick visual sweep of the room still didn't turn up the canine. She turned to find Cindy practically in her hip pocket.

"Where is she?" Cindy stepped beside Lindsay and turned on the light switch. She gazed around the room just as a pitiful whine sounded from beneath the closet door. Crossing the distance, she opened the door and was almost bowled over by a very grateful Martha.

"You locked her in the closet?" asked Cindy, easing down on one knee to receive several swipes of a rough tongue across her cheek. She hugged Martha close and looked up at Lindsay expectantly.

"I did *not* lock her in the closet," said Lindsay adamantly, her gaze moving from what would normally be the perfect scene – Martha's unconditional acceptance of Cindy – and

instead, focused her thoughts on her morning routine. She could've sworn Martha had walked her to the door as she'd done almost every day since she'd come to live with Lindsay.

Martha whined again, her head resting on Cindy's shoulder and her eyes searching out those of her master. Feeling the intense scrutiny, Lindsay pulled herself from her troubling thoughts and walked over to pat her pet on the head. A pink tongue lolled from Martha's mouth, giving every indication that she'd forgiven Lindsay's indiscretion.

"Sorry, girl; I'll be more careful next time," Lindsay rubbed the fur behind Martha's ears, earning herself a satisfied bark.

"I think I've got just the thing to make Martha forget all about her unsettling day," said Cindy, pushing to her feet and grabbing up the bags that she'd dropped when Martha had decided she was in need of a full body hug. "I just happened to stop by *someone's* favorite butcher."

"Arf! Arf!"

"You're spoiling her. She's going to expect a bone every time you come over." Lindsay stood as well, her long reach allowing her to maintain contact with Martha's soft coat of fur.

"Well, today, she deserves a treat, don't you, girl?"

"Arf! Arf!"

Cindy laughed and started for the kitchen, Martha right on her heels, while Lindsay stayed behind, making another visual sweep of the room. She truly couldn't remember closing the closet door that morning. Blowing out a deep sigh of frustration, she flipped off the light and headed for the kitchen. She had some major making up to do.

On the far wall of the darkened bedroom, a red light blinked lazily inside the viewfinder of a camcorder positioned just behind the air-conditioning vent, its built-in motion sensor bringing the recording action of the camera to an abrupt halt.

## ***Act II***

"Find anything interesting?"

Lindsay leaned over the body of Charles Moore, paying close attention to the lack of trauma to the man's wrists. Claire had been right; he'd barely been tied to the chair. The bruising was practically non-existent.

“Maybe if you’d quit hovering, I’d find something,” said Claire, tilting her head and leveling a laser-like glare through her safety glasses. Lindsay slowly held up her hands in surrender and took a giant step back.

“I’ll just . . . um, be right over there,” she offered, gesturing toward the glass window that looked into Claire’s office. Lindsay couldn’t help but smirk at the sight of Jill catching her eye and waving a few fingers while she pretended to talk on the phone. Both Lindsay and Claire knew the DDA had only used the excuse of needing to make a few calls because she could no longer stand to look at the victim’s face. She’d literally cringed every time she’d gazed down at the wire tearing through the skin of the grotesquely swollen eyelids as if it were the consistency of hamburger meat.

Now that she had sufficient room to maneuver, Claire began a running commentary of her findings. “The contusion and stellate lacerations surrounding the gunshot wound appear to be caused by a muzzle. There’s also some gunpowder in the wound. I’d say the killer pushed the gun forcefully against the victim’s temple and fired point blank.”

“Anything else?” asked Lindsay, already figuring that the kill shot had been inflicted at very close range. She continued to keep her distance in hopes that Claire would find something out of the ordinary that might give her a lead, especially if her second attempt to interview the fiancée that afternoon didn’t produce anything.

“Not yet. You know, you really need to learn some . . . well, hello there,” said Claire, not taking her eye off her new discovery as she reached blindly for a pair of tweezers. Very slowly and very carefully, she extracted a paper thin filament from inside the entry wound and held it up to the light.

“What is it?” Lindsay moved closer and squinted. Whatever Claire had found was barely discernible to the human eye. Surely something so small and insignificant-looking couldn’t be the case breaker.

“Hmm, looks like some kind of rubbery material.” Claire angled the tweezers toward the light, watching as the odd-colored strand wiggled freely back and forth. “It appears to have an orangish tint.”

“A basketball!” exclaimed Cindy, hurrying into the room to get a glimpse of the newly found evidence. She’d arrived just in time to hear Claire’s last few words and had immediately jumped to what, she thought, was a logical conclusion.

“And you know this because?” asked Claire, just able to keep herself from waving the tweezers at the young reporter for almost scaring the life out of her.

“Ellis Vanderholt.” Cindy grinned widely as she reached into her purse for her glasses. Stepping closer to Claire, she eased them onto her face and studied the orangish material.

“Golden State’s starting point guard? What’s he got to do with all of this?” asked Jill from her position just inside the doorway to Claire’s office, making sure to stay as far away from the body as possible but still close enough to take part in the discussion of the new evidence.

“And you know him how?” Lindsay was momentarily distracted by Jill’s question and suddenly began to wonder if she was the only member of the group who had very limited knowledge of professional sports in the Bay City area or in any area, for that matter.

“Luke’s a huge fan. I had to learn all the players,” Jill answered matter-of-factly and turned her attention back to Cindy. “Why Ellis Vanderholt?”

“Wait a minute,” said Lindsey, crinkling her brow and facing Cindy. “Why didn’t you say something about this Vanderholt guy last night?”

“Martha needed comforting,” explained Cindy, not bothering to mention that Lindsay had needed comforting as well to assuage the guilt she’d felt at accidentally locking Martha in the closet, even if she had kept insisting that she never, ever, closed her closet door.

“Something happened to Martha?” asked Jill, concern evident in her voice as she stepped further into the room. Her sudden interest in the welfare of Lindsay’s dog had her temporarily forgetting about her queasiness.

“Martha spent the whole day in the closet, poor thing,” tsked Cindy, the memory of the dog’s grateful expression at having been found shining through in her words.

“It wasn’t my fault. The door must’ve closed on its own somehow.” Lindsay’s tone was weak at best, giving every indication that she might finally be on the verge of accepting that she was truly the one at fault. After all, Martha could hardly lock herself in the closet.

Sensing her friend’s turmoil, Jill tried for a bit of levity, “Don’t worry, Linz; I’ve had friends who’ve stayed in the closet for years. At least Martha came to her realization in a timely fashion.”

A deep, rich chuckle rose up from deep inside Lindsay’s gut and was soon followed by a chorus of laughter from the other women. Cindy wiped a tear from her eye and took advantage of the perfect turn of phrase by Jill to drop her bombshell.

“Yeah, and some people are still so far in the closet, they can’t even find the door anymore – kind of like Charles Moore and Ellis Vanderholt.”

Any and all laughter, including the intermittent sprinkles of light chuckles, came to a screeching halt and was immediately replaced by a deadly silence. The change in the tone of the room was so sudden it was eerie.

“Charles Moore and Ellis Vanderholt?” asked Jill in complete disbelief. She could still recall the night when Luke couldn’t stop talking about Vanderholt and his amazing abilities, calling him a man’s man. She’d just never considered the possibility that he could be speaking literally. Of course, she’d figured Luke hadn’t either.

“And you didn’t think that was worth at least a mention?” Lindsay couldn’t believe Cindy hadn’t breathed a word about what she’d suspected. This information could blow the case right out of the water, especially if the media sharks got wind of it.

“Well, I did say that I needed to talk to another one of my sources this morning before I could confirm my theory. You seemed willing to wait at the time.”

A very vivid memory of exactly what Cindy had been doing when she’d relayed the tidbit about her source made its way into Lindsay’s head in high-definition, the resolution crystal clear. A light pink tint painted her cheeks, and she swallowed hard.

“Um, oh yeah.” She struggled to regain her composure, “Er, okay, why don’t you fill me in now?”

Claire, who’d been silently listening to the conversation, grinned from ear to ear at the last bit of exchange, before she finally spoke up. “I think this is going to be a loooong explanation, and I’m already starving. Let’s order something for lunch and move this discussion into my office. Just let me bag this.” She slowly lowered the forgotten tweezers. “Jill, hand me one of those evidence bags, would ya?”

Sporting a matching grin, Jill turned toward the table behind her for a plastic bag, not realizing that she’d slowly gravitated to a spot next to Claire during their friends’ conversation. She gently released the seal on the bag and held it open for the coroner to ease the filament into the container. Taking possession of the evidence, Claire properly sealed the edges.

“Okay, I’m in the mood for some pizza...” Claire lazily gripped the sheet and gently began to pull it over the victim’s body, “hmm, I’m thinking sausage.”

