

Breakaway

Rating: I'm going with R for safety :D

Summary: Sydney is a double agent for The Covenant and The CIA as Julia Thorne. Jack, Vaughn, and Irina is searching for her in their own ways, and somehow, somewhat, they come face to face.

Timeline: At 3x11-Full Disclosure, Kendall gave us the missing time at the end of s2. What I understand from that ep is, Sydney was aware of herself, what she was doing, she was a double agent (again) for both The Covenant, and The CIA. And also, she had found out that Vaughn was having an affair with a woman (of course Lauren), and she was told that Jack was on mission, also Irina was missing. According to that, Sydney didn't kill Lazarey on that room yet, so Jack doesn't know she's alive.

Author's Notes: This is my first Alias fic :D If I do something wrong don't hesitate to tell me :D

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Breakaway

CHAPTER 1 – SO IT BEGINS

“Areee youuu reeaadyyyyy???????”

The crowd cheered when the DJ began to mix the songs at an extremely loud level. At the bar, a woman didn't even notice the music at all... her long, scarlet hair was making her presence known along with her red outfit as she walked the dance floor with strong, feminine steps...

“Wanna dance?” She boldly asked a man about her age.

The young man smiled at her and they began to dance closely... she raised her hand to his neck, and while playing with his soft hair, she smiled seductively:

“You smell nice.”

He smiled and bowed his head to her, slowly asking.

“What's your name dear?”

She smiled and whispered into his ear.

“Jenna.”

When he smiled, she raised her brow and asked.

“Like it?”

He nodded and when the song changed, he took a hold of her hand.

“I have a private room upstairs... Would you like to see it?”

She awarded him with a big smile and squeezed his hand tight.

“I'd love to.” They went to upstairs with secret smiles on their faces. He pulled out his card and opened the door, then he moved to the side to allow her to enter first. “Ladies first...” She smiled sweetly. After a moment, he felt immense pain between his legs. When he cried out, she punched him in the nose and shoved him into the room where he fell onto all fours as she asked.

“Where's the chip?”

He looked blankly at her for a moment, but that only earned him another punch in the face. He screamed from the pain, but she already knew that no one could hear them.

“Where is it?!” She demanded. “I don't know!” He desperately tried to explain.

She smiled sadly, pulled her gun out, aimed it at him and asked again.

"Just once more and you can be sure that I'll kill you. If I don't get the chip, they're going to kill me. Believe me, I killed so many men, you won't be the first." She grabbed ahold of his hair yanking his head backwards and asked between clenched teeth.

"Where is the chip?"

For the first time, he was scared... He knew that she could fire her gun and escape here without even being noticed. He shivered visibly and pointed towards the desk.

"It's over there...under the book of Shakespeare..."

She tied his hand to the chair and murmured to herself.

"Shakespeare in a sex club? *That's* intelligent..." she took the chip and turned back to him cocking her gun. "What are you going do?" he asked terrified.

"Shoot you. Sorry." She answered coldly.

All he saw was a flash of light before hearing a bang feeling pain.

She was running like if she stops, she dies. After a few minutes, she stopped in a dark alley and looked around. Certain that nobody had followed her, she pulled out a cell phone, dialed a number, and while waiting for it to connect, she became a different person, *again*.

"I got it."

She hung up, took a few deep breaths, then pulled out a different cell, and dialed a different number... This time, she wasn't that strong woman. She was desperate about the masks she was living under (a bit confusing here) The only person who was in knowledge of that was at the other end of line. "Kendall?" When she heard his voice, she was relieved.

"I got it. Tell me what to do."

She listened for a while, then silently hung up. She had only two hours before she would be Julia Thorne, *again*. What she didn't notice was another pair of eyes watching her...

Sydney fished out her keys and opened the door. This house was nothing like her, it was Julia Thorne's house. "*It isn't even a house,*" she thought.. "*A hotel room... A dead, cold hotel room...*" She sighed heavily and plopped down on the couch, waiting for Kendall to call. Suddenly the phone rang and room service apologized for dialing the wrong number, she jumped up and went to the park where she is to meet her handler.

While walking, she thought that only one man could be her handler. Now he was having an affair with a woman whose name she doesn't even want to know... Cause Sydney knew that if she learns her name, she might not be able to restrain herself from killing her...

She looked up to the sky.. "*What have I become? I'm thinking about killing an innocent person!*" She shook her head to clear it and looked for her handler. He was sitting on a bench over there...the 12th bench to the left... Every month, they get farther away...

Every month, they would skip a bench... This month, it had been a year... A long, hollow year without *her* life...

She sat beside him on the bench and murmured with a harsh voice she always uses when she speaks with him.

"It's a cold night."

When no answer came, she looked to her left. He was sitting slightly slouched, but her gut instinct told her that something's wrong... She gulped and shook his right arm.
"Sir?"

When his head fell to his chest, she literally had to hold back her scream. He had been killed! She blinked furiously trying not to panic. *They know about me! I've got to get out of here!*

Opposite to the frantic thoughts flying through her mind, she felt cold inside. She slowly rose from the bench and looked around before walking away... Her heart was crying... Within minutes, she knew that she could be dead... But her ears weren't dead yet, she heard leaves rustle behind her. A second later, she armed herself and spun around, shouting.

"Get out!"

The leaves were crackling to her side as she walked back, rested her back to the tree, and breathing heavily, waited for her enemy's face.. seconds passed, one, two, three.. but when she saw the face she's been least expecting, her gun fell to the ground.

"Mom?!"

Sydney blinked in shock, and cried out, again.

"Mom?!"

Irina grabbed a hold of her arm, picked her gun up from the ground, and gave it back to her.

"Sydney, listen to me."

Sydney wasn't listening. She knows she's dreaming, she knows this is not real. When Irina saw the tears in her daughter's eyes, she took a deep breath and with a soft voice, she pleaded.

"Sydney, darling, listen to me..."

Sydney blinked and looked at her face, when Irina caught her eyes, she spoke quickly.

"That man was a mole. He was aware of your situation you have, and he was going to kill you, I swear." Sydney was wide awake now. She looked to her mother.

"You killed him?!"

Irina shook her head.

"No. But I intended to."

Sydney shook her head. She was biting her lip to hold back tears.

"Mom, but how? Why?"

Irina took a deep breath and with a cold voice.

"I'll explain later. We can't remain here., It's not safe being so. visible to prying eyes."

Sydney nodded and they began to run... She didn't know what she was doing. When Irina pushed her to the road and towards a waiting car, she jumped in without hesitating.

Once they were driving, Irina began to talk, while keeping her eyes on the road.

"Sydney, first of all, I'm glad that you're alive."

"You've known this?! For how long?! Mom, aren't you even a bit surprised?" Irina looked her.

"No, I'm not surprised. Again no, I didn't know this. But I'm glad that I'm wrong."

Sydney looked her horrified, which made Irina smile.

"Don't look at me like I'm a ghost, you *are* a ghost."

That made Sydney smile for the first time in a year... She asked with a soft voice.

"How did you find me?"

Irina answered quickly.

"That was the easy part... I have very talkative men."

Irina saw that Sydney smiled a little more and was beginning to relax.

"Aren't you scared?"

Why?" Sydney asked.

Irina smiled playfully. "That I may kidnap and torture you?"

While leaning back, Sydney answered.

"You *are* kidnapping me. Also I have a gun."

Irina smiled to that, and Sydney looked to the woman at her left.. She hadn't changed a bit, her soft, brown hair was the same, and the look in her eyes still remained , but only gets a little brighter when she looks at you. Her inner voice told her that the other physical things were still the same too... She turned towards the road, and watched silently.

Irina was happy. Indeed, she was happy. But now was neither the time nor the place to do a dance of joy. One of them has to think logically, and clearly Sydney was in shock. When she heard her daughter's voice, she smiled.

"This is way better and worse than the Covenant at the same time..."

Irina slowly asked.

"How?"

After a few minutes, she slowly replied while not looking at Irina.

"I know our relationship is complicated... But I'm your daughter... And I have to believe that would be the case under *any* circumstance."

When Sydney looked at her with a little smile and hope in her eyes (Irina wished that, it was hope), she smiled.

"It is."

After that, a relieved Sydney closed her eyes with a sigh, drifting off to sleep. Irina drove the car in silence... This was going to be a long, long night...

CHAPTER 2 – THINK, KNOW, TRUST.

"Sydney, darling, wake up."

Sydney opened her eyes with a little purr and looked at Irina.

"Mom?"

Irina smiled slightly and opened the door wider to allow Sydney some space to exit the car. Once out of the car, Sydney asked, "Where are we?"

Irina locked the doors and while entering her home, she answered, "One of my many houses."

"And the CIA..." Sydney asked hesitantly.

"Doesn't know."

Sydney nodded and followed her inside the house. It resembled her house, she noticed, her *old* house--cream walls, cream carpet(???), bookshelves.

Irina headed into the kitchen and hollered to Sydney.

"Hungry?"

Sydney answered once stepped into kitchen.

"No, thank you."

Irina turned on the kettle, took a mug from inside the cabinet, and asked, "Coffee?" Sydney eagerly nodded yes. Two black coffees, one with sugar, were ready within the next minute.

They went to the lounge room and sat facing each other on the cream colored sofa. A long silence ensued between them... Surely, both of them had thousands of questions, but they weren't so certain that they wanted to hear the answers either.

Sydney broke the silence after taking a sip of her coffee, and asked, "Why are you here?"

While leaning back, Irina raised her brow. "You mean the States?" Sydney nodded. Irina quickly replied, "I had some business..." Sydney looked at her worriedly. "But isn't it-"

"Dangerous? Yes it is... But I have a good cover, believe me..." Sydney smiled half-heartedly to that and Irina took her turn.

"So. You are you..."

Sydney smiled to that and nodded.

"Yes, I'm me. But sometimes even *I* don't know who I am..."

Irina smiled knowingly and quietly she began to explain.

"Well, then you may now understand my place, 20 years ago. Hiding your real personality is not easy..."

Sydney was silently watching her coffee. She softly asked, "Does dad know you're here?"

Irina smiled.

"It would be fun, wouldn't it?" She then admitted, "Yes, he knows."

Sydney nearly spit out her coffee and looked her in shock.

"What?!"

Irina smiled.

"He only knows. He doesn't help me."

Sydney shook her head in total disbelief. "I don't understand."

Irina smiled and continued. Sydney, after your disappearance, your father and I worked together to-"

"To what?!"

Irina looked at her.

"To find you."

Sydney's mouth fell open.

"How?!"

Irina set her mug to the table and turned to her, then quietly continued.

"Your father and I didn't believe you died in that fire. First, how did that fire start? You shot Allison and then house burnt down? Also, if you were conscious, you would have done something-- call the fire department, or police or try to put it out yourself. But, even if you were beaten *that* badly, you would have known that the house was burning by the smoke and heat., You are an agent Sydney, and a very good one at that, your senses never sleep *that* hard."

