

Chapter 20

Once everyone had explained what had happened, Skeet was released and Jack was taken into custody. They had to call a second ambulance because Shawn had been taken away in the first one on the scene. It had just been a flesh wound but the ambulance drivers wanted him checked out by a doctor just to be sure and they would need a doctor's statement for the police report anyway. Skeet and Chapin gave statements to the police then followed Shawn's ambulance to the hospital while Brian dropped off Jaque and rescheduled the flight that they were now late for. Shawn had called his wife, Jen who was meeting them at the hospital.

Shawn got patched up and was given a clean bill of health before Jen arrived. The bullet had just grazed his upper arm so just a good cleaning, a couple of stitches and a tetanus shot fixed him right up. Skeet and Chapin waited with him until Jen arrived to pick him up and stuck around for a few just to calm her down a little. Even though Shawn was ok, it's not every day you get a call telling you that your husband has been shot. "That settles it!" she had said. "We are so moving to California or Canada or Australia or SOMEWHERE!"

Once Jen and Shawn pulled away, Skeet and Chapin hopped in the car and headed for Chapin's apartment so she could pack. Brian had been able to reschedule the flights for four hours later, which bought them a little time, but not much. If they missed this one, they would have to wait until the next day to leave.

Chapin packed quickly, just grabbing a couple of pairs of jeans, a few shirts, some underwear and only the basics of makeup. She also grabbed a couple of baby doll nighties that she thought might come in handy. She grabbed her laptop computer bag and they headed for the airport.

They met Brian and boarded their plane. They had a connecting flight to catch in Philadelphia and hoped they wouldn't miss it, but on the flight they just tried to relax from the harrowing day.

"You should try to get some sleep. It's gonna be a long flight and getting through customs in Ireland can be a bitch," Skeet said. Chapin had been looking out the window but turned to meet his gaze. He reached out and took her hand and squeezed it. "I'm really glad you came, you know. I just not sure I could have done this whole thing alone." His eyes drifted off toward the ceiling of the plane. A dulling look came across his face. "I probably just would have tried to ignore the whole thing, which is probably the wrong thing to do."

"Well, I sure as hell wasn't going to let you go without me. I think you're stuck with me," she said.

"But why?" he asked.

“Why? What do you mean, ‘why’?”

“I mean why are you doing all this. Why are you going halfway around the world to watch me act like an idiot on a wild goose chase. You planning a big story from this? It’ll probably make you a mint.” His eyes suddenly turned a little colder.

“Don’t be an ass, Skeet. I’m not going to write about any of this. I’m here because I want to be here, but if that’s all you think I’m here for, then I underestimated what we had.” She let go of his hand and turned back to the window.

Skeet’s head dropped. “Look, I’m sorry. It’s been a really stressful day and I’m not used to all this.”

“Who of us is used to all this? I mean, psycho guy tries to kill you, hits your friend, mystery sounds on a tape driving you out of your mind. It’s not your everyday stress,” she said.

“Well, yea. That’s true too, But that’s not what I was talking about.”

She turned and gave him a puzzled look.

“Yea, you see, I meant the whole caring about someone and having someone care about me kinda thing. I don’t really have ‘relationships’ or anything. I mean, there have been women, but we usually hook up for a few dates and that’s about it. I am gone too much. I’m just not real sure how to do this.” he said. He hadn’t felt this vulnerable since his youth, and it showed.

She took his hand again. “You were doing just fine until the crack about the story part, but on that one lost you a couple of points,” she said with a soothing smile. “My track record isn’t great either. I have always been very calculating in relationships, but after the last one, I decided to go with the flow a little more. So far, I think it was the right decision, at least I hope so.” She paused and looked at her hand in his. “I’m gonna be straight with you here. I know we’ve only known each other a short time, but I’m falling for you. Hard. I hope that doesn’t scare you away or anything like that, but I want to be honest with you and I want you to be honest with me.” She was afraid to look up so she kept her eyes on their hands. He made no move to let go so she took that as a good sign. With his other hand, he reached under her chin and gently lifted her head so she was looking at him. He slowly leaned in and kissed her, a very soft gentle kiss. When their lips parted, he looked into her eyes.

“I’m falling for you too. It’s really hard for me to admit, but I am.”

“Geez, get a damn room!” Brian’s voice boomed from the seat behind them as he kicked the back of Skeet’s seat. “I mean, my God. You guys are so mushy, it sounds like you could shoot right through a screen door.”

“Oh Brian!” Chapin began. “I didn’t think you were even paying attention since I had my clothes on!” Skeet fell forward giggling and had to hold his stomach.

Brian fell silent.