Jill - making the grave mistake of glancing down at the corner’s slab just as the stark white polyester-cotton neared the completion of its journey and eased its way over swollen, wire-sewn eyelids - swallowed the bile that was rapidly working its way up her esophagus... again.

“I think I’ll just have water.”

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Jacobi stared at the dull white tiled wall and frowned slightly. The deluxe corned beef at the deli just down the street *or* the supreme pasta salad at the quaint Italian restaurant

he'd come across several months ago? So intent on his lunch decision, he never saw the individual who'd entered the room to stand, practically shoulder to shoulder, next to him.

"So, how's the case going?" asked Tom, glancing briefly to his left before settling his focus on the grayish grout that outlined the drab tile of the wall directly in front of him.

"Lindsay's going to talk to the fiancée again this afternoon, and Claire may have found something embedded just inside the entry wound." Jacobi shifted uncomfortably. He hated discussing cases in the men's room. In fact, he hated having discussions of any kind in the confines of the men's room.

"What did she find?" asked Tom, not seeming to have any problems carrying on a conversation while otherwise engaged.

Jacobi shrugged slightly. "Lindsay's not saying yet. She said Claire needed to run some tests first."

Tom nodded in understanding. Claire was the ultimate professional. "So, how's Lindsay holding up these days?"

Jacobi's eyebrows lifted to his hairline, and holding the expression in place, he tilted his head and first glanced down at Tom's hand and then his own. "I am *not* discussing my partner's well-being while we're standing in front of the urinals." He rose up on his toes several times and, following a few quick motions, zipped up his pants. "In fact," he turned on his heel and headed directly for the sink on the opposite wall, making quick work of washing his hands, "I'm not answering that question anywhere, anytime, or anyhow." Opening the door, he took one last look at Tom's back. "You figure it out."

Tom worked his mouth open to respond, but the door had already closed on Jacobi's parting words. Looking down, he wondered when he'd lost the ability to know what Lindsay was thinking.

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"Oh God, this is sooo good," said Claire, readying to take another bite of her sausage pizza with extra cheese. She glanced over at Jill who was nibbling on a cracker and sipping her water. "Sure you don't want some?" Grinning, she held up a slice.

"You are evil." Jill made a face and shifted on the couch, easing her leg up under her as she turned her attention to the other end of the sofa. "So, spill – what's this about Ellis Vanderholt and Charles Moore?"

Taking a sip of her Coke, Cindy looked up to find three sets of eyes on her, one pair in particular almost causing her to drop her drink, the gaze so intense. "Um, I searched through every picture I could get my hands on, including gallery openings, charity galas, and holiday parties, featuring Charles Moore. I started paying more attention to the

background and discovered something interesting. The same man kept popping up behind the scenes.”

“Ellis Vanderholt,” Lindsay piped up, her mind already firming up a motive. It made perfect sense to her. Closeted NBA player, scared his lover was going to out him, found the perfect fall guy – the Hallelujah Man. Too bad the star point guard hadn’t made proper use of the Biblical verse or known to make his lover suffer.

“According to my sources, Moore and Vanderholt have been lovers for the past three years. They met at a charity benefit.”

“How have they kept their secret under wraps?” asked Jill, angling more toward Cindy as she rested her arm on the back of the couch. “If your sources know, then chances are other people do, too. In this day and age, a secret like that would be worth a handsome payoff. Loyalty doesn’t stretch as far as it used to.”

“Well,” Cindy shifted in her seat, completely focused on the subject of the two gay men and not giving a thought to the fact that she and Lindsay had a similar secret of their own that they were keeping. “I don’t think anyone would notice anything out of the ordinary at these big events – just a bunch of high profile people coming together for a cause, and they’re super careful with the more private affairs.” She placed her canned drink on a side table to free her hands. “They make sure it’s a truly,” she made air quotation marks, “‘gay’ affair.”

Lindsay almost choked on her pizza at Cindy’s rather descriptive turn of phrase, suddenly realizing that their own ‘affair’ could very well be on the verge of being discovered, but her investigative skills kept her on track.

“And how exactly do they do that?”

“Everyone involved is gay from the drivers to the caterers to the serving staff. Plus, the hired help is paid very well and guaranteed to work all the parties. It’s also been rumored that some of them even hook up with the guests.” Cindy watched Lindsay narrow her eyes and anticipated what the next question might be, adding quickly, “Not that I’ve ever been to one of these parties myself.” She made it a point to maintain eye contact with her girlfriend. “My sources occasionally attend, but they adamantly refuse to talk to the police about any of the relationships, especially Moore and Vanderholt.”

Jill chuckled softly under her breath. “But they’ll talk to the media.”

“I’m not the media to them.” Cindy took offense to the statement and, with a slight huff, folded her arms across her chest and swiveled around to face the DDA.

“And exactly what are you considered to be then?” asked Claire, exchanging a quick glance with Jill and Lindsay, before turning her attention back to the young reporter.

“A friend.” The answer was swift, matter-of-fact, and very sincere. “Besides, the people who attend these parties are just trying to find a little happiness in life that they’d otherwise never be allowed to have. Is that a crime?”

“No, but a crime has been committed, and it’s quite possible that some of these people can shed some light on a probable motive, perhaps even know if Vanderholt had threatened Moore.” Lindsay pushed to her feet and moved to the office door. She peered through the open blinds at the body that lay beneath the draped sheet.

“Linz, you can’t just barge into Ellis Vanderholt’s home and accuse him of murder, especially if there aren’t any tangible ties to his relationship with the victim.” Jill bent her elbow and rested her head against her closed fist. “You’ve got to find someone who can at least tie him to Moore.”

“What about the fiancée?” asked Claire, tossing her napkin into the empty pizza box. “She’s bound to know something. That old saying about the wife or lover being the last to know is bull. They’re usually the first to suspect – just the last to accept.”

“Or maybe Moore confided in someone he works with or perhaps someone he depends upon, someone he’s close to,” said Jill, hesitating slightly before adding, “kind of like us. We pretty much share everything with each other.” She purposely alternated her gaze between Cindy and Lindsay, before looking over at Claire and shrugging not so innocently. This pretending game the four of them had been playing at was getting old, but she knew Lindsay had to be the one to make the decisive move to bring it to an end.

A not-so-comfortable silence ensued until Lindsay had finally had enough. It was time to address the very large pink elephant that was fast becoming a permanent fixture in their group. Jill had opened the door; all she needed to do was step through it.

“Maybe he was afraid to tell his friends,” said Lindsay in a soft voice, keeping her focus on the morgue’s far wall. “Maybe he thought they wouldn’t approve of his choice.”

“If they’re truly friends, they’d be happy that their friend had found someone.” Claire pushed to her feet and walked over to sit between Jill and Cindy. She took hold of Cindy’s hand and squeezed reassuringly. “Happy for both their friends.”

“And are they?” Lindsay released a nervous breath and slowly turned around, leaning her back against the door for support. She looked first to her lover and then to her friends. “Are they happy for their friends?”

Smiling, Jill took a firm hold of Claire’s hand and extended her other toward Lindsay, motioning with her fingers in invitation for her friend to complete the circle.

With a crooked grin, Lindsay pushed off the doorframe.

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Booted feet made their way down a narrow hallway and came to a stop beside a brown stained wall at the far end of the corridor. The man paid no mind to the water-damaged finish, instead taking great care to ease his key into the deadbolt, making as little noise as possible to unlock and open the door. With a final glance over his shoulder, he stepped into the apartment and softly pushed the door closed, not taking a single moment to pause inside the doorway as he crossed the room with determination.

A flick of a switch brought a monitor to life, and after a few seconds, the room was awash in the soft glow from the television screen. The man reached across to the recording device and checked the time settings on the DVR. He gripped the remote and stepped back a few feet until he was in the perfect position to view the full screen. Using the time stamp, he activated the earliest listed: the camera specifically assigned to the apartment's den.

The screen's action began with the opening of an apartment door, and he watched as a tall brunette stepped into the room, followed by a shorter redhead. The pair seemed concerned about something as they moved quickly across the den and out of view. A push of another button brought a second camera's view to life and showed the smaller woman walking briskly toward the bedroom closet door. The man stepped closer to the monitor and activated the sound, smiling when the redhead accused the other woman of locking the dog in the closet. He continued to follow their conversation to a third recording of a camera that had been positioned behind the air-conditioning vent in the kitchen.

"Hey, it was an accident. It could've happened to anyone." The redhead continued to remove various containers from the bags she'd set on the kitchen table. "Let's not worry about it. Martha's quite content with her bone, just as you should be with your crab rangoon."

The brunette glanced down at her dog, happily gnawing on her bone. "She does look okay."

"She's fine," assured the younger woman. "Now, sit; the food's getting cold."