Sydney raised her brow and thoughtfully asked, "So?"

Irina went on, " Also, Jack and I couldn't believe that you were dead." Sydney's head suddenly popped up at that comment with unshed tears in her eyes, and Irina smiled sympathetically at her.

"I have been dead for 20 years with evidence indicating that I was dead for sure. Your case would have been the same." Then without any questions needed, she continued.

"After using all his channels and sources, your father had only one person left: me. And we made contact..."

"How?"

Irina smiled sweetly, and said, "That's our secret, darling. We set up one with you, but that's between him and I, ok?" Sydney nodded and her mother went on.

"Once we understood that we were thinking along the same lines, we began to search for you. Over the course of time, I think he decided to trust me a little. Not *a lot*, but a little." Irina smiled sadly to herself. Then she remembered that Sydney was there, she straightened her back and continued in a formal voice. "As you asked, he knows that I'm in the States, but not my exact location."

Sydney asked, "Does he know... about me... being alive?"

Irina shook her head.

"No."

Sydney looked at her angrily and demanded, "Why not?! How can you keep this from him?"

Irina simply answered, "Because I had to be sure, that's why. Can you imagine the damage it would cause if I told him that you may be alive, but sadly not? It would crush him." Sydney, slightly afraid, looked at her mother. She could remember her authority really well. She backed away and with a cold voice asked, "So, when will you tell him?"

"After you tell me what happened and we decide what to do." Sydney sighed heavily, and without any other options, she nodded.

"Ok. But first, you have to finish your story."

Irina took a sip of her nearly cold coffee and quietly began to talk.

"I heard of the amazing talents of Julia Thorne."

Sydney shivered inside. Her mother knew what she did, what she will, and-

"Sydney, look at me." She listened to her words and forced herself to meet Irina's gaze. Irina saw the concern in her eyes, and slowly, she began to explain.

"I know what you did and why you did it. You killed some people. But Sydney, believe me, I know that you had to do it. Or they would have killed both of you. Besides, you work for your country, I know that too. Stop beating yourself up. These men were already dead, you only pulled the trigger." Sydney silently begged her to continue, she desperately needed someone's comfort, some understanding... And here, her mother was giving it to her. When Sydney heard her voice, she devoured all of her words.

"You didn't kill that man, did you?" Without any answers, Irina continued. "Even if he wouldn't give you the chip, you wouldn't kill him, I know you. He'd beg you to kill him, but you couldn't, wouldn't..."

Sydney asked with a little voice, "You think?"

Irina shook her head.

"No sweetie, I *know*." Sydney smiled. Maybe for her trust in her, maybe for that word of sweetie, maybe for both of them... After a few silent minutes, Irina went on.

"What you did was bad, but not wrong. You gave peace to those men, think about that way." Sydney nodded and Irina continued.

"Julia Thorne was the best. Whatever you wanted from her, like magic, she could do it, I heard. So, I wanted to see who she was. Where was she all of these years?" With thoughtful eyes, she went on.

"And I hired you. Using one of my men of course. When he brought me the pictures of you, you can guess my reaction." Both of them smiled slightly to that, and Irina continued.

"I wanted that chip. The job was mine."

Sydney's eyes went wide for that and she squirmed.

"Yours?!" Irina nodded.

"The chip is false, I decrypted it already. Besides that, I learned that your handler is a mole, and with all the insecurities, that was unacceptable."

Sydney asked, "So, you went to kill him?" Irina nodded, and Sydney asked again, "But he was dead already?"

Irina nodded again, and her brows creased, she murmured, "I really don't know who did that."

Sydney got the point, and looked her in horror.

"So, he or she knows that you were there too? Perhaps saw you?" Irina nodded and looked at her.

"So... What's your story?"

"You should get away Mom! They could kill you!" Sydney nearly shouted. Irina smiled slightly and said, "They always could do that. I've always live under threats Sydney, and trust me, I know what I'm doing." Sydney nodded helplessly, and looked at her mother.

"What you heard is true... I do what they ask me to do. My magic is the CIA though."
Irina smiled playfully.

"Again?"

Sydney nodded with a sad smile.

"Again. Being a double is hard, especially when you have no one to talk to."

Irina asked with curiosity, "Why are you talking to me Sydney?" Sydney looked at her, so Irina explained, "I mean, because I'm here? I know what you do? I might be the Covenant, you know that..."

"But you won't kill me." Sydney murmured blatantly. This time, Irina at looked her with shock.

"You think?"

Sydney smiled sadly and looked to her.

"I know."

Irina smiled a little, and asked again, "So, why are you talking?"

Sydney looked to her, and with a deep breath, she answered, "I know that you're not the Covenant, don't try to fool me. If you were, I'd already know." Sydney looked at her, and openly gave her the reason.

"Because you're my mother."

Just for one moment, the world stopped for Irina. Breathless, she watched her daughter's face. She accepted her. Within all these lies, all these insecurities, a part of Sydney had accepted and trusted her. Irina held back her tears and gulped with a smile.

"Thank you."

Sydney knew what was going on. She wasn't dumb. She too was in shock. She was living such a complicated life that she couldn't think that much anymore... And Irina was her mother-- the only thing that hadn't changed. So she smiled brightly and held back her tears and spoke.

"I'm hungry now."

CHAPTER 3 – TARGET

When Sydney finished her meal, Irina entered the kitchen.

"Your room is ready." Sydney smiled thankfully, and raising up from her chair, asked, "What are you going to do?"

While getting the dishes, Irina replied, "Have to make some calls. I have to be sure that nobody has seen us."

"And Dad?" Sydney asked with a tiny voice. Irina stopped for a moment, then turned around, and looking into her eyes, she answered, "After Kendall, we can work on him too, ok?" Sydney nodded, and went to her bedroom at the end of the corridor. She was numb. Her life had changed in one day, again, and she didn't know what to do. She was in her mother's hands, and could hear her Dad's yelling already.

Smiling to herself, she pushed the covers on the bed and lied down. *Strangely, I feel safe, she thought, In a place I don't even know, in a house I have never been in, and with a woman I hardly know still.*

After a few moments, when Irina entered the room quietly, she found her daughter already had fell asleep with a slight smile on her face. Smiling to herself, Irina straightened the covers over her, and although she was wanting to kiss her like she had always done when Sydney was a child, Irina couldn't.

Instead, she turned off the lights, and closed the door after her, silently.

When Sydney opened her eyes on the next morning, she was refreshed. She opened her windows, and changed her clothes, which Irina left on the chair for her at dawn, and strangely Sydney hadn't heard that noises, and went down to the kitchen, to find her mom talking through the phone.

"I understand! But what I tell you is the case now, and you'll do it. This is your first priority from now on, understood?"

When Irina saw her, she smiled to Sydney, and pointed out the breakfast on the table. Sydney moved over there silently, and while gnawing some piece of bread, she watched her mother who was clearly angry now.

"Listen to me. I will say this once and for all. If you fail on this, you can be sure I'll come for you. And believe me, you really don't want to see me pissed off."

And not listening to the other end, she hung up the phone, took a deep breath, and smiling brightly, turned to Sydney

"How are you today? Slept well?"

When Sydney rolled her eyes and continued to look into her eyes with an open question, Irina replied with a sigh.

"I hate beginners. Did I tell you that?" Sydney smiled a little and spoke.

"You were a beginner too years ago Mom." Gnawing her bread again, Sydney asked, "Who was he?"

While taking her mug, Irina replied, "Someone. He will take the bands of security camera over the quarter." Sydney nodded, but Irina cut her off.

"Stop gnawing your bread." For that, two woman looked each other with shock. Irina hadn't said these words for years, and Sydney hadn't heard them either. After a few seconds, Sydney dropped her bread to the table, and said with a blank face, "I've got to reach Kendall." Irina pointed over the phone, Sydney asked, "Is it secure?" Irina nodded, Sydney took the phone and dialed silently. A few moments later, even Irina, who was sitting across the table, heard the roar of Kendall.

"Where are you?!!"

Sydney found her voice finally, and answered.

"Kendall, relax, I'm safe." Irina smiled to that, and to give her private space, she got out of the kitchen. Sydney then turned to Kendall and rushed out her words.

"I'm fine Kendall, stop yelling at me! I know that he was a mole! No, I didn't know it until yesterday! What? No, I don't know what he could have given out to the Covenant! Yes I'm safe, yes Kendall I'm sure!" Sydney quietly continued.

"But I know I have to go back.. I don't think that the Covenant suspects me as a double.. No, I'm not sure.. I know I could have been killed Kendall, I'm not a child!" Sydney sighed and spoke with control.

"Alright... I decrypted the chip, and gave it to the Covenant too by the way. Yes I know I'm good. Kendall, is my dad back? Not yet? Are you sure he's fine over there? Alright, alright. Ok I'll call you before my move." And when she hung up, she sat still for a few moments. Then she got up and found her mother.

"Mom?" Irina raised up from the sofa and looked at her.

"Is everything ok?" Sydney nodded, then demanded, "You said you'd call Dad." Irina looked at her thoughtfully. It was obvious that she didn't want to call Jack, Irina knew that he'd yell at her. She was not afraid, but he'd hurt Sydney too, would try to cut all the things, and that would cause a lot of trouble. Irina knew Jack well. So, she decided to be honest.

"Sydney, you know your father-" Sydney shouted finally, "But it is his right to know!"

"It was his right to know all along, but you didn't call him, did you?" Irina shouted back, and the room fell silent.

Sydney looked at her mother angrily and asked, "So, what is your plan about it? Or do I have to get out of here?" Irina looked at her, and slowly spoke.

"I'm going to be a member of the Covenant."

"You're going to be what?" Seeing her expression, Irina began to explain again.

"Sydney, you need backup.. And only I can give you this, you know that." Sydney looked at her.

"And they won't notice us, how?"

"You're not Sydney, you are Julia Thorne. They believe this, as they'll believe that I'm bad," Irina explained.

"How will you convince them that you're bad?" Sydney asked. Irina smiled a little.

"Sloane will help me." Sydney's eyes went wide with that, and she shouted, "Sloane?!!" Irina nodded.

"He's a half double too, which I do not believe, but he is as he seems. And he's bound to do whatever CIA asks him to do. So, your nice man Kendall will ask him for a favor, a favor that'll spread my name all over the world, again."

"Mom, didn't Sloane find out that you were working for us last year?" Sydney asked, and Irina nodded to that, then went on:

"But now, he is working for you too. So, that won't be a problem at all. If they don't believe, I can give them some good examples." With Sydney's look, Irina fixed quickly, "Which won't be real, of course. After that, I'll be your magic too. Whatever Kendall wants, I'll get that for you if I can."

From out of nowhere, Sydney asked, "Mom, why are you doing this? Again turning yourself in?" Irina shook her head.