The watcher continued to listen to the ensuing conversation that centered on the dog, and bored with the rehashing of the same topic of how she'd come to be closed up in the closet, he halted the play of the DVR's recording and was just about to turn off the machine when he noted another recorded listing from the bedroom camera. Highlighting the choice, he hit play and stepped back once again when the darkened screen came to light. He frowned slightly as he watched the two women enter the room together, hand in hand, and his own hand clenched tightly around the remote when the brunette pulled the redhead close, dipping her head and gently pressing their lips together – the gesture clearly not forced. There was no sign of hesitation or nervousness; it was familiar, comfortable even.

He fingered the remote to stop the action but halted his motion when a tanned hand eased its way to the buttons of the younger woman's shirt, expertly freeing each one as she deepened the kiss. Anger rose deep inside him as he watched the long tapered hand return to where it'd begun its task, and now barrier-free, it easily palmed a silken-covered breast and squeezed lightly. The resulting moan from the redhead pushed him over the edge.

Flinging the remote against the wall, he heard it shatter into pieces, the force causing the recorded action to fast-forward. He stared at the images speeding by him so quickly he couldn't make out the blurry figures and felt relieved that he'd been spared from watching the sinful actions play out. Just as he reached out to manually shut off the monitor, the recording came to sudden halt, freezing the last image onto the screen. He hadn't been spared after all.

Light from a full moon shone brightly through the bedroom window, casting a silvery glow on the two women nestled closely together. A long leg had been carelessly thrown over a shorter one, the rather impromptu position in sharp contrast to the way the brunette cradled the redhead closely to her, protecting the younger woman even in sleep.

Consumed with hate and anger, he flipped the switch and darkened the screen, before turning on his heel and heading for the door. Slamming it hard enough to rattle the wall, he stomped down the hallway, no longer concerned if anyone knew he was there.

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"Would you care for something to drink, Inspector?"

Sally Walters walked toward the poolside table, carrying a serving tray containing a tall carafe filled with lemonade, two glasses, a small plate of cookies, and napkins. Lindsay shifted in her seat uncomfortably. She hadn't liked the idea of interviewing the fiancée outside the station in the first place, and now she felt as if she was on a social call rather than official police business.

"Perhaps later, I'd like to ask you some more questions about your fiancé first," said Lindsay, placing her elbows on the arms of the wrought iron chair and resting her clasped hands loosely across her stomach.

The blonde faltered slightly, but nodded her assent as she neared the table and placed the tray in its center. Sitting in the seat directly across from the inspector, she mimicked Lindsay's posture with one minor exception. Her hands were gripped together tightly.

"Has anyone ever threatened your fiancé?"

"No; why would they? Charles has never given anyone any reason to be upset with him."

“How about someone he works with? Has Mr. Moore ever spoken of problems at the office?” Lindsay treaded carefully in her questioning, laying the foundation for the questions she really wanted answers to. Besides, there was always the possibility that there was someone else who might have a motive. If not a lover, who better than a disgruntled employee?

“No, he never said anything about work problems. He’s always been very generous to his employees.”

“What about friends? Any arguments lately?” Lindsay watched the blonde closely for any reaction or obvious hesitation in answering her question. Hesitation seemed to be the order of the day as Sally turned her focus to the crystal blue waters of the swimming pool as if the answers to the inspector’s question lay at its bottom. She bit down on her lip in thought.

“There was something a few months ago, but it was resolved.”

Lindsay leaned forward, placing her elbows on her knees. Surely it wasn’t this easy.

“What happened?”

“Charles bought an original painting...” Sally hesitated again, trying to remember every single detail of the argument. “I can’t remember its name, but it was two children playing on the beach. Charles wanted to hang it in the foyer of the local women’s shelter, but John didn’t think the painting would be safe there.”

“John?” Lindsay pulled a small notebook from her pocket and removed the attached pen.

“Yes, John Mullins, one of the gallery owners in the Bay Area. He was very upset when he realized what Charles had intended to do with the painting.”

“Did he threaten your fiancé?” asked Lindsay, jotting down the potential suspect’s name and making a note of the incident.

“No, not really; he came up with another idea instead. He suggested a reproduction be placed in the shelter and that Charles keep the original in his study. Charles didn’t like the idea at first, but then he finally agreed.”

“So, you don’t think Mr. Mullins might have held a grudge over the incident?”

“No, not at all. Besides, John would never hurt Charles. He was the gallery’s best patron.”

“Okay, anything else come to mind?” Lindsay sat back in her chair. She’d remembered seeing the painting. It was the one Jill kept her focus on the most when she’d been trying to avoid looking at the victim’s body.

Sally looked off in the distance and shook her head sadly. She truly had no idea who would want to hurt her fiancé.

Reaching into her back pocket, Lindsay pulled out a business card and handed it to the blonde. "I appreciate your time, Ms. Walters. If you think of anything, please give me a call." With a smile, she pushed to her feet and turned to leave, but stopped suddenly as if something had just occurred to her.

"Was Mr. Moore serious with anyone else before the two of you starting seeing each other?"

For a second, Lindsay was certain she'd have to once again leap to the aid of the other woman. All color had drained from Sally's already pale face, but the blonde managed to stay conscious. She was clearly unsettled though.

"Um, I don't believe so."

At that moment, Lindsay was certain Sally Walters was fully aware of the relationship between her fiancé and Ellis Vanderholt, but if she didn't come forward, Lindsay would have to go elsewhere to make the connection. She tried once more to plant a seed of doubt.

"It was just an idea. You wouldn't believe how many times the ex-lover turns out to be the killer."

Wide green eyes, filled with obvious surprise and fear, snapped up to fasten on Lindsay's just before they rolled back into Sally's head. Lindsay was just able to cover the distance between the two of them to catch the fainting woman in her arms. This time there wasn't anyone around to hear her call for help.

### *ACT III*

"Again?" Jill chuckled out loud. "That certainly brings a whole new meaning to saving the damsel in distress."

"I just hope she doesn't get a big head over having a woman swoon at her feet – twice," said Claire with a soft snicker, joining in on the fun. She could just imagine the look on Lindsay's face when Sally Walters toppled over into her arms for a second time.

Keeping her attention on the different photos she'd downloaded to her laptop the day of Moore's murder, Cindy half-listened to her friend's conversation as she struggled to focus on what had been niggling at the back of her brain ever since she'd heard about the latest fainting incident. Frowning, she moved her gaze from each picture's foreground to its background, and then back again, but she just couldn't quite put her finger on what was bothering her.

“Cindy, you should play the jealous girlfriend and milk this big time; make Lindsay grovel for awhile.” Jill glanced over at Claire for an approving nod and then looked across the table at their distracted friend. “Hey, I’m giving you good advice here, and you’re not even listening.” She tempered her words with a reassuring smile.

“Huh?” Cindy looked up sharply from her screen, her glasses slipping halfway down the bridge of her nose. She pushed them back into place with her index finger and apologized for her lack of attention. “Sorry, I was thinking about something.”

“We know; we could hear those wheels turning from over here,” teased Claire. “Why don’t you take a break from staring at that screen? You’re going to go blind.”

“Yeah Claire’s right, but you know, if you’re really into listening to old wives’ tales, there are much more enjoyable activities you could be engaging in that will supposedly give you the same blinding results.” Jill sat back in the seat and smirked, waiting for Cindy to put two and two together.

The young reporter wasted no time in connecting the proverbial dots as her face instantly turned scarlet red. She’d most definitely learned her math facts.

“Um . . .” Cindy swept her tongue across suddenly too-dry lips, not certain how she should respond to Jill’s rather suggestive impropriety. Shifting her gaze to the diner’s parking lot, she searched for a silver Jeep. She was most definitely in dire need of rescuing.

“Wonder what’s keeping Lindsay?”

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“I’m sure Ellis Vanderholt is our guy,” said Lindsay, looking over her shoulder to make certain none of her colleagues had overheard her. Even though she was confident in her assumption, the last thing they needed was the station’s rumor mill getting a hold of something this juicy.

“Did she actually say that her fiancé was dating Ellis Vanderholt?” asked Jacobi, his eyes wide and jaw slack, his expression one of extreme shock.

Lindsay grinned. “You just don’t want him to be gay.”

“You’re damned right I don’t.” Jacobi lowered his voice. “I love the guy.” He glanced around the room nervously. “But I can’t love the guy if he’s gay.”

“Why not?” Lindsay noticeably stiffened; she hadn’t expected that particular answer. Her partner hadn’t seemed at all homophobic when he’d been prodding her to make a move on a certain redheaded female reporter.

Jacobi scrunched up his face. “It’s a guy thing.”

“So, it’s not a gay thing?”

“Nope, only if the gay thing coincides with the guy thing.” Jacobi leaned closer and whispered, “If one of the guys just happens to be straight like me, that is.” The corners of his mouth turned up into a teasing grin. “And macho, too.”

Lindsay chuckled softly, understanding exactly what her partner had meant. “Okay, we need to figure out how to tie these two together so that we can have a sit down with Mr. Vanderholt.”

“Well, this is usually where I’d tell you that it’s impossible for Ellis to have killed Moore, seeing as how the team has five away games scheduled for this week, but Ellis is recovering from a badly sprained ankle and isn’t supposed to resume play until the Miami game. He more than likely didn’t travel with the team and stayed back so that he could get daily treatment on his ankle.” Jacobi blew out a tired sigh; this was one time he was hoping his partner was wrong. “Why don’t you see if you can dig up something else while I do a quick check on Ellis’ whereabouts for the past few days?”

Lindsay spared a glance at her watch and checked the time. She was running much later than she’d realized. “Sounds like a plan. I’m supposed to meet with Claire, Jill, and Cindy at Joe’s for breakfast. Maybe one of them has something for me.” She met Jacobi’s gaze. “Meet you back here in an hour?”

“That should do it.” Jacobi nodded his head and started toward his desk. He had more than a few phone calls to make.

“See you then.” Lindsay grabbed her leather jacket off the back of her chair and started for the door just as Tom stepped onto the bullpen floor. He made his way over to Jacobi, keeping his eye on his ex until she’d exited the building.

“Where’s she off to?”

“Checking out something.”

“Anything I should know about?”

Jacobi suddenly remembered the autographed poster of Ellis Vanderholt Tom had showed him after the championship game a couple of years ago. His lieutenant had been beaming with pride.

“Trust me, you don’t want to know.”

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“Look! It’s a bird... it’s a plane... no, it’s SuperLindsay! The savior of fainting women everywhere!”

“Very funny, Jill,” grumbled Lindsay, sliding into the booth next to Cindy. She was just able to stop herself from taking advantage of her position opposite Jill to kick the DDA in the shin.

“Don’t mind her, she doesn’t know how to act in front of a superhero,” said Claire, her blank expression morphing into a bright smile. “So, how does it feel to hold a beautiful blonde in your arms – twice in one day?”

Easing her hand onto Cindy’s thigh, Lindsay squeezed lightly. “Pretty damned good, actually.”

Jill’s jaw dropped in surprise at her friend’s candor and Claire burst out in laughter, while Cindy just smiled to herself and patted the hand that had kept her grounded, its warmth providing just the right amount of reassurance.

Offering another soft squeeze, Lindsay removed her hand and brought it up to rest on the table. She looked over at Claire as she folded one hand into her other.

“Have you had time to check out that filament from Moore’s gunshot wound?”

Claire nodded and shifted to a more comfortable position. “It’s definitely consistent with the material used in the manufacturing of basketballs all right, but it certainly didn’t end up on the muzzle just by lying around the vicinity of one. Someone had to have placed the gun right up against the leather and fired.”

“Why would the killer do that?” asked Cindy, frowning at the idea that someone would purposely chose to shoot a basketball. “I’m sure that would make a huge mess, and what would it accomplish?”

“Beats me,” said Claire. “Unless he or she was pissed off at the basketball for some reason.”

“Like maybe one that didn’t make it into the basket when the final buzzer went off?” asked Jill, figuring that would certainly be reason enough to want to off a basketball, especially if it was a pivotal game that decided which team made the playoffs.

“Okay, so we have motive for why someone would want to blast a basketball to smithereens and we also know the gun used to kill Moore killed said basketball. Now, how do we go about putting the same gun in Vanderholt’s hand?” asked Lindsay, clenching her hands together tightly. She knew Tom would never approve of even a friendly chat with the high profile player unless there was a direct link between the two

men, other than the fact that they just happened to attend the same types of social functions. She really hated all the politics involved in her job.

“So I take it the fiancée wasn’t very helpful in that department before she so willingly fell into your arms?” asked Jill sweetly, one side of her mouth crooked in a smile that bordered precariously on a smirk.

Lindsay refused to take the bait. “When I asked if Moore had had any problems with friends lately, she only referred to a problem with a painting he’d purchased. It turned out to be nothing, and I was just about to ask her about the parties he’d attended where Vanderholt had also been a guest, but...” she shrugged, “...you know the rest.”

“You going to try to talk to her again?” asked Cindy, hoping her words weren’t tainted with a jealous tone. Moore’s fiancée had managed to end up in Lindsay’s arms twice in the same day whereas it had taken Cindy seemingly forever to receive as much as a brief hug from the brunette. If all she’d had to do was fake a swoon, Cindy would’ve done it ages ago.

“Tom doesn’t think that’s a good idea right now. She’s still very emotional.” Lindsay brushed her hand through her thick locks. She was beyond frustrated with the way things were, or rather weren’t progressing.

“What happens now?” asked Claire, wishing she could offer definitive evidence that would link Vanderholt to Moore. The filament was all they had to go on, and on its own, it simply wasn’t enough.

Lindsay released a dejected sigh. This copycat case was turning out to be almost as difficult as the serial killer cases. She’d hoped for a quick and easy resolution to boost everyone’s confidence level, but she hadn’t planned on the possibility of such a high profile suspect. She’d also figured if the copycat screwed up the way he’d referenced the Bible verses, then he’d more than likely made other critical mistakes, too.

“For now, I guess we’ll...” The sharp ringing of a cell phone cut off her words, and she reached into her pocket and removed her phone, flipping it open and bringing it to her ear in a single motion.

“Boxer.” She listened carefully and glanced around at her friends with a disappointed expression. “You sure? ...yeah, of course you’re sure... okay, I’ll be back after I’ve had a quick bite to eat.” Lindsay snapped her phone closed and laid it in the center of the table. All eyes focused on the silent cell.

“Well?” asked Jill, noting the ‘so not happy’ expression still etched on Lindsay’s face. She just hoped it hadn’t been news of another dead body. A true Hallelujah case might send them all over the edge.

“Jacobi checked out Vanderholt’s whereabouts.”

“And?” Claire leaned forward in her seat, already fairly certain that whatever Jacobi had reported wasn’t good.

“He’s in Chicago, visiting family. His father had open heart surgery, and he’s been there for the entire week. If he had anything to do with the murder, it’s going to be hell to prove.”

Easing her elbow onto the table, Lindsay closed her eyes and pinched the bridge of her nose between her thumb and forefinger. They were back to square one.

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The afternoon found Lindsay and Jacobi standing in front of Tom’s desk, waiting for their lieutenant to end his phone call. In a united front, each inspector refused to look at the other as they both worked very hard at not rolling their eyes.

“Okay honey, I’ll be there,” said Tom in a low, but sickeningly sweet tone. Reaching across his desk, he snagged a Post-it note and scrawled out the name of a restaurant. “I love you, too.” He pushed a button ending the call, noted a time in the upper-right hand corner of the canary yellow note, and pulled it free from its pad.

“Better stick it on your badge so you don’t lose it,” suggested Jacobi, having been guilty of making reminders, only to later forget where he’d put them.

Lindsay could care less where Tom stuck it. “You wanted to see us?”

“Yeah, where are you on the Moore murder? Still think it’s a copycat?” asked Tom, dutifully following Jacobi’s suggestion and affixing the yellow Post-it to the badge that hung around his neck.

Lindsay’s gaze strayed to the yellow note that covered her ex’s badge. During their marriage, she was the one who usually forgot to show up at an agreed upon place. There wouldn’t have been enough Post-its in the world to draw her focus away from Kiss-Me-Not. She’d have ignored the reminders just as easily as she had Tom.

“Definitely a copycat,” said Lindsay, lifting her eyes from the edges of the gold shield to rest on those of her lieutenant’s.

Tom nodded. “Got any suspects?”

Jacobi glanced at his partner and shrugged. He wasn’t going to be the one to burst another man’s carefully constructed bubble around one of the league’s best players.

“We did, but the suspect had an ironclad alibi.” Lindsay treaded carefully. Just because her theory hadn’t pointed directly to Vanderholt as the killer, like she’d expected, didn’t

mean the star basketball player hadn't hired someone to do the deed or, at the very least, that he couldn't be instrumental in finding whoever did kill Charles Moore. She stepped closer to the desk.

"There is someone I'd like to talk to, but he won't be back into town until tomorrow morning. I think he may be able to shed some light on some things."

"Friend of Moore's?" asked Tom, placing his elbows on the arms of his chair and steepling his hands under his chin.

Jacobi nodded. "You could say that."

Lindsay wished she was standing close enough to her partner to elbow him sharply in the ribs. "Just someone who runs in the same circles."

Jacobi snickered. "You could say that, too."

"I think she just did," said Tom, staring at his two inspectors. The pair looked truly mismatched, but they were the best team he'd ever seen. "Someone care to fill me in?"