"I won't turn myself in Sydney, this time it's different." Irina choose her words carefully, and went on. "This time, I'm free. I will never, ever carry a transmitter this time, except crucial circumstances chosen by me. Also, this time I'm not in your custody. Besides that, I'll work with you. You don't know these people Sydney, look what have they done to you already." Irina spoke slowly, "And this time, you don't have Agent Vaughn with you."

With that, Sydney shot a glare at her, and asked, "You know?" Irina nodded, and answered simply.

"Lauren Reed, daughter of Senator Reed. Well educated, directly began to work on NSC. Probably clean, but not sure." Sydney nodded her head, and Irina spoke again.

"He doesn't know Sydney." Sydney looked at her, and Irina explained.

"I can't tell you the pain he was suffering, believe me. He really did believe that you were dead. Maybe for your own sake, I don't know, but he really seemed convinced about this."

"You talked to him?" Irina nodded

"After your funeral ceremony, I found Vaughn, at a bar. He needed someone to talk to, and I am your mother. Maybe he saw you in me, I don't know. But he spoke. He told me everything about you, and really Sydney, he was in an incredible pain." Sydney nodded, but couldn't hold herself.

"But he's in an affair with her." Irina didn't gave an answer to that. She knew that none of the answers she had would be enough for Sydney, so she choose a different path.

"We have things to do. After everything's set, you have to go back to your hotel room with an excuse." Sydney nodded, and while getting her Jacket, she asked, "Where are you going?"

"I have to make an impression.."

"Mom." Irina smiled to that, and turned to her.

"I won't do any harm, I promise." Sydney looked into her eyes for a second, and nodded. When the two had gotten outside after a few minutes, and went their separate ways, both knew they could only trust each other from now on.

At the same moments, in a hotel room across the town, a man was ready for his attack. He was going to kill her, he vowed. *Whatever it takes, I'll do it.*

While cleaning his gun, Jack Bristow was ready to kill the enemy: Julia Thorne.

CHAPTER 4 – REUNION

“What?!”

Sydney took a deep breath, and repeated again, “My mother helped me.”

Kendall was red with anger. This wasn’t a game! How could she? How could they? He asked with his last tolerance, “Where.Is.Irina.Derevko?”

Sydney shook her head honestly, and replied “I don’t know Kendall, I swear.”

“You let her go?!” Sydney sighed and stood up.

“Look, she and I need help. They may know about me, we are not sure about this, you know that. Only she can help me, you know that too.”

Kendall crossed his arms and asked with sarcasm, “And what will this help be like?”

Sydney knew what was coming. With courage, she spoke: “She is going to the Covenant, with your help, and Sloane’s.”

Irina Derevko was nervous.

She had only slept for one hour, made plans, talked with people, made arrangements... but all of this was trash when it came to Sydney. *If something goes wrong, they'll kill her. After me,* she thought.

At their safehouse, while changing her outfit, Sydney turned to Kendall.

“Look Kendall, I know this is crazy. But we have, *I have,* no choice. Plus, my mother never harmed me intentionally, you know that.” Kendall turned off the lap-top and turned to her, hardly controlling his voice, he spoke.

“I know. But think about it Sydney, with all we’ve given to her, what can she be capable of from now on? Anything! Anything and everything!”

Sydney was watching him from the mirror while knitting her hair. She answered, “But she won’t.” Now, Kendall was furious.

“How can you know that?!” he shouted. Sydney turned to him, ready, and replied.

“I know. It’s that simple.” Getting her coat, she checked on her microphone, and asked with a simple tone, “Isn’t Dad back yet?” Kendall shook his head.

“No. I don’t know where the hell your father slipped off to. As if I could care about one more Bristow now.” Sydney smiled to that, and took her purse.

"Thanks Kendall. For everything."

"You're not going to die, are you?" Kendall asked her with worry.

Sydney smiled and replied, "Well, it can end tonight." Kendall shook his head and smiled.

"Get out, I don't want to see you again." While closing the door after her, she whispered to her microphone, "As you wish."

At that same moment, one woman, Irina Derevko, was ready for action. In the club, her eyes was searching for her daughter, to give her the plans of The Covenant as her new boss from now on. She was laughing outside when they told her that her dearest Sydney was dead, and now she was a contract killer, named Julia Thorne.

But inside, she was dreaming of 1001 ways to kill them.

In the same club, one man was ready for action. *Tonight, this will end*, Jack Bristow thought. *The woman who killed Sydney will die.*

And in the middle of this, a young woman was walking. She was both Julia and Sydney. Only careful eyes could tell the difference. *I'm Julia, and I don't know that woman sitting there*, she told herself.

She knew the Covenant was listening when she sat across from her mother, so she asked with a flat face, "They told me you're my new boss?" Irina nodded her head, and slowly, she began to speak.

"I'm told that your skills are amazing. I hope that it's true." Sydney drank her drink, and smiled.

"If it wasn't true, I couldn't survive till today, could I?" She ate some chips, and with a bored voice, she asked, "When and where?" Irina was proud. It was clear that Sydney has the same blood as her. She was afraid, Irina could tell that, but the mask Sydney was wearing... it was amazing. Irina took a deep breath, and gave her a folder.

"Before that, I'd like a test run." Sydney rolled her eyes.

"Again? How many times do I have to prove myself to you guys?" and opening the folder, she asked, "What do I have to do this time?" Irina knew she could read it, but she spoke to give Kendall information through Sydney's microphone.

"A bait game. Two minutes from now, you'll steal that little bronze statue in the middle of the dance floor." Sydney smiled

"That should be easy." Irina smiled to that.

"As I said, it's a bait game. When you take the statue, the alarm under it will alert the security, then your game begins. With carrying that statue, you have to go downstairs, open the safe box, take the files in it, and again, with that statue, get out of the club. I'll wait for you outside." Irina took back the folder, and stood up.

"I assume that you can pay the bill," Sydney smiled playfully.

"Good luck." Irina blended into the crowd. It was dangerous, she knew that, but hoped that Kendall could gain some time for Sydney before the guards came.

After a few minutes, Sydney was flirting with the guy in front of the downstairs, with the statue held at her back. When she saw a guard turning the corner with his radio, she jumped on the guy in front of her. While kissing furiously, they descended the stairs, where she punched him into unconscious.

She checked her watch, knew that she had one minute, she began to run. She couldn't talk with Kendall, she was aware of a transmitter on the statue. She slowly opened the door at the end of the corridor, and finding it empty, she began to work on the safe-box.

After 15 seconds, she was upstairs, going to the front door. But when she saw the man in front of the bar, she froze.

She furiously went to the back door. *My God, how can Dad be here?!!* She opened the gate, and seeing the back door guy, smiled playfully.

"Hi. Did you see a car here? My boyfriend ditched me I think..."

The guy wanted to help her and when he turned his back, Sydney blacked him out with the statue, then ran in the alley to the corner of the street, but when she heard a cock of a gun, she froze.

"Stay there!"

Irina was becoming nervous. *Where was she?* She slowly started the car, and went backwards, to a place where she can both see front and backdoors. But when she saw the man with a gun directed to the back of Sydney, Irina thought she was dreaming.

Sydney took a deep breath, and slowly turned around. The expression of Jack Bristow was unreadable. He nearly dropped his gun, and whispered, "Sydney?"

Sydney knew that the Covenant could hear them, so, painfully, she spoke.

"You don't know your enemy's name?" Jack looked her with shock, and straightened, but his gun was not directed to her now. Sydney's face told him other than what she said.

What the hell is going on?!! He thought wildly. He heard a car, and thought the world had gone upside down when he saw Irina's face and, more importantly, a gun directed at him. Jack cried out, "Irina?!"

"Get into the car Julia," Irina said coldly. While Sydney got into the car, Irina looked at Jack, and slowly spoke.

"I wish you wouldn't have seen this Jack." Irina held Sydney's hand and tightened hers in a warning not to talk. "I'm sorry." Then she fired.

When Jack opened his eyes with shock, he saw Irina and Sydney rushing to him, and covering his mouth with their hands, they pushed him onto the car. When they were all set, Irina went full speed.

Sydney turned to her father, and still covering his mouth, she coldly spoke to Irina.

"Are you sure he's dead?"

And Irina, whose eyes were on both the road and the man in the backseat, replied "I always fire my gun with a deadshot."

Jack looked at both of them with anger and shock, his eyes clearly asking, *What is going on?*

But he had understood that he shouldn't talk, so he pushed his daughter's hand from his mouth, and breathed silently.

"What should I do with the statue? They could be tracking us," Sydney asked. Irina nodded.

"Oh yes... throw it." And without another second, Sydney throw the statue from the window, and then chaos began.

"Dad I'm so sorry!"

"Jack, are you all right?"

Jack looked to both of them, and angrily demanded, "What is going on?"

CHAPTER 5 – THANK YOU

When they entered the house, Jack quietly asked, "Any device here?" Irina shook her head.

"No, completely safe." Then, Jack exploded.

"Then I think it's time for an explanation." Irina and Sydney looked at him, waiting for his anger to lessen, but when they understood that that was not going to happen, Irina silently went to the phone and when Jack saw that, he asked,

"What are you doing?"

"We need to send someone to hospital as you. They'll look for you Jack, you know that." Jack nodded slightly, then turned to Sydney.

"Sydney?" Sydney couldn't hold herself anymore and threw herself in Jack's arms.

"Dad I've missed you so much!" Jack patted her back with some discomfort and surprise, and at that moment his and Irina's eyes met. But Jack turned his head.

"Can one of you tell me how my daughter and her mother work for the Covenant? Should I kill you?" Sydney dried her tears with a small laugh, and spoke.

"I work for the Covenant as a double, Dad." Jack turned to her.

"Again, don't think that I'm not happy that you're alive... but, how?" then he turned to Irina. "And you knew?" When Irina nodded, Jack began to yell.

"I knew it! You knew, and you didn't tell me! Irina how can you be so irresponsible about this? After all we've done-" Irina stopped him.

"Jack, will you calm down?"

"No I won't calm down! My daughter is alive, my wife is working with her, and no one told me anything!" Jack turned to Sydney and angrily spoke.

"If you turned to me one second later, I would've shot you! I could've killed my own daughter! And why? *You* didn't tell me!" To that, Sydney couldn't hold her tears, and cried out.

"You think it was easy for me? You think it was, don't you? But let me tell you something! It was horrible! I am horrible!" She looked into his eyes, and went on "I am dead, Dad! Will thinks I'm dead, you thought I was dead, Mom thought I was dead..." With a tiny voice, she finished, "Vaughn thinks I'm dead." But that flamed her up, and she continued.

"All the things that I've lived through? It was hell! They interrogated me, tried to brain-wash me, tortured me, left me near-to-death! What could I do? What *should* I do? I turned into what they wanted me to be! To save myself, to save you!"

Jack was taken aback. Nearly a year without her face, her voice, and now she was in front of him, yelling. But he knew Sydney was right, so he gave out a breath.

"I'm sorry." Sydney looked at him in barely held tears, and she spoke with her last strength.