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Cindy focused on the split screen of her computer, the hustle and bustle of her co-workers completely unnoticed as she reviewed every published story from the Hallelujah Man murders. Nowhere made mention that the Bibles had been highlighted in any way, so how had the copycat known to call attention to his particular verse? Had he just assumed that the passages had to have been marked in some way?

"Um, excuse me, Ms. Thomas. Do you need your trash emptied?"

Startled from thought, Cindy managed to close the windows of the various open stories and swivel around in her chair, only to spy the sandy-haired, blue-eyed day custodian. She imagined he'd used his boyish looks to capture many a girl, but his charm was lost on her.

"Not at the moment, JP; thanks for asking though." Cindy offered up a smile. He really was a nice guy, despite his flirting nature.

"I'll swing by later then." JP grinned widely and moved on to the next desk, taking his bright eyes and wide smile to the next available woman.

Amused, Cindy watched as the man slowly made his way through the office, winking and smiling at every woman he encountered. The guy was definitely a player. With a tired sigh, she returned her focus to her screen, this time pulling up photos from Moore's social events. She was determined to figure out just what had been bothering her.

Leaning back in her chair, she gripped the mouse loosely and ran through the pictures once again. It was the next to last photo that caught her eye, and she eased her hand from the mouse. The expression on Sally Walters face was forced, a smile that never reached her eyes. It couldn't – her eyes were constantly diverted elsewhere, as if she were scanning the crowd. Cindy quickly called up the rest of the images and looked for the same kind of reaction, making a mental note of the date that each photo was taken. She'd finally found what had been eluding her.

Automatically reaching for the phone, Cindy frowned when she got Lindsay's voice mail, but not to be deterred, she called another number, barely waiting for the other woman to answer before she blurted out her theory.

"Jill, I think we might be barking up the wrong tree."

Jill spoke calmly, keeping her eyes trained on the woman who stood cross-armed in front of her desk, glaring at her. "Could you hold for one minute, please? I'm just finishing up with a conference." She kept the phone against her ear, not bothering to put the caller on hold.

"Was there anything else you needed, Denise?" asked Jill sweetly and watched as her boss' expression turned even sourer. She was going to owe Cindy big time for getting her out of this particular meeting.

"Not now, but I want a full update soon," said Denise, turning on her heel and walking purposefully toward the door. She stopped at the threshold and glanced back at her smug-looking DDA. "Very soon."

Jill chuckled quietly as her boss closed the door with controlled force. Life with Denise was actually kind of fun these days. She never knew which Denise was going to show up. Today's fiasco, however, had been entirely her own fault.

"Remind me to buy you a drink."

"Later," said Cindy, her eyes still trained on the photo of one half of the supposedly happy couple. "What if there's another reason why Sally Walters fainted when Lindsay asked her about an ex-lover?"

"Like what?" Jill rifled through the various papers she was supposed to have ready for Denise this morning. Cindy had truly saved her ass.

Sparing a quick glance around the Register's office, Cindy cupped her hand over the receiver and whispered, "What if Ellis Vanderholt isn't the lover or ex-lover in question?"

"You mean another one of Charles Moore's lovers?" asked Jill, the idea not entirely unrealistic. In fact, it was a possibility they should have already considered.

“Well, there’s that,” agreed Cindy. “But what if it’s one of *her* exes?”

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“I don’t believe this!” Lindsay slammed her long frame into her chair and stared up at the ceiling. Tom had been adamant that if she spoke to Ellis Vanderholt she was to concentrate solely on the usual types of questions: Did you have any dealings with the deceased? Do you know anyone that may have held a grudge of any kind against him? Under no circumstance was she to bring up either man’s sexuality. Tom’s last words, “and especially as a surprise tactic,” had sent Lindsay storming from his office.

“You can’t really blame him,” said Jacobi, looking down at his upset partner and waiting for her dark eyes to flash at him in anger. He’d only counted to two when a force ten glare was directed his way, and he held up his hand before Lindsay could turn her full wrath on him. “He’s looking out for the department’s well-being. We really don’t have any concrete evidence. What did you expect him to do?”

“Believe in me.” Lindsay sat up in her chair and rolled it slowly toward her desk. “I told him I had it on good authority.”

“Yeah, but he doesn’t know just how cute your authority is. Otherwise, he’d have never questioned you.”

Jacobi smiled at the deep chuckle that bubbled out from his partner’s lips. It seemed the young reporter could make Lindsay smile even when she wasn’t in the same room.

“So how do we go about interviewing Ellis Vanderholt?”

“Well, he’s going to be pretty busy when he returns in the morning. He’s scheduled to rejoin the team against Miami here tomorrow night, and then there’s Houston and San Antonio Friday and Saturday,” Jacobi paused and added, “in Texas.”

Lindsay frowned. “Why so many games?”

“Wake up, Boxer; the season is in full swing. Teams play three to four times a week, sometimes five – home *and* on the road.”

“Then we better make sure we talk to him before he leaves for Texas,” Lindsay pushed to her full height and immediately spotted a pink ‘While You Were Away’ slip on her desk, the note folded in such a way to showcase the word URGENT written boldly across its top. She’d been so angry when she’d come down to the bullpen after their meeting with Tom, she hadn’t so much as glanced at her desk.

“Hey Jacobi, I’m going to the morgue to see if Claire’s found anything else in the trace results.” Lindsay never looked back at her partner as she strode across the bullpen.

Jacobi wore a ghost of a grin as he shook his head. He'd recognized Cindy's handwriting right away and could detect the scent of the perfume Jill always wore still lingering in the vicinity. Crossing to his desk, he grabbed up a file and pretended to read.

"Not a club, my ass."

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"So?" Lindsay stepped into Claire's office and waved her pink slip in the air.

"Lois Lane," Jill motioned toward the young reporter and grinned widely, recalling her earlier reference to Lindsay as a superhero, "may have come up with something."

"What?" Lindsay shifted her gaze to Claire's chair where Cindy sat with her fingers perched over the keys of her laptop that was centered on the desk.

Keeping her focus on her computer screen, Cindy stared at a downloaded photo she'd called up just before Lindsay had arrived. It showed Sally Walters and Charles Moore at a ribbon cutting ceremony – Sally's smile was as plastic as the oversized pair of scissors the couple held in their hands.

"What if someone isn't after Moore because of their relationship to each other, current or old news, but instead, someone is after him because he's engaged to Sally Walters? What if it's someone from her past?"

Lindsay knitted her brow in thought. She'd figured the killer had to be from Moore's past, especially when she'd discovered the secret he'd been keeping, and even though her lead suspect had an alibi, she still hadn't ruled out murder for hire. And, if that didn't pan out either, Lindsay planned to turn her sights to Moore's other lovers - someone Moore had dropped like yesterday's news in favor of Ellis Vanderholt.

She hadn't thought to ask the fiancée if there was anyone who'd want to hurt her in some way. She'd been so focused on individuals from Moore's life that she hadn't considered other possibilities. Had her frustration with not having any real leads in the Hallelujah Man's cases caused her to become so single minded?

"Something's been bothering me," said Cindy. Knowing the meticulous way Lindsay's mind worked, she decided to go ahead and explain why she'd made the leap to Sally. "Early in the relationship, Sally seemed nervous, even jittery in the photos. Then she started to relax. The camera is truly her friend when she's smiling and at ease."

"And?" Lindsay snapped out of her thoughts and glanced over at Cindy.

"And a couple of months ago, she slipped back into her mousy mode, shying away from the camera and always looking into the crowd."

“So, you think we may be looking for someone who not only has a passion for basketball, but Sally Walters as well?” asked Lindsay, her tone questioning but her mind already whirling with other pertinent facts she may have overlooked in her very short interviews with the fiancée.

“Oh, talk about wicked – what if the killer knew about Vanderholt and purposely left the basketball evidence behind to link him to the murder,” said Jill, caught up in the idea of a frame job.

“More like wacko if you ask me,” chimed in Claire. “Why go to such great lengths to try to pin it on the Hallelujah Man if he planned to plant evidence that would implicate Vanderholt all along?”

“Hmm... good point.” Jill certainly didn’t envy Lindsay her job. Nothing was ever as it seemed.

“So, is there any chance of another interview with the fiancée?” asked Cindy with mixed emotions, not too keen on the idea of three being a charm, but what if... “Hey, what if you took Jacobi with you this time?”

“She was extremely jittery around him before, but that’s a good idea. Maybe the extra adrenaline will keep her conscious,” said Lindsay, pulling her cell phone free of her pocket. “Let me run it by Tom.”

Nodding a couple of times in show of her support of the idea, Claire walked out of the room and into the morgue. She returned seconds later, headed straight for Lindsay, and held out a closed fist. Lindsay delayed making her call and stared down at the other woman’s hand.

“What’ve you got?” she asked, gesturing to the offered hand. Surely Claire hadn’t waited this long to tell her she’d found new evidence.