"Don't be sorry. I knew you were searching for me. I hoped that *someday*, you'd find me." Jack looked into her eyes and knew that she was telling the truth. His daughter was counting on him. Whatever it took. When Sydney spoke, he startled a little, but looked at her.

"Don't go hard on mom either." Irina was surprised at that, but Sydney didn't let Irina talk; instead, she herself went on.

"She found me nearly four days ago. She saved my life, and brought me here. And we made a plan to save my life, and also continue to work as a double. She got herself a place in the Covenant as my new boss. Mom, Kendall, and I are working together to take down the Covenant."

"Kendall knew that too?" Jack asked. Sydney nodded.

"I- I mean, me and mom- we work for him." Jack looked to Irina with surprise, but Irina was unreadable. Jack turned to his daughter again.

"How long does is this thing going on?" Sydney slowly answered.

"Nearly four months. I'm a contract killer of the Covenant, but besides that, they use me for my spy qualities too. I do whatever they ask me to, but as I was in SD-6, I work for the two sides. Only Kendall knows I'm alive, he plans the counter-missions, he helps me, he's my partner." Jack sighed.

"That explains why he went off that much." Sydney nodded.

"I tried to contact you, I knew that you could keep this as a secret, but Kendall didn't let me. You were lost too." Jack nodded and explained.

"I-" he paused. "Your mother and I, we were looking for you. Then all the things I found lead me to the fact that you were dead, killed by a woman named Julia Thorne." Jack looked at her. "In fact, it seems it turned out to be true."

Sydney spoke again.

"Four days ago, I went to meet my handler, an ordinary agent who doesn't know me, or the importance of the job," she smiled sadly. "At least that was what I and Kendall thought, but it turned out that he was a mole. Mom saved me, and now, as I told you, we're here, in this situation." A silence fell over the room. After a minute, Irina spoke.

"Sydney, why don't you go and change your clothes?" Sydney smiled slightly to that, and went to her room, Irina turned to Jack with a sigh.

"I know you have questio-" but Jack cut her off.

"You took care of her." Irina couldn't decide that if it was a statement, or a question. So, she nodded slightly to that, and Jack stood in silence for a while too. Then Irina couldn't contain herself.

"She is our daughter Jack, you don't have to thank me." Jack shot a glance at her, Irina smiled, and went to the counter, slowly speaking, she began to prepare coffees.

"You shouldn't feel guilty, or make her feel guilty for what had happened. She's alive, and this is our first priority." And she pushed a mug to him.

"Coffee." Jack took it silently, and looked around the house. Irina spoke again.

"If you decide to stay here, I can make you a room." Jack shook his head.

"No, ah, I don't think tha-" Irina cut him off

"You are, supposedly, in an important surgery right now Jack. You will be in a coma for a few days, so I think you should stay." Irina put her mug down, and lost in the corridor.

Jack slowly sat down on the couch, and try to connect the things he learned today. His daughter was alive and she'd become a double, as had Irina.

"Dad?" Jack startled to Sydney's voice, and smiling, he looked to her.

"Yes sweetheart?" Sydney smiled and sat down right next to him, Jack put his arm around her, and they sat in silence for a while. Soon, Jack noticed that Sydney was crying. And with his heart aching, he asked "What's the matter?" Sydney smiled and dried her tears into her fathers chest.

"Nothing." Jack smiled and while caressing her hair, he asked again with hope.

"Are you crying because you are happy?" Sydney nodded into his chest, and Jack was relieved at that.

"When I was alone, at my hotel room, I dreamed this. Me, you, and Mom maybe. The dream's aim was to dream the impossible, because impossible was only making me happy."

Hearing that, Jack felt the knife twist, and hit his aching heart. They made his girl sad. That was unacceptable. Then he heard Sydney's voice.

"And now, it seems so real."

Jack looked into her eyes for a moment, then saw with the corner of his eye that Irina had come into the room. He smiled a little without looking to Irina, and murmured to Sydney, "It *is* real, sweetheart."

Sydney smiled and rested her head on her father's shoulder. Jack looked at Irina, who took out a blanket from the drawer and set it across the two. When Irina was silently going back, Jack grabbed her hand, and Irina looked at him with shock. Looking into her eyes, Jack quietly whispered.

"Thank you."

CHAPTER 6 – ENGAGEMENT

When Jack opened his eyes, he thought he was dreaming.

He was in a house, filled with a beautiful scent, and in his arms was Sydney. She was breathing heavily in her sleep. In front of her, at a chair near the window, there was Irina, his wife. She was watching outside with silence, and Jack was sure she was thinking the same thoughts.

At that moment, the spell broke, and Irina turned to him.

"Awake?"

Jack nodded to that. Irina got up from her chair and went to the kitchen. After her disappearance, Jack turned to his daughter. Hating to wake her, he whispered, "Sydney?"

Sydney murmured something to him, and Jack, knowing his daughter, persisted.

"Sydney, wake up."

Sydney slowly opened her eyes and once she had vision, she smiled, "Hi Dad."

Jack smiled slightly and asked, "Are you all right?"

Sydney nodded. While straightening, she asked, "Where's Mom?" Folding up the blanket, Jack answered.

"Kitchen." Sydney nodded and got up, disappearing into the kitchen. Jack stood up and listened to their good mornings, then went to bathroom. He needed some water to erase the illusions of the past.

While putting the bread on the table, Irina spoke.

"We need to go the base center." Jack looked at her, and Irina explained.

"Yesterday Julia took some files for the Covenant, and I've changed them as Kendall asked me to. While you transfer them to the CIA, Julia and I have to go back." Sydney nodded, and while sipping her orange juice, she spoke.

"Also, you need to confront Kendall, and we'll give you time for that." When Irina and Sydney smiled, Jack couldn't hold himself and smiled a little as well.

"All right. But I can't go outdoors, I'm supposedly in a coma." Jack looked to Irina. "Thanks to you."

"My pleasure." Irina smiled sweetly. Sydney watched them in awe before speaking.

"I can contact Kendall, and you can meet somewhere safe." Jack nodded. Sydney got up and went to the phone, then Irina spoke quietly to Jack.

"Vaughn is returning today after his leaving." Jack looked at Irina, and she went on. "He doesn't know Jack, and he shouldn't. He's moving on with his life, with that woman-" Jack cut in.

"What woman?" Irina looked at him with surprise.

"You didn't know?"

"Oh, because Mr. Vaughn always chooses to give me details of his private life, right?" Jack answered sarcastically. Irina sighed to that and spoke.

"He's with Lauren Reed. I've checked up on her, she looks clean, but I'm not sure of it either. The part Sydney doesn't know is," Irina dropped her voice lower and went on "They got engaged 2 weeks ago."

Jack looked at Irina like he had a bullet in his chest for real. Irina waited for him to accept these facts, but Jack was angry, and didn't hesitate to show it.

"I knew he wasn't good for Sydney. I felt it." Irina sighed.

"Jack, he's been through this too." Jack looked at Irina.

"I didn't marry someone else after you." The kitchen fell dead silent with that. Irina looked at him in shock; Jack was frantic with thoughts, and not allowing Irina one more second to talk, he cut in.

"I mean, after Laura." That did it. Now Irina held pain in her eyes, and she stood up.

"If you're finished?" Jack nodded and Irina took his plate to wash the dishes. This was the moment when Sydney stepped back in the kitchen with a bright smile.

"I've arranged it Dad, you've got two hours."

While Jack was working on Irina's lap-top, he was aware of Irina's eyes. He broke her heart, he knew that much of it, but the case was his heart first of all, and Jack needed to protect it.

Sydney called a moment later.

"I'm ready." Jack turned to her and Sydney smiled hesitantly. "Do I look like enough Julia today?" Jack smiled.

"Why are you saying that? You even got me for one second last night." Sydney smiled brightly, and spoke.

"But *now* I'm happy, that's the difference." Both Irina and Jack's eyes met to that, and Irina broke it, turning to her daughter.

"Come on, we can't be late." Sydney kissed her father once more, then went to the door with her coat. Irina looked at Jack and with a flat face, she spoke.

"There's food in the refrigerator, and your room is ready. You can find some books if you get bored." And not waiting for his response, Irina closed the door after her, leaving Jack to his silence.

When Kendall got into the basement of the arranged building, he immediately found himself on the floor, an angry Jack at his head.

"How could you keep this from me?!" Kendall tried to get away from him and pushed him upwards with all his strength, also yelling.

"At least I kept her alive!" Jack let go of him, and spoke.

"Yes, and I thank you for that, but that doesn't change my mind. You should've told me." Kendall looked at him and asked

"And? What would you have done Jack? You barely could handle the SD-6 case, and now you think you could go through it all over again? At least Sloane was protecting Sydney, now she's all alone, could you handle that?" Kendall put his tie in order and looked Jack in the eyes.

"I'm *not* sorry that I didn't tell you. That was the best for her, and you know it. That is the main reason I'm not dead now, because you know I'm right."

After a silent moment, Jack handed Kendall a file.

"Irina sent these."

The Covenant Base Center

While Julia was walking down the corridor, she saw Irina walking out of an office. When Irina looked at her, Julia went to her side and asked. "You need me again?"

Irina nodded, and they went for Irina's room. When Sydney closed the door, Irina gave her a folder and spoke.

"Your mission is to go to Nepal." Sydney looked at her for a second, but Irina went on. "I and some others will company you."

"Whom, may I ask?" Sydney questioned.

"Mr. Sark."

Sydney froze.

CHAPTER 7 – SURPRISE

CIA Operation Center

"Hello Mr. Bristow." Jack nodded and sat in his chair. While working on his computer, Kendall gave the information.

"Mr. Bristow is under a cover, and if I hear a word goes outside this center that he is or was in this building today, I'll arrest all of you. Is that clear?"

Ten agents in the office nodded and got back to their work, and at that moment, Vaughn stepped in. Weiss smiled.

"Look who's back." Vaughn smiled a little and turned to Jack.
"Jack, I see that you're back too." Jack spoke with a cold voice.

"Yes, and as I'm updated, I hear that you've gotten engaged."

With that, Weiss and Kendall left them alone in a second. Jack looked at the young man, who clearly was not comfortable with the situation. Vaughn spoke with a distant voice.

"I had to move on."

Vaughn could see the anger in Jack's eyes, and he couldn't blame him for that either. Sometimes he even blamed himself. But he wasn't regretful. Sydney had moved on after Danny. Vaughn knew that the relationship Sydney had with Danny was different than she had with himself, but that was the only thing he could hold on to. His thoughts were cut when he heard Jack speak.

"Sydney might have understand, and maybe she could even forgive you."

Vaughn looked at him, and Jack went on.

"But I won't."

When Julia and Irina got to their cars, Irina spoke.

"We'll leave tonight, I can drop you wherever you want." Julia nodded and got into Irina's car. When they were on the road, Sydney asked.

"Sark?! How?" Irina, whose eyes were on the road, answered.