Remaining silent, Claire tilted her head and gave her infamous ‘don’t mess with me’ look. Lindsay glanced at the other two women in the room and shrugged as she held out her open hand, palm side up. Without hesitation, Claire deposited two small vials in the center of her friend’s palm.

“What’s this?” asked Lindsay, frowning as she lifted her hand to study its contents.

Claire folded her arms across her chest and grinned from ear to ear.

“Smelling salts.”

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“Why exactly am I here again?” asked Jacobi as he stood next to his partner on the front porch of Charles Moore’s home.

“Because I’m not taking the chance of being alone with Ms. Walters if she faints again.”

Lindsay lifted a hand to knock on the ornate door as she reached into her pocket with her other hand to make certain she still had the vials Claire had given her.

“Oh goodie, I get to scare her to death instead,” replied Jacobi, just able to wipe the sarcastic expression off his face as the door swung open. Sally Walters nodded her head in greeting and then turned and walked back inside.

Lindsay smirked at her partner. “She’s still alive. I guess you’ve lost your touch again.” With a wink, she stepped over the threshold and followed the victim’s fiancée into the study, leaving Jacobi standing outside. With a light chuckle, he moved into the house and closed the door behind him.

“Thank you for agreeing to answer more questions, Ms. Walters. I know how difficult this has been for you,” said Lindsay, moving to take a seat on the sofa across from the blonde, who’d chosen to settle into a cream-colored wing chair. Lindsay motioned for Jacobi to join her, but he chose to stand behind the couch instead, figuring that a little distance may be just what the fiancée needed.

“I must apologize for the other times, Inspector; I’m not usually so frail. This whole ordeal has been very unsettling for me,” said Sally, crossing her right ankle over her left and placing her hands in her lap.

Lindsay offered a reassuring smile. “We’ll try to be brief, but we really need some answers from you so that we can move our investigation forward.”

“I’ll do whatever I can to help.”

Jacobi kept silent and watched the proceedings. It was apparent that Ms. Walters was aware of his presence, but she hadn’t seemed as nervous around him as the first time. He wasn’t going to take any chances of rattling her at the moment though.

“Inspector Jacobi and I are still working on the possibility that someone Mr. Moore knew or worked with targeted him, but we keep hitting a brick wall. So, we thought we’d broaden our search and look at some viable alternatives.” Lindsay paused and allowed the other woman time to take in her words. Reaching into her pocket, she bypassed the smelling salts and removed her notepad.

“Last time we spoke, we concentrated on individuals from your fiancé’s past and present, but I’d wondered if we could talk about you for just a moment.”

Sally’s eyes grew huge. “You think I had something to do with Charles’ murder?”

“Oh no – no, no, no,” Lindsay assured. “But we’d wondered if there was someone who may be angry or upset with you. Perhaps someone who may have threatened you but, for some reason or other, decided to take it out on your fiancé instead.”

If possible, Sally’s eyes grew larger. “Oh my God, it can’t be true. Charles said he was the one who put the rose in my car.”

Lindsay froze in place, hoping she wouldn’t need to use the smelling salts. Instead, she watched as a look of resignation replaced Sally Walters’ shocked expression. Cautiously, she asked the obvious question. “What?”

“He’s found me.” Sally pushed to her feet and walked over to a large picture window that overlooked the spacious grounds and manicured lawn. Wrapping her arms around herself protectively, she stared out unseeingly.

Lindsay glanced over her shoulder at Jacobi in surprise. She was torn between staying where she was so as to not spook the other woman or crossing the room and tearing into Sally Walters for not disclosing what, from all intents and purposes, appeared to be critical information in her first two interviews. The inspector’s moment of indecision was broken by a soft voice.

“It has to be John. I didn’t say anything the other day because I never thought he’d harm anyone else. He’s only ever centered his attention on me, but when you mentioned that the killer sometimes turns out to be an ex-lover, I panicked.”

Flipping a few pages in her notebook, Lindsay read her notes and frowned. “John? John Mullins, the gallery owner? You said he’d never hurt your fiancé.” She looked across the room at the other woman’s back. “Why would he have reason to hurt you?”

“No...not John Mullins.” Sally wrung her hands and wept softly. “John Parker, my ex-husband.”

#### *Act IV*

“So what’ve you got on this Parker guy?” asked Tom, leaning back in his chair and looking every bit as smug as he had when Lindsay and Jacobi had reported that they’d found another suspect. With a fresh cup of coffee in hand and the knowledge that he could now thoroughly enjoy Ellis Vanderholt’s return to the Warriors tonight, he couldn’t be happier.

“No criminal records, although, from what we’ve been able to ascertain, he should have a very thick jacket,” said Lindsay, flipping through the pages of the thin file she held. “He’s lived in the same town where he was born and raised, including the years he was married to Sally Walters. Her parents still live there, too.” She pushed the papers

forcefully back into the manila folder. “But we’re getting stonewalled. Parker’s dad is the local sheriff and his uncle is the county judge.”

“What *have* you been able to find out?” Tom placed his mug on his desk and sat up straight as he eased his chair closer to the desk.

“We know he’s hasn’t been working for the past two years. The local high school finally fired his sorry ass after he broke a kid’s ribs,” said Jacobi, his anger bubbling close to the surface. When he’d talked to the principal and discovered just how many incidents of abuse had been swept under the rug through the years, he’d wished the conversation had taken place face-to-face. He wanted to look the spineless man in the face and ask just how he could’ve allowed Parker to continue his abuse.

Pulling several pages free of the folder, Lindsay handed them over to her lieutenant. “And here’s a summary of the injuries Sally Walters sustained while she was married to Parker. She gave her consent for us to obtain her medical records, but this was all the hospital sent. I’m guessing the files themselves were too big to fax.”

Tom clenched his jaw tightly as he scanned the list of injuries, ranging from cuts and lacerations to contusions and broken bones. His eyes locked on the last item.

“Miscarriage?” He kept his focus on the report and avoided eye contact with his inspectors, one in particular.

“Yeah,” said Jacobi in disgust. “That one bothered me, too. I called and had a chat with the doctor who’d treated her. He refused to go on record, but he confirmed that there’d been extensive bruising on her abdomen, and he suspected that she’d been kicked repeatedly.”

“We need to nail this son of a bitch.” Tom looked up and locked eyes with Lindsay, who never so much as blinked. Her reply was swift and spoken with utmost conviction.

“Oh, we will. You can count on it.”

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In a mostly vacant garage, a red Saab looked completely out of place parked between a mineral green BMW X5 and twilight grey Lexus LX 570. Cindy sat perched on the hood of her car and waited, hoping that the BMW owner would be the next person to step out of the elevator as she’d already watched most of the luxury vehicles drive away.

A soft ding signaled that the elevator had once again returned to her floor, and Cindy slid off her car and turned toward the opening doors. She smiled when she spotted the man she’d been waiting for and took a deep breath before she spoke.

“Mr. Vanderholt? Could I have a word, please?”

The tall man wrinkled his brow and glanced toward the garage's exit. "How did you get in here?"

Cindy smiled sweetly and gestured in the same direction the basketball player had been looking. "Um, well, I'm friends with Carl, the security guy. I can promise you I'm not a stalker or anything like that. I'm a reporter from the San Francisco Register."

The star guard couldn't help but grin at the cherubic face of the young woman. If she was a stalker, she sure was a cute one. "So, what do you want to know? If I'm 100%? If I'll be able to go all four quarters? How I'll stack up against Chalmers? If . . ."

His next question was cut off abruptly by the one question Cindy needed answered.

"Did Charles Moore ever mention someone by the name of John Parker?"

Vanderholt looked nervously around the garage and visibly swallowed hard. "Um, I don't know anyone by that name."

"Parker?" asked Cindy, slowly closing the distance. This was one conversation she definitely didn't want to be accidentally overheard. "Moore never said anything about him?"

"I'm sorry, but I don't know either man. Now, if you'll excuse me, I really need to get home." Using his longer strides to step around the reporter, he started for his car, but Cindy was, as usual, relentless; although she truly hated having to just blurt out what she'd hoped would grab the basketball player's undivided attention. She'd prefer it had come up in the course of a longer conversation.

"The police believe Parker is the man who murdered Charles Moore."

Vanderholt's steps faltered, and he turned around to face the young woman. "But, I thought it was the Hallelujah Man. One of the papers said something about a new sin – envy, I think it was."

"No, someone tried to make it look like it was part of the serial murders, but it wasn't," said Cindy, not bothering to point out that he certainly knew a lot about the murder of a man he supposedly had no knowledge of. Instead, she took advantage of the situation and closed the gap between them once more. "Sally Walters believes her ex-husband is responsible. And I was wondering why Moore didn't go to the police when he first suspected Parker was in San Francisco. I was hoping you might know the answer."