"I don't know. But my opinion is, they don't know Sark is being held by CIA."

"But again, how?"

"Sloane, or your father could've shown that he was still in the business. They could've run his jobs with the information that Sark gave for his good." Irina answered, Sydney nodded and spoke.

"We need to plan fast."

"That's what your father is for." Sydney smiled a little at this, and dialed a number from her private cell-phone. While waiting the secure line's connecting, she spoke.

"You think they will give Sark to us?"

"You got me out when necessary." Irina smiled a little.

"But you were good. Sark is evil." Sydney smiled and looked at her. Irina laughed a little and answered.

"He can be a good boy. He knows what's good for him, he's smart." Sydney made a relieved noise for that, and when the line connected she spoke.

"Kendall?"

But the voice she heard made her heart stop.

"Sydney?!"

Sydney quickly shut down the cell phone and closed her eyes. Irina saw that and asked, "What happened?"

"Vaughn! He picked up the phone!" Sydney answered breathlessly. Irina shot her a glance, and Sydney nodded. "He recognized me!"

In a second, Irina spoke.

"Get the laptop from the backseat." Sydney did that and opened it, and with Irina's words, she sent a message to her father's computer. After a minute, an answer popped up. Sydney read it out loud.

"He asks what happened exactly."

"Tell him that you're the egg--"

"Egg?!"

"You're our egg. Go on, tell him, then explain what happened." Without a second thought, Sydney began to type, and waited for Jack's answer. After a second she sighed.

"He said he'll take care of it, and shoot Kendall." Irina smiled slightly to that.

Jack closed the message box, and sighed. After a second, he stood up, but came face to face with Vaughn.

"Agent Vaughn..."

"Don't go 'Agent Vaughn' on me Jack, and tell me the truth." Jack looked at him.

"What truth?" Vaughn looked at him hard, and slowly spoke.

"Is Sydney alive?" Jack looked at him with an unreadable face.

"How could you ask me this? You threw her ashes to the sea, if I recall correctly." Vaughn spoke again between his teeth.

"I didn't ask you that. You buried your wife, as I recall correctly, but she's alive." Jack glared at him hard, and stepped aside.

"If you've finished your interrogation, Agent Vaughn, I have a job to do." But Vaughn was after him, and asked.

"What job? Delete the secure line's records? I already got them, don't try." Jack turned to him and looked at his face.

"You're crossing the line." Vaughn looked at him.

"You *are* making the line." They stood silent for a moment, then Vaughn asked again, "Is Sydney alive?"

Entering Kendall's office, Jack spoke.

"I can kill you for this." Kendall was angry too, and turned to Vaughn.

"How could you get my phone? Who gave you permission for that Agent Vaughn?" Vaughn looked at Kendall and spoke.

"I'm sorry. I thought it would be Marshall. I was waiting an answer from him and he knew that I'd be here, waiting, and he has access to cameras. He could've known where I was." Kendall sighed and looked at Jack, but he was blank. Vaughn insisted.

"I heard her. I know her voice. Just tell me."

Kendall took the phone and dialed a number, after a few seconds, he spoke.

"Your house, 1 hour." He hung up, then turned to Vaughn.

"You want answers? I'll give you answers. But trust me, you won't be happy."

Sydney was nervous. What was going on? As if reading her mind, Irina spoke.

"I don't know what's happening either Sydney."

Sydney sighed and stopped playing with her hands, she sat down on the couch, and spoke.

"*Your house, 1 hour.* He could've explained more."

"I'm sure it's just a formality, he will explain us what we have to do." Sydney shook her head and Irina went on.

"Maybe they're coming to get me?"

Sydney looked at her in horror, and Irina, who already regretted what she had said, fixed it.

"I'm kidding, Sydney. I'm not leaving until you want me to." Sydney sighed, and at that moment, the front door opened, and Sydney got up fast and relieved when she saw her father.

"Dad, what's going on? Could you make Vaughn believe that it wasn't m-"

She froze when she saw him.

There he was.

Vaughn.

CHAPTER 8 – BIRTHDAY

Irina looked at Jack with a clear question in her eyes, but Jack didn't make a sound. Irina turned to the two young agents.

Vaughn was speechless. There she was, Sydney, alive and looking at him. When he opened his mouth to speak, Sydney spoke first.

"Oh God."

That was it. The next thing Vaughn knew was Sydney lips on his own.

Sydney thought she would faint. *OhGodohGodohGod*. She pulled him closer to herself. *This is Vaughn!* She moaned a little, *This is Vaughn!* As if reading her thoughts, Vaughn hugged her more closely, entered his fingers to her hair, and drew her in an another breathless kiss.

And in the room, two men, and a woman were watching them. Irina blinked a little, and turned to two men with a smile on her face, she slowly spoke.

"Get out."

When they did not move, Irina ushered them to the kitchen.

"They need some privacy I think."

Jack spoke with a disgust.

"They're-"

"Kissing, yes., Irina smiled.

Jack muttered something unintelligible to that, and Irina turned to Kendall.

"Kendall." Kendall looked at her and spoke.

"Derevko, let me make something clear." To that, Irina looked at him curiously, and Kendall continued, "Sydney trusts you. And I also know that Jack did not see you for the first time just a few days ago." Irina and Jack remained unreadable, so Kendall kept going.

"But I have no evidence, so I can't do anything. But, if you do something wrong, I swear I'll kill you before Jack can, is that understood?"

"Thank you. I always feel so comfortable in your custody Agent Kendall." Kendall smiled coldly, and Irina went on. "But Sydney is my daughter. I care about her much more than you do. I did not separate her from her father, I told her the truth. Lies torture Sydney, you should've known that. She's grown up in a world of lies, and you have no idea how much she needs some truth about her life." Irina looked at Kendall and continued.

"She is weak. She was dead. You, me, Jack, we all killed her. Now, we need to give her some honesty. Agent Vaughn is the first step of this." Kendall shook his head.

"That's not my business, you're her mother." Irina smiled sarcastically.

"Oh thank you. But I think Agent Vaughn can handle this. If he doesn't tell Sydney that he's engaged, I'll tell her. The sooner she learns, the lesser the damage will be." Jack spoke for the first time

"That will kill her." Irina looked at Jack, and after a few seconds, she nodded.

"I know. But I stabbed her before, I can do it again."

Jack looked at her with interest. She was sacrificing herself. To not break the bonds between him and Sydney, Irina was sacrificing herself. Jack shook his head and spoke.

"If Agent Vaughn doesn't do it, we'll tell Sydney."

That was the moment that Irina felt her heart stop, and fell in love with Jack Bristow all over again.

When they finally separated, Vaughn blinked. Was that real? After a lonely, hollow, scary year, was this real?

As if reading him, as she always did, Sydney smiled a little.

"Hi." Vaughn smiled a little too.

"Hi." Then, the magic broke. They stepped apart and Sydney spoke slowly.

"Vaughn, let me explain."

Vaughn looked at her and demanded, "Only *I* didn't know this?" Sydney shook her head.

"No. Nobody knew this but Kendall. Vaughn, this was not a planned thing, I swear. After that night, the Covenant kidnapped me and interrogated me, tortured me to become a different person, a contract killer named Julia Thorne."

Vaughn was looking Sydney with clear shock. History was repeating itself. Sydney became a different woman as her mother did before. He spoke coldly.

"Go on."

Sydney began to explain with an ache in her heart. Vaughn thought that she was dead, this was for sure. And with every sentence she made, he was breaking once again.

When the trio heard the soft voices of the couple, they entered the room silently. When Sydney saw Irina, she smiled hopelessly.

"Mom..."

Irina nodded and made herself visible to Vaughn. When he saw Irina, he yelled, "Irina?!"

"Agent Vaughn, sit down," Irina answered quickly. When he did that without a response, Kendall was amazed. But of course he wouldn't even admit it to himself. Irina was speaking.

"What Sydney told you is true. We had no idea of she was living. We had guessed, that's true, but none of us had known for sure. Only Kendall knew it, and that was for Sydney's sark. And of course for yours." But Vaughn was angry, and he showed it.

"This is unacceptable! God, my life was depending on her! All of you knew it! You think only you lost a piece of your heart? She died, a part of me died! A big part! You know that. *Especially* you know that." Irina nodded.

"I know. But I also know some other things too Agent Vaughn."

And with that, Vaughn felt a knife stabbing his heart. They knew. Of course they knew. He shot a glance at Sydney, then to Irina, and with the look Irina has been giving to him, Vaughn understood that Sydney didn't know. He sat silently. *Damn*.

"We need to talk." All heads turned to Sydney with that, and she continued. "We need to get Sark out." Kendall flew out of his seat.

"What?!"

Jack was confused too, and Vaughn was trying to catching up. Irina spoke next.

"The Covenant thinks that Sark is out and free. And they need him in their next job, with Julia."

"Sark'll recognize her," Jack said. Sydney nodded.

"But we have to make believe him that I'm Julia. That won't be a problem at all I think. Mom and I will go, and Dad, you can get Sark with you. Of course the Covenant will listen us in some places. Because of that, Mom and I will not speak to you, and we can make sure Sark doesn't either."

"Marshall can give you a machine that changes your voice for the listening devices," Kendall sighed. Sydney smiled at him.

"You accept?" Kendall shrugged his shoulders.

"You Bristow girls never give me a chance to say no." Irina and Sydney smiled a bit proudly to that, and Jack rolled his eyes. After a second, Kendall stood up.

"OK, I need to sign some papers to let Sark free temporarily. Sydney, you have to prepare yourself. Sark knows you much better than you think. You *have to be* Julia." He turned to Irina.

"You have to get me the intel of the job. The more you can get me, the safer all of you will be." Irina nodded to him, and Kendall looked to Jack.

"Jack, I'll look into your hospital records, we have to put you in a coma for another week too I think. We can not give a suspect to that." Jack nodded too, and Kendall turned to Vaughn.

"And Agent Vaughn, you can clearly understand that, what we have said in this room will remain here. You can not tell anyone what you know or what you saw. Sydney Bristow is dead. Is that clear?" Vaughn nodded with a sigh, so Kendall went on. "All right. You and I will organize the operation center for this. You probably won't sleep for a few days, so be ready, and come to the operation center in two hours with all your needs." Vaughn silently nodded. Kendall looked at Sydney and spoke.

"I hope you're happy now." When Sydney looked at him, Kendall went on, "Happy birthday." And Sydney smiled. When Kendall walked out, Irina squirmed.

"Today is your birthday." Sydney silently nodded to that, and looking to the trio in the room, she spoke.

"In fact, that's true. *Today, Sydney Bristow is born again.*"

CHAPTER 9 – THE DETAILS

Jack kissed Sydney's cheek and slowly spoke.

"Happy birthday sweetheart." Sydney smiled and hugged him quickly. When they got apart, Jack turned to Irina.

"I'll be gone for a few hours, I need to prepare some things." Irina nodded and Jack left. Irina turned to Sydney and smiled.

"Happy birthday Sydney." Sydney smiled and moved to her.

"For years, only Dad kissed me on my birthdays. Now, I have my Mom back." Irina smiled and hugged her tightly. Kissing her cheek, she whispered into her ear.

"Happy birthday my little princess. When you get older, your prince will take my place. That is the time when you'll be a queen, and leave your old mum alone." Sydney giggled to that, she forgot this ritual, and God, how she had missed it. She looked into her mother's eyes, and whispered.

"Thank you." Irina smiled, and spoke.

"Thank you too." Then they hugged. For the first time with no police's company, and for real. When they stepped apart, Irina wiped her tears and spoke with a smile.

"I'll prepare something, this can not go uncelebrated."

"Mom.."

"No argue. Your dad will be back in afternoon too, and I'm sure that he'll agree with me." Sydney gave in helplessly, and Irina went into the kitchen. That was when Sydney remembered Vaughn's presence, and turned to him.

"Vaughn..." Vaughn took two steps towards her, and whispered.

"I'm so happy that you're alive. From now on, you're not alone. You know that Sydney, I never gave up on loving you, or being a friend of you, or being your ally." Sydney nodded with tears, Vaughn smiled a little.

"Life has been complicated since you've been gone. I lost my way sometimes, I needed someone to show me, and I got lost too."

"I know about Lauren," Sydney murmured a little. Vaughn was startled.

"You do?" Sydney nodded and looked at him.

"I do. And I won't ask you a question about her, I promise. I hate her, I thought about several ways to kill her, I won't deny it. But I won't do any harm to her. Because you love her-"

"I don't love her. Sydney you *have to* believe me, I don't love her."

Nearly crying, Sydney asked, "Then why?" Vaughn stood still for a moment, then answered.

"I don't know. Syd, I was going crazy, I needed someone else's presence. Losing you had nearly tore me apart, and Lauren was there. She became a friend, then a company, and we are-" Sydney was looking at him with hope, and Vaughn couldn't dare to break her.

"Together now." *And engaged.* Sydney nodded.

"I know. But I only ask you a single questio-"

"Yes, I love you still." Sydney sighed in relief, and while moving in to kiss him, she whispered, "I won't kiss you again.. I can't be the other woman Vaughn."

Vaughn kissed her with a lingering kiss, and whispered to her lips.

"You'll never be the other woman. She is the other woman."

Sydney smiled to that, and murmured to his lips, "But you can't break up with her Vaughn. At least till I come back. That would be suspicious."

Vaughn looked at Sydney, and in her eyes, he read it. She was honest. She was breaking her heart, but was talking the truth. He couldn't break up with Lauren. Vaughn nodded.

"Ok. But I love *you*." Sydney smiled and kissed him finally.

"I love you too."

(Well.. It seems like too good to be true, isn't it? Well, I call it first shock. :D When they got into the real life from now on, they'll see that their relationship has changed, and is complicated.

Also, Vaughn still didn't tell Sydney that he's engaged. Well, I'd be mad, if I learn that after that conversation -points up above- wouldn't you either? :D So, stay tuned ;))

"Mom?" Irina looked at Sydney above the counter and smiled.

"Did Michael leave?" Sydney nodded and stood near the door, watching Irina.

"What are you doing?" Sydney asked. Irina smiled and answered.

"Well, I haven't made food like in months, but I'm trying." Sydney smiled too, and moved closer.

"What is it?" Irina answered

"Puree. Your favourite. I mean was-"

"No, still. It is my favourite." Irina looked at her and smiled.

"Good then. Also we'll have chicken."

Sydney smiled brightly and asked, "Can I make the salad?" Irina watched her for a second. She was still the same child she was years ago. *Always trying to help mom*, Irina thought. Then she nodded.

"Yes you can. But don't cut yourself." Going to the refrigerator, Sydney laughed a little.

"I can use knives very well, thank you."

When Jack Bristow entered the house, with the keys Irina had slipped in his pocket in the morning, he heard two women's cheerful talking. *Bristow girls*, Kendall had said. He went to his room silently, and then went back to kitchen and made his appearance. Sydney noticed him first.

"Dad! You're back!" Irina turned to the door too, and with a smile on her face, looked at him. Jack was struck by that, but gave nothing, he asked.

"What's for dinner?"

"Mom had made chicken and puree, I did the salad. Go change, it is nearly ready," Sydney answered playfully. Jack looked at Irina, they both knew that Jack remembered this menu. Jack straightened and spoke.

"I brought in some clothes, I'll arrange them and take a shower." Irina nodded and spoke.

"That'll fit right in, go ahead." Jack nodded and disappeared, and in the silence, Sydney murmured.

"He'll get used to this."

Irina turned to Sydney and asked, "What?"

"Dad. This is difficult for him, you could guess it. We're in the same house, bonding again-"

"I don't think that your fa-"

"No, he's bonding with you too. He worked with you for a year, he didn't even yell at you here. That's progress. And now, we look so much like we used to be. You make food, I help you, he finds us like this, the house is warm... these are new to him Mom. He's been lonely for 20 years."

Irina listened her silently, then nodded. Sydney smiled and turned to the table, and setting up the plates, Irina murmured. "I'll be out for a while. I'll get wine, ok?"

"I can get it if you-"

"No, that's ok, you go and get ready, you are the birthday girl." Sydney smiled and nodded, and Irina let herself out of the house. Sydney then set up the table, and when satisfied, she went to her room to change.

CHAPTER 10 – DEAL

While checking the birthday present's package, Jack heard a soft knock at the door and asked, "Who is it?"

Irina slowly opened the door and looked at him. Jack nodded for her to come in, and while closing the door behind her, Irina pointed to the presents on the bed and smiled.

"I knew that you'd get some presents."

"It's her birthday," Jack murmured, hiding the presents inside the wardrobe. Irina nodded to that. "What do you want?" Jack growled.

Irina smiled as innocently as she could, and showed him the package she was holding.

"I told her that I went out for wine... But I need some wrapping paper, and it's in this room..." Jack nodded.

"Take your time."

But when he was heading to the door, Irina spoke, "Jack."

He looked at her with interest, but Irina said nothing and got the paper from the cabinet before turning to him.

"What will we do about Sark?"

"Put your finger here."

Jack pressed his finger on the ribbon, and while Irina was bow knotting it, he spoke. "If we don't tell Sark that she's Sydney, he can give her some information."

Keeping her attention on the package before them, Irina spoke.

"True. But how can you make him believe it? If it would only be the three of us, it would be easy. Sark would believe me. But there's you now. No, no, there." Jack pressed again on the place she'd asked.

"I can tell him that you think that I've become the bad guy, for Sydney, and get Sark out of his cell," he answered. Irina looked at him and spoke.

"But you can do this if you're still the good guy." Then Irina turned back to the package. Watching her, Jack answered.

"I know. But Julia is Sydney, and Sark will know her. You tell him that my efforts in trying to make her Sydney again are meaningless, Julia will never be Sydney again, and that you, as Sydney's mother, are only using me, pretending to care."

With that, Irina looked at him, and their eyes met.

"You don't believe that, do you?"

"What I believe is unimportant, you have to make Sark believe it." Jack answered her.

"Don't run away from the question Jack."

"Don't ask a question that you know I won't answer." They exchanged glares. Irina knotted the bow for the last time and turned to Jack, who was sitting right next to her.

"Why? You still think that I could run away? I could leave Sydney to the wolves? And for the first time that she and I have bonded. Do you think that I could leave her?"

"You left us in a situation just like this."

Irina looked at him with her mouth open. After a second, she spoke without restraint.

"Are you *that* stupid? I know you are a smart man Jack. You should know that I left for a reason! A reason about you, Sydney, us!" Jack was already regretting what he had said, but he also knew that he couldn't stop Irina now. So, he let her talk, and Irina continued.

"They'd have killed all three of us, you know that! I filled in that KGB tape in which I was talking about my mission, because I had to prove myself! Do you know how my heart ached when I was doing that? I *knew* you'd be watching it Jack! I knew I'd kill you again with that! Don't try to tell me that you weren't sorry, I know you were. I know how you mourned me, how you distanced yourself from Sydney... I was around all the time, you just didn't see me." Irina lowered her voice, and looked Jack.

"I did die that day. Only I'm not buried."

And with that, she got up, and left the room.

Irina was angry. How could Jack think that way about her? After 30 years? Hadn't he learned something about her?

She angrily changed her clothes, and while brushing her hair, she heard a knock. Hoping to see Sydney's face, she answered, "Come in darling."

But the 'darling' was Jack, and they stood still for a second.

"What?" Irina snapped.

Closing the door behind him, Jack held out the present.

"You...um... forgot this." Jack said hesistantly.

At that moment, Irina could've hurled the brush at his head, and she knew she'd hit the right place. But she stopped herself, took the package roughly, and continued to brush her hair.

"Thank you."

Jack took a deep breath, and used his chance.

"I'm sorry." Irina didn't look at him, but stopped brushing, so Jack quickly continued.

"I didn't mean that. It was just an answer that... I didn't think before speaking." With that, Irina looked at him, and Jack kept going.

"I don't believe that you would harm Sydney, nor leave her in this game. You and I both know the tricks, and the dangers of this, and I want to believe that you won't leave her."

When Irina tried to speak, Jack cut her off and went on. "This year, after searching for her, and the previous year, what you did when you were in custody... it meant something to me." Jack looked at her.

"Really. And it's up to you, if you do something wrong, I can easily forget these two years. You should know this too." Irina nodded

"I know." With that, Jack went on.

"Besides that, today is Sydney's birthday. She needs both of us more than she ever has before. My offer is-"

"Offer?" Irina raised a brow playfully. Jack acted like he didn't see that, and continued.

"To forget everything, and give her the family she wants." With that, Irina stopped breathing.

"Are you serious?" she asked.

Jack nodded; he was serious. He was afraid she was going to say yes, but a part of him wanted her to. And she nodded.

"Deal. But no turning back, no plays, no insults."

Jack nodded and answered, "Deal."

After a full minute of looking at her, he turned to leave, and while opening the door, he spoke.

"If you really want to know, I died that day too."

And he left the room, and a shocked Irina.

CHAPTER 11 – PERFECT NIGHT

"Sydney! Dinner's ready!"

"I'm coming!"

Jack and Irina were careful not to look each other, but when Sydney came into the room, they both held their breath. Sydney was wearing a white, soft cashmere pullover, a pair of pale blue jeans, her hair was brown again, and falling to her shoulders, and she was smiling to them.

Irina spoke first.

"You are Sydney."

Sydney nodded happily, and Jack spoke, "Sweetheart, I really missed you." And they hugged; Sydney was smiling like a child.

"I decided to dye my hair just for today! This is my night, isn't it mom?"

Irina smiled and nodded, and then Sydney hugged her too.

"I'm glad you're here. It's a dream comes true."

Irina looked at Jack, and turned to Sydney.

"No sweetie, my dream came true."