"I really don't want to talk about this," said Ellis nervously. "I can't afford for... um, things to be splattered all over the headlines, and besides, it won't bring Charles back." The last part was spoken in a whispered, almost broken tone.

“I understand, really I do,” assured Cindy. “And I can promise you this will never, ever, appear in print. I just need to know why Mr. Moore told his wife that he was the one who’d left the rose in her car two months ago when she was visiting the shelter.”

Vanderholt stood silent, towering over the diminutive woman, until he finally released a loud sigh and explained his lover’s reasoning.

“Sally had finally quit looking over her shoulder, expecting to see Parker at every turn. When the rose turned up, Charles spoke up and said he’d left it. He apologized for ‘forgetting’ that Parker had always brought Sally roses after the guy had beaten her to a pulp. He just wanted her to feel safe. He hired a private detective to try to find Parker, but nothing turned up. Then, when Sally didn’t receive any more unexpected gifts, he figured everything was okay.”

“Yeah, I’d probably think the same thing,” admitted Cindy as another question occurred to her, one that Lindsay had told her she’d been wondering about as well but hadn’t had the heart to ask Sally after the other woman had answered everything else she and Jacobi had thrown at her. “Why did Moore ask Sally to marry him?”

“You wouldn’t understand,” said Ellis, shaking his head sadly.

“Try me,” said Cindy, her tone soft and gentle. “Please?”

Once again, Vanderholt marveled at the angelic features of the young reporter, her expression one of total sincerity. She might just be the only person who’d understand.

“I could never live my life openly, at least while I’m still playing basketball. Charles understood that, but he also worried that if someone did see us together, they’d dig and dig until our relationship came to light. He thought that if he was married, then perhaps that would cast doubt on anyone’s accusations. He met Sally at the shelter and they hit it off immediately – not anything sexual, mind you – just two people who enjoyed the same things. They became best friends and soon she moved in. She agreed to the marriage and told Charles that should he ever decide to come out, she’d divorce him quietly. She actually told me once that she looked forward to that day.”

Cindy took a firm hold of his hand and squeezed gently, speaking the words no one else had said to him. “I’m so sorry for your loss.”

Looking down into watery brown eyes, Ellis swallowed the lump that had been stuck in his throat ever since he’d heard the news of his lover’s death. She did understand.

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“Bad news, Linz; there are no court documents anywhere associated with John Parker. Well, except for the divorce decree,” said Jill, easing next to the corkboard that was filled

with photos of the Moore crime scene. She made sure not to focus on any of the pictures of the victim and his wire-sewn eyelids.

“What about the incident at the school? The one where he lost his job for hitting one of his students?” asked Lindsay, whirling around to face the DDA.

“I’ve just gotten a hold of a little more information from the principal,” Jacobi piped up from the doorway. “It seems the student’s parents dropped the charges, but they did agree to have the Parker family pay the hospital costs. I also found out another interesting tidbit.”

Lindsay turned her attention to the huge grin that resided on her partner’s face. “Well?”

“Guess what other job Parker held at the school?”

His grand moment of revelation was ruined when Claire pushed off the desk she’d been leaning against and guessed, “Basketball coach?”

Jacobi chuckled at the coroner’s sarcastic tone and rewarded her for her correct response. “Bingo!”

“So yet another crime he’s gotten away with,” said Jill, staring up at the only picture they had of John Parker – a blown up driver’s license photo. It seemed that Sally Walters had burned all the photos she’d had of her ex-husband. A deed she, Claire, and Lindsay had agreed with and applauded.

“But you said there weren’t any criminal...” Lindsay started, just as the proverbial light came on, “...ah, I get it - killing a basketball.”

“Wonder what it did to him?” asked Claire, moving to stand next to Jill. She glared at the sandy-haired, blue-eyed asshole. “And how in the world did he find his ex in San Francisco?”

“We’re not sure, but Sally thinks her mother may have accidentally slipped and told one of her friends. Small town gossip spreads faster than a California wildfire,” said Lindsay, wondering how long it had taken Parker to find his ex-wife. Her frustration with their unanswered questions was starting to take its toll. “Why we can’t find him? He’s got to be living and working somewhere nearby. Unless Daddy and Uncle Joe Bob have been sending him money.”

“Uncle Joe Bob? Is that his real name?”

The trio of women, plus Jacobi, turned to face the newcomer, their gaze following Cindy as she crossed the room and stared up at the board. “Still haven’t found him?” She scanned the corkboard and took in the various crime photos.

“Where have you been?” asked Lindsay, keeping her tone light. When she’d awoken this morning, Cindy had already left, but her upset had evaporated when she’d smelled the freshly brewed coffee.

“Tying up some loose ends,” said Cindy, glancing around the room and noting the number of people milling around. “I’ll tell you guys about it later.”

Jacobi grumbled under his breath. “Yeah, in the clubroom, no doubt.”

Three voices chimed at the same time – “We’re not a club!” – but the fourth voice remained silent; she was too busy staring at the blown up photo of Parker.

“Who’s this?” asked Cindy, tilting her head to get a better angle.

“That’s John Parker,” said Jill, wishing for a dartboard. Maybe with Parker’s face in the center, she’d actually be able to hit the bullseye for a change. Although, pinning Denise’s face to the board certainly hadn’t helped her aim much.

“Oh my God, I know this guy!” exclaimed Cindy, her focus on bright blue eyes.

Lindsay stepped in next to her lover and tried to keep the worry out of her voice. “You’ve seen him?”

Cindy nodded, but kept her gaze on the photo. She knew that smile all too well. Never in a million years would she have imagined it to turn sinister.

“Practically every day for the past several months; he’s one of the day custodians at the Register.”

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“How do you want to handle this?”

Tom stood beside Lindsay and looked down at the floor plan of the building that housed the San Francisco Register. The number of exits was mind boggling, and Lindsay briefly wondered if reporters truly needed that many escape routes. Thinking back on the times she’d been tempted to go toe-to-toe with reporters from the crime beat, she concluded there weren’t nearly enough.

“We can’t just go storming in there. We need some kind of diversion,” said Lindsay, paying close attention to those exits that dumped out into crowded streets. If Parker slipped into a crowd of people, they’d never find him.

“Um, excuse me,” said Cindy, stepping away from the far wall where she’d managed to hide in plain sight when things had begun to heat up. Everyone had been so busy trying to organize a plan that no one had paid any mind to the reporter.

“She can’t be here,” said Tom, gesturing for one of the patrolmen to escort Cindy from the premises. Lindsay looked up from the table and glanced over at the reporter.

“Yes, she can. We need someone who knows this building inside and out,” replied Lindsay, motioning Cindy over toward the table.

“We’ll get a city planner in here,” argued Tom, clearly not happy to have a civilian involved in the situation. It somehow escaped his attention that, while on the city payroll, a city planner was considered a civilian, too, or that Cindy had already been involved in two separate police matters, both having been much more dangerous than just offering insight to possible hidden escape routes the Register might have.

“We don’t have time.” Lindsay gazed at Cindy and then pointed at the blueprints. “Can you narrow down the exits Parker would be most likely to take?”

“If you’re thinking of staging a bomb threat, I know exactly which exit he’ll take,” said Cindy, looking down at the building’s plans and tilting her head left and right to get her bearings. She ran her finger along the back of the building and pointed. “There.”

Tom, who’d been following the path of the reporter’s finger, looked up sharply. “How can you be so sure? Who knows what he’ll do when he’s asked to evacuate?”

Cindy grinned. “I do. The custodians always go out back, sit on the edge of the loading dock, and smoke a cigarette.”

“Always?” asked Tom with a frown.

“We’re a newspaper; we get bomb threats all the time.”

Lindsay smiled. She imagined most of those threats had been a direct result of a certain redhead’s articles. Meeting her lieutenant’s gaze, she said, “We’ll station two people outside the other exits just in case, but I want the majority of our personnel to tighten up the area around the loading dock. This guy is not getting away.”

Rolling up the blueprints, she started for the door, stopping abruptly when she sensed exactly who was on her heels. She turned to face the other woman.

“You...stay here.”

“But,” Cindy started, ready to give reason upon reason as to why she should be allowed to tag along; however, the expression on Lindsay’s face stopped her words. She knew exactly what was going through her lover’s mind, and even though this situation wasn’t anywhere near the same as the recent school hostage one, it could prove to be dangerous nonetheless. She nodded her head. “Okay, but I get an exclusive.”

Lindsay longed to pull Cindy into her arms and kiss her senseless, but this wasn't exactly the time or the place to come out to her department or her ex, especially in such a demonstrative way. Although, she would love to have seen the expression on Tom's face afterward. Instead, she smiled and said, "You've got a deal." With a quick wink, she turned and left the room.

Cindy momentarily considered going back on her word, but the doorway in front of her was suddenly filled with the bodies of her two friends.