Sydney smiled to that, and Irina spoke.

"Ok, to the table. Now."

Jack murmured something to Sydney like "did you miss her in that way too?" and Irina was happy that when she saw that Sydney nodded.

"And then dad yelled me not to--"

"Let me guess. You did, didn't you?" asked Irina.

Sydney nodded with a giggle, and Jack rolled his eyes to that, Sydney went on, "When I got back, he was crazy. C-r-a-z-y. I literally ran away from him!"

Irina smiled to them and sadly spoke, "I wish I could be there."

While taking a fork, Sydney nodded.

"I wish that too sometimes... Especially after the operation we went all together... We work great as a team..."

Sydney looked at the two of them and smiled.

"You guys would be perfect partners, you know?"

Irina smiled and looked at Jack, and playfully spoke, "Yes honey I know, don't you agree Jack?"

Jack growled something to that, and Irina pressed further.

"Do not run away from the question Jack."

Jack looked at her and blatantly answered, "Yes, yes I do. Are you happy?"

Irina just smiled at him.

While sipping from her after dinner coffee in the living room, Sydney asked, "Where's dad?"

To answer her, Jack appeared with two presents, and Sydney started shouting like a little girl.

"Presents?! For me?!"

Jack nodded and held out one to her, and Sydney jumped up from the couch, snatched the present out of Jack's hand, and nearly tore apart the package trying to get the wrapping paper off.

"Dad... this is beautiful..."

She was looking at the necklace she was holding, and after a moment, she put it on..

Jack smiled and kissed her, then held out the second one.

"This is from both of us."

To that, Irina stood up too, looked at him surprised, but went along and smiled, Sydney opened the present with curiosity, and fell silent.

"Oh my God... "

Irina was dying to know what it is, and Sydney jumped up and hugged her.

"Mom, this was your idea wasn't it? Thank you!"

Irina was holding a crying Sydney, and looked at Jack horrified, *what did you buy?!* As if reading her mind, Sydney showed it to her.

"Thank you Mom. It means a lot to me."

Irina looked below, and saw it. *Alice In Wonderland, The First Edition.*

When Sydney went to bathroom to clean her face, Irina turned angrily to Jack.

"Why did you do that? It is at least \$60,000!"

Jack shook his head.

"It was more." Irina was both touched and angry.

"You didn't have to spend your wealth. Or tell her that it was from the both of us."

Jack smirked a little.

"She's not unhappy."

Irina looked at him and frowned.

"I know. Jack, this means so much to her. It's something from her childhood." Irina straightened up and held his hand, then whispered, "You gave her childhood back to her. I appreciate it."

Irina smiled a little, and spoke softly.

"Thank you."

Feeling her warm hand for a moment, Jack stood still, and looked at her.
"You're welcome."

Exiting from the bathroom, Sydney couldn't believe her eyes. *Oh God*. Her mom and dad were holding hands, and speaking in hushed tones. *Oh Goodd*. This can't be good, can it? At that moment, they separated, and while her dad was sitting on the couch, her mom was coming to her way, and Sydney acted like she'd just came out of the bathroom.

"Oh, hi mom."

Irina smiled, and spoke. "I got a present for you too."

Sydney smiled with surprise.

"You do? There's really no need to after the boo-"

"Sydney." Irina's tone of voice silenced Sydney's protesting, and she followed her mother to her room. When they got into Irina's room, Irina gave her a small package.

"Here it is."

Sydney smiled at the package.

"Why does it have so much ribbon on it?"

Irina smiled, but didn't answer right away. After taking a moment to collect her thoughts, she spoke.

"These are special to me, you know that. After the fire in your house, my men found them. I was holding them in a bank in a safety box, but I think it's time for you to have them back."

Sydney opened the package, and smiled.

"Mom..."

Irina smiled, and spoke.

"They're yours."

Sydney hugged Irina and silently thanked again, and looked at her hand. The earrings.

When Irina and Sydney got into the living room again Jack was nowhere to be found...

"Jack?"

"Dad?"

Jack yelled from the kitchen, "Stay there Sydney! Irina, come here!"

Irina walked into the kitchen and asked.

"Jack, what are you up- oh..." Irina smiled at the sight. Jack was lighting the candles on the cake. As she grabbed some plates and silverware, Irina spoke.

"Bossy much?"

Jack growled something unintelligible, and Irina smiled, then let him lead the way, and spoke.

"You're really enjoy this evening, aren't you?"

Jack turned to her with the cake he's holding, and asked, "Honestly?"

Irina nodded, Jack answered.

"Yes, I'm enjoying it. As I've said, this is the perfect night. I forgot everything."

Irina watched him for a few seconds, and nodded.

"The candles... we have to go..."

Jack nodded and they went to the living room, to an awaiting Sydney.

Sydney yawned and murmured, "This was wonderful, thank you."

Gathering up the empty plates and silverware, Irina answered.

"It was a pleasure darling. Going to bed?"

Sydney stood up and nodded, then kissed her dad, and murmured, "Thanks for everything dad."

Then she turned to her mother and spoke.

"Mom... This night was nearly perfect. There's only one thing missing."

Irina didn't understand, and looked at her confused. Sydney ended her confusion by asking, "Would you read to me?"

When Irina came out of the room, Jack was waiting for her in Irina's room.

"Is she asleep?"

Irina nodded and closed the door behind her.

"She fell asleep during the first chapter."

Jack nodded and Irina spoke again.

"Jack, thank you." Jack waved his hand and stood up.

"Goodnight then."

Irina didn't know why, but she couldn't let him go.

"Jack." She pleaded.

Jack turned to her, not knowing what to say, Irina said, "Stay."

CHAPTER 12 – TWENTY QUESTIONS

"Stay?"

Irina nodded.

"Stay."

Jack was speechless. *What did she mean stay? Stay?!*

So, he asked, "What's that supposed to mean?"

Irina shook her head.

"I don't know."

"You don't know?"

Irina nodded.

"I don't know. Look Jack..." Irina moved closer to him and lowered her voice. "You've been saying all night that this has been the perfect night."

Jack gulped. Perfect night? *Oh God.* As if reading his thoughts, Irina continued.

"Don't get me wrong, all I'm saying is..." Irina looked at him and trying to decide what to say, she shrugged her shoulders. "I just don't want it to end, that's all."

Jack stared at the beauty in front of him. She was breathtakingly beautiful, that was a given. Her chocolate eyes were shining like diamonds, the wine from dinner was making her talk without thinking. And damn, the perfume she wore was driving him wild. After what seemed like an eternity, Jack nodded.

"Okay."

Jack asked uncomfortably, "So... now what?"

Irina shook her head, she still couldn't believe that he accepted. Tonight was truly like a dream. She slowly spoke.

"Well, we can sit... and... um... talk..."

Jack nodded, and Irina moved the pillows so that she could lean against the headboard, and Jack was sitting at the foot of the bed, facing her.

On second thought, Jack was beginning to regret that he decided to stay. *The same bed?* That was extremely hazardous...

Irina was nervous too. This game was becoming dangerous. But as she said before, there was no turning back.

After a few moments, they were sitting face to face on the bed.

It was easy to give Irina the lead, at least for tonight, so Jack gave let her take control of the conversation.

"What do you want to talk about?"

Irina looked at him, and blurted out the first thing came to her mind:

"How did you survive?"

"You expect me to talk to you about this?" Jack asked outraged.

Irina raised her brow and asked honestly, "Why not?"

Jack couldn't answer that. How could he? Giving his secrets about his pain when he lost her meant revealing weakness.

Jack shrugged his shoulders and told the truth.

"I don't know," he said quietly.

"You don't know?" she asked not believing.

Jack shook his head.

"I don't know. It was hard, as you can imagine. Mainly, I tried to protect Sydney by shutting myself down, sending her away from the dangerous zone, but looking at her was hard. You know how you two look similar."

Irina nodded her head in agreement. She knew...

"One day, Sydney called me on the phone from home when I was on field, which she obviously thought that I was away for a business trip, to say that she was accepted at UCLA and was going to live in the dorms. That was the time it hit me. 20 years had passed already. And looking into my heart..."

Irina looked at him, wondering what he would say. But Jack had already forgotten Irina's presence. He was lost in thought... He slowly stopped reminiscing about the past and looked her straight in the eye before speaking, at her, then spoke

"I found that it was empty. I finally realized that Laura was dead."

Irina didn't know what to say, her heart was pounding in her ears, she asked the inevitable.

"Is there a place that Irina owns in your heart?"

Jack looked at her. In the dim light, on a soft bed, looking as stunning as only she can be... Fighting back his emotions, Jack put on his game face and roughly replied, "You asked your question, now it's my turn."

Irina nodded, and asked, "What do you want to know?"

Jack shot back, "How did *you* survive?"

"I was empty. As you know I was held in custody by the KGB. All these years, only one thought kept me from giving up: you and Sydney were still alive."

Jack looked at her. She wasn't seeing him, he could understand this...she was lost in those dark memories. He could see the pain that Irina had tried so hard to bury begin to resurface. She went on, and he listened.

"When I finally escaped from there, the first thing I did was look for you. It was an extremely dangerous thing to do, but I had to do it. You were all right, Sydney seemed happy in school, so I left there. You were moving on, and I was really happy."

Irina looked him in the eyes and spoke softly, "I did leave you. I could handle the pain, I knew what was coming. But what I couldn't handle was to see you or Sydney in pain. And I was happy to see that you moved on. As you said, you were empty."

Jack nodded, Irina continued.

"Eventually, I moved on too.."

"With Khasinau."

Irina looked at him. And painfully, nodded.

"Yes. With Khasinau. But it was nothing like..."

This time, Jack waited patiently her to continue. He was dying to hear about their relationship. Irina looked at him, and carefully considering her word choice, she spoke

"The life I had when I was Laura."

Jack looked at her with a clear shock to hear Laura's name, but Irina went on.

"It may seem like it was all a lie to you... that I lied and cheated, that I was wrong. However, there were a thousand bad things about the life we had." Irina looked at him and went on with a more confident voice.

"But being married to you, and having my own family as the truest thing I ever had. You were faithful to me Jack, like no one had ever been to me. Sydney was true to me. My little family was honest with me. And I tried all the things to keep it that way. I moved on with Khasinau? Yes, I did. But it was like a friend that you sleep with."

Irina looked at him, and spoke.

"But you were my husband. It was like a lover you sleep with."

CHAPTER 13 – END GAME

Jack was having a *big* headache. He gave away all his secrets, and she gave away some of hers too. Like a lover? Yes, it was like that. It was clearly, definitely like that.

He looked at her, and spoke, "Your turn."

Irina smiled a little, and asked, "Did you move on with someone else?"

Oh God. He knew that would be coming. He took a deep breath, and spoke.

"I did not have an affair after Laura died. But yes, I slept with some woman in years."

Irina smilingly asked, "Some woman at the same time?"

Jack smiled at that too, and shook his head.