"C'mon, Lois Lane. Let's go get some coffee and wait it out in Claire's office," said Jill, extending her hand in invitation.

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"Cindy was right; there he is," said Lindsay, her back against the wall and a huge smile on her face. She couldn't wait to slap the cuffs on John Parker.

"Cute and smart, I like that," teased Jacobi, keeping his eye on the edge of the loading dock, and specifically, the man in the center of the group. Parker's cocky smile was about to be wiped off his smug face.

"Me, too," whispered Lindsay, lifting her arm to her mouth and tilting her wrist to speak directly into the microphone attached there. "On three." She glanced around the area once more before she counted, "One, two, three!"

Agents flooded the zone like rats running for higher ground, and John Parker was the first of the six men to react as he swiveled back toward the building and pushed to his feet. He froze at the gun that was inches from his face.

"John Parker, you're under arrest for the murder of Charles Moore." Lindsay reached for her cuffs as Jacobi moved in next to her, his gun trained on the other man's head.

"Wait, you've got the wrong guy," cried Parker, "I'm not the Hallelujah Man!"

"No shit," said Jacobi. "You should probably count your blessings, though; my partner would've probably shot first and asked questions later had you been him."

"But...the Bible," said Parker, wincing at the force Lindsay used to cuff him.

"You got it wrong, dumbass." Lindsay pulled down hard on the cuffs for good measure. "If you'd gotten it right, you'd have been the victim. Moore had nothing to be envious of."

Parker's demeanor changed right before their eyes, and both inspectors saw the man who'd beaten Sally Walters on a regular basis. Gone were the innocent act and the sweet smile, replaced with an expression of sheer hatred.

“Oh, but he did. Sally belongs to me – she always has. He shouldn’t have tempted fate by trying to take her as his own. He cast his own die.”

“Read this asshole his rights,” said Lindsay in disgust as she handed Parker over to a couple of uniformed officers. The arrest hadn’t been nearly as satisfying as she’d expected, but handing over an exclusive to Cindy would more than make up for it.

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Focusing on her computer screen, Cindy put the finishing touches on her latest story – Arrest Made in the Murder of Charles Moore – as she inserted a photo of the deceased near the top of the article and sighed. What a waste – all because of a man’s obsession over a woman who no longer wanted him. She wondered if Parker’s father and uncle would feel any guilt for this latest crime, but she figured the two of them were already working on a way to try to ‘fix’ the problem. She felt safe in the knowledge that Jill was the DDA on the case. The blonde would have a field day with the two country lawmen.

“Ms. Thomas?” asked a meek voice, and Cindy swiveled in her chair to find Javier Hernandez standing a few feet away.

“Hey, Javier, what can I do for you?”

“I just wanted to apologize for hiring JP... um, I mean John Parker. I should’ve realized he was no good.”

Cindy pushed to her feet and leaned back against her desk. “It wasn’t your fault, Javier. Parker was very good at deceiving people.” She hesitated, and then added, “He even deceived me. I had no idea what he was capable of. I just thought he was a huge flirt.”

The head of the day custodians smiled slightly at Cindy’s confession. “Yes, he was very good at making people think he was a good person.”

“So, don’t worry about it. He’s safely behind bars now and can’t hurt anyone else,” assured Cindy, offering a kind smile.

“True, true,” he said, nodding his head. “Okay, I better get back to work; I just wanted to let you know how sorry I was.” With another quick nod, he turned and walked away.

Sighing tiredly, Cindy turned back to her computer and scanned her article once more before sending it to her editor, who’d been torn between disgust and excitement when he’d learned that his paper had employed Charles Moore’s killer. Getting an exclusive hadn’t been nearly as rewarding, knowing that the killer had been walking through the Register’s doors on a daily basis for the past few months.

A soft chirping sound drew Cindy's attention to her phone which lay beside her keyboard, and she smiled when she noted the caller.

"Hey."

"Hey yourself," said Lindsay, crawling into her Jeep and buckling up. "I was just on my way home. How far along are you on your story?"

"Just put it to bed and thinking about heading out myself."

"You hungry?" asked Lindsay, hoping her own hunger pangs weren't loud enough for Cindy to overhear. She could eat an entire large pizza if one were sitting in front of her.

Cindy, once again, managed to crawl inside Lindsay's head. "Want me to pick up a pizza and meet you there?"

"Why don't you let me get the pizza? I'm thinking extra large tonight."

"Sounds like a plan. See you in a bit then." Cindy hung up the phone and chuckled. Lindsay's appetite had returned in a big way, and she tried not to think about the other appetite that usually went hand in hand with her eating one. A blush slowly crept up her neck and settled on her face, compliments of the path her last thought had taken.

"Oh God, I'm channeling Jill." With another light chuckle, she snatched up her purse and started for the exit.

Hurriedly stepping into the parking garage, Cindy focused her full concentration on the contents of her purse as she fumbled with her keys. In her haste to have keys in hand before she arrived at her car, she hadn't seen the figure who'd stepped out from behind one of the garage's supporting posts. She walked directly into the solid body and dropped her keys onto the cement floor.

"Oh!" Cindy looked up into a pair of clear blue eyes, her own eyes widening in recognition. He was the last person she'd expected to see.

"Pete! You scared the crap out of me." She placed her hand over her heart to keep it from beating out of her chest and spoke the words that had already begun to spin around in her head. "What are you doing here?"

Ever the gentleman, Pete leaned over to retrieve her keys. "Sorry I scared you. I wasn't thinking." With a crooked smile, he dangled the keys for Cindy to take. She blew out a nervous breath and reached out a shaky hand. He dropped them into her palm and took a step back.

"So... what are you doing here?" asked Cindy again, this time adding a slight smile to her question, despite the situation. This was bad, seriously bad.

Placing his hands deep in his pockets, Pete shrugged shyly and said, “I came by to ask you for your help.”

“Help? You need my help?” asked Cindy, wondering exactly when God had gotten a sense of humor and why He’d chosen to try it out on her.

“Yeah, I just got into the city, and I’ve been trying to figure out how to approach Lindsay.” He smiled coyly. “I want to try to talk her into reconsidering our relationship.”

Cindy lost the grip on her keys once again, and they fell to the ground with a loud clatter. “Um, oops.” She shrugged and moved to retrieve them, but Pete had already snagged them from the ground.

“Maybe you should get one of those bracelet things to attach your keys to. You know, the ones that look like a telephone cord?” He held the keys out a second time, and Cindy gripped them tightly in her palm. She was certain she’d have notch impressions and indentations when she finally released them.

“Yeah, maybe I should.”

An awkward silence ensued until Pete mercifully decided to end it. “So, I was wondering if you knew who Lindsay was seeing. She said something about dating a woman.” He chuckled nervously. “I hadn’t realized she was into girls.”

“Me either,” said Cindy truthfully, but was she ever so grateful that she’d been wrong.

“So any ideas?”

“Um, no, not really. Lindsay doesn’t share everything with the club.”

“Club?” asked Pete, tilting his head in question. “She’s joined a club, too?”

Cindy let out a shaky laugh. “No, it’s just something I refer to on occasion.”

“Ah, okay,” said Pete as he glanced toward the exit ramp. “Listen, I don’t want to keep you. I just thought you could give me a heads-up with Lindsay. I’m kind of flying blind here.”

Cindy actually felt a twinge of sympathy for the man. After all, he’d not done anything wrong; he just wasn’t the one for Lindsay. She was sure of that. Just as sure as she’d known she and Lindsay were meant to be.

“Sorry, I can’t help.”

Pete sighed audibly. “That’s okay. It was worth a shot. I should probably go.”

Nodding his goodbye, he turned to leave, and Cindy quickly pivoted on her heel and started for her car. She had to get to Lindsay and warn her that Pete was back. So focused on her whirling thoughts, she almost didn’t hear her name being called.

“Hey, Cindy!” Pete waited patiently until the younger woman looked his way. Wearing a determined expression, he maintained direct eye contact for what seemed like an eternity, before he finally spoke in a cocksure manner.

“I’m going to get her back.” Grinning slyly, he turned and walked away.

Cindy stood motionless and stared at Pete’s back until he finally disappeared from view. Swallowing hard, she headed for her car, barely able to control her shaky hands long enough to hit the automatic door locks. She crawled into the safety of her vehicle and instinctively locked the doors, her focus centered directly on the garage wall in front of her as she replayed the last few minutes.

Every insecurity she’d ever had crawled out from its hiding place and stared her in the face as her mind conjured up various images of Lindsay when she’d been so enamored with Pete. The shy smiles and shrugs, the crooked grins and soft words that had been directed at him, not her, pushed their way through every memory of her own special moments with Lindsay and left in its wake a single burning question.

Would Lindsay take him back?

***FADE TO BLACK***