"You'd like that wouldn't you?"

Irina chuckled and Jack could swear that she was blushing. So he went on. "Doesn't it bother you?"

Irina looked at him and said, "It is my turn!"

Jack smiled and shrugged his shoulders. "You'll ask two. Now answer."

Irina nodded and spoke. "No. I'm not bothered by that."

Though he doesn't like it, his heart was breaking. But Irina continued, "You are a man, I can understand that you have some needs about women. You said you didn't have an affair, just sex. Prostitutes? Well, that's predictable. To be honest?"

Irina looked at him thoughtfully, and went on. "If you go and sleep with one now I'll kill both of you. But I can't. You're not mine."

Jack pushed his luck, God, she was possessing him. He asked, "I thought we are still married."

Irina stared at him, and she was sure that this is a dream. She happily spoke, "Yes, we are. Then this means I can kill you both."

Then, the unexpected happened: Jack laughed.

Irina looked at him shocked. She was seeing him like that for the first time since she came back. And she was dangerously close to beginning to like it.

"Ok, my turn."

Jack sipped his wine which Irina went and grabbed from the kitchen a few minutes ago, and looked at her.

"Don't you ever sleep?"

Irina shook her head, re-filled her glass, and answered. "I don't, if I don't want to."

They cheered the glasses making a small clink as they met, and Irina asked. "Ok... When I was in custody, and we went to Nepal... You knew I was going to betray, didn't you?"

Jack found the wine in his glass fascinating for a moment, and nodded. "Yes, I think I knew. I knew that you'd escape, so I injected that transmitt-

"And that's another case to discuss. How could you do that Jack? That moment was special, how could you ruin it like that?"

"It was special?"

"Wasn't it?" Irina suddenly stood still, and asked coldly. "Tell me that you didn't sleep with me just to inject that transmitter."

Jack shook his head and answered quickly. "I didn't sleep with you just to inject that transmitter."

Irina hit him on the arm and spoke. "Are you listening to what I'm saying?"

Jack nodded, Irina ordered. "All right. Then, Jack, tell me the truth. Why did you sleep with me that night in Nepal, while we were on that mission?"

Jack was nervous. How could he answer to that? The game had ended with that question, he knew that. He had been telling the truth for all night, and he chose to do that again.

He looked her in the eyes, and spoke. "Because you were amazing."

Irina was struck with that. "What?!" she exclaimed.

Jack answered. "You wanted the answer. I gave it to you. Still you're not satisfied? Typical Derevko."

Irina shook her head and looked worriedly at him. "Jack, are you all right?"

Jack stood up and took the empty glasses. "Ok, good night."

But Irina was faster, she grabbed his waist and pulled him back to the bed, and when they came face to face, she asked breathlessly. "What did you mean that I was amazing?"

"You want compliments now?"

"Jack!"

Jack sighed and looked at her.

"Irina, it's late, we have to get up early-"

"And we should get to bed?" she asked with a playful seduction.

Jack stood up silently with that. The chat had been going the same as it had in Nepal. He sighed and spoke. "You were charming, played me all night, you know that. I know how you seduce me, I know your tricks, but still, you kept coming. You knew we would sleep together."

He looked her in the eye, and spoke. "You know how to send shivers down my spine just by looking at me. I know you Irina, you know that I couldn't hold anymore that night. Plus, you wanted me as much as I wanted you."

Irina stood up and remained silent. She couldn't answer if she even wanted to. *Did Jack say these?*

As if reading her mind, Jack spoke, and his breath hit her face as he leaned in closer. "Are you happy now? You know all of my hidden agenda about the lost years, about Nepal, about last two years.."

He asked again. "Are you happy?"

And she kissed him.

Jack thought he was dreaming. They were kissing.

After a moment he woke up from that dream, and found Irina still kissing him, he grabbed her and with one move, he dropped the glasses on floor, and when they fell onto the bed, Irina moaned.

"Jack.."

Jack was looking into her eyes from above his hands cradling her face, and he spoke. "I'm.."

Irina kissed him again, hard. When they separated, Irina whispered. "I'm not a prostitute."

That did it. Smiling, Jack kissed her, and whispered to her lips. "This is crazy."

"You are crazy."

Jack looked to her beautiful face and spoke. "I'm crazy now? You always blame me."

Kissing his temple, Irina answered. "If you don't shut up, and kiss me, yes Jack, I'll blame you—big time."

And the unexpected thing happened, again: Jack laughed. And kissed her.

CHAPTER 14 – COLD

When Jack opened his eyes in the next morning, he saw her shoulder back to him and breathed in strawberry-scented brown hair.

He smiled lazily and while caressing her bare shoulder, watched Irina's face for signs of awakening. He knew the vicious cycle that would be coming. They'll fight, and drift apart,

and move on. *Again*. Things must happen this way. The other way was bad. He couldn't get caught up in her again.

At that moment, Irina's chocolate eyes fluttered opened, and she murmured, "Morning."

"Morning."

Irina stirred and looked at him. "So, the night has ended?"

Jack became serious. "Irina.."

Irina sat up and looked at him

"Jack. Let me talk this time. As you've said, last night was the perfect night—and believe me, it was—but we both know it can't last very long. And also it is dangerous. I say, as it will be hard, but I persist that, we forget about yesterday."

She kissed him lightly on the lips, and spoke. "Maybe we can sleep together again in two years. That can be arranged."

Jack rolled his eyes, and pulled her close before whispering in her ear. "Stop acting."

Irina looked at him, and Jack continued. "If I talk more, I know you will cry any moment. So, stop acting."

Irina stood up and looked at him. "So what? What do you want me to do? This not a fairytale Jack. We're different people, I'm not Laura you know that!" she spat angrily.

"Really?" Jack said disbelieving.

"Stop that! You know I'm angry! What happened to you? Why were you so nice?"

Jack looked at her and answered honestly. "Because it is the best way to break you." That did it. Irina's face was red with anger, and clutching the sheet to her chest, she spoke angrily. "Break me? Was that your goal? Last time a transmitter, now to make me cry? Well Jack, news for you: I won't cry. I.Won't."

They exchanged death glares for a few seconds, and Irina spoke with a disgusted voice. "The magic has ended. Now be yourself."

Jack stood up, collected his belongings, and left the room without a sound.

After a few moments, yet another unexpected thing happened: Irina Derevko silently cried.

As Sydney was taking the toast out of the toaster, Jack entered the kitchen.

"Morning Dad! Breakfast's ready, is Mom awake?"

Jack murmured a little "I don't know", that made Sydney go to Irina's room. She softly knocked on the door and called out, "Mom?"

After a few seconds, Irina spoke, "Yes honey?"

"Are you awake?"

When Sydney heard a low yes, she opened the door, and peered inside. Irina was lying on her back on the bed, her hair was a mess, her hands on her head.

"Mom, are you all right?"

Irina looked at her as if seeing her for the first time as she got up.

"Yeah, honey I'm okay. Is your dad up?"

Sydney nodded and spoke. "You sure you're ok?"

"Positive. I'll take a shower and be fine." She smiled slightly.

"I smell bacon, you made breakfast?"

Sydney smiled and nodded proudly, Irina smiled too.

"Good. I'll be there in 15 minutes."

Sydney nodded and left the room, Irina sighed and went into the bathroom.

When Irina stepped into kitchen, Jack was sipping his coffee, and working on a lap-top.

Irina spoke, "That's my lap-top."

Jack looked at her, both startled and surprised about her comment. Sydney was watching both of them, aware of this, Jack spoke, "So?"

Irina blinked once, then she coldly demanded. "It has password protection." Then she bent down, and typed something quickly.

After that, she turned back, and smiled at Sydney.

"Darling, you're blonde again."

Sydney nodded. While handing Irina her coffee, Sydney showed them the file. Laid out the game plan, began to go over the agenda for the day.

"Well, today, dad needs to get Sark out. Kendall made the office clear for transfer, only Vaughn, Weiss and Marshall are there."

Irina asked, "Do they know?"

Back from his seat, Jack answered. "No. But we're planning to tell them. Kendall, and sadly I too, believe that Agent Vaughn's judgements can be somewhat emotional. Agent Weiss can help prevent that." Jack looked at Irina and continued. "Also, we need Marshall. We have to keep Sark under our hands."

Irina turned to Sydney and asked, "Marshall is the op-tech guy, isn't he?"

Sydney smilingly nodded, and explained who Marshall and Weiss were. Jack was watching Irina, who clearly ignored him. He sighed, turned to computer, and entered the password again: *'Family.'*

Sydney turned to her father, who was powering off the lap-top, and spoke. "We'll meet here at 8:00 p.m. Then we'll move to our new location."

Jack nodded and looking both of them, and said, "Good luck."

Irina sighed and opened the door, before replying, "You too."

CHAPTER 15 – THE CELL

CIA Operation Center

"Mr. Bristow!"

Jack turned around to see who was yelling at him. Suprisingly, it was Marshall.

"What, Marshall?"

Marshall was excited. Actually, he was far more than excited. He cheered. "I heard that--"

"Marshall!"

Jack turned to see Vaughn glaring at Marshall. He spoke, "I'm sure Jack knows what you're talking about, and is ecstatic as you are."

Jack nodded to that, and Marshall apologizingly smiled. "Sorry. But hey, give my hugs to you know." He smiled again and hurried to his office, after that, Jack turned to Vaughn.

"Agent Weiss?"

"He's been informed. He's not that bouncy, but he's excited too."

Jack nodded, then asked. "Where's Kendall?"

"In his office, signing papers like crazy."

Fifteen minutes later, when Kendall, Jack and Vaughn arrived back in the Rotunda, it was nearly empty.

Weiss turned to them and spoke. "We're good. Now we'll loop the security cameras."

Kendall nodded and sat down with them. Vaughn was also seated at computer. Right before Jack turned down the corridor to Sark's cell, Weiss called him. "Just for the record I'm glad."

Jack nodded, and proceeded down the corridor.

Before him, the gates were opening. He was in this corridor, a year ago, to see a different prisoner. Now, everything was so much different.

Jack stood before the glass wall, and looked inside. Sark was standing right in front of him, looking him in the eye.

After a minute, Jack spoke. "You're getting out."

"Do not think that I'm not glad to see you Jack, but excuse me?" a British voice questioned.

Jack looked at him effortlessly, and spoke. "I said you are getting out."

Sark placed his hands on the back of his neck and smirked. "How that will be? And more importantly *why* that will be?"

Jack opened the little box, and dropped some files in it. Sark opened the other side, and while taking them, he glanced at Jack. *What was going on?* He read some sentences in the report, and looked at Jack.

"You need my body."

Jack looked at him and spoke. "I wouldn't say it that way, but yes. They need you in physical form too."

Sark looked at him and smirked, he asked. "They? Or you as in CIA?"

Jack looked at Sark, who was still a boy, but a very intelligent boy. Then he spoke. "Both CIA, and Covenant need you for different reasons. But this doesn't give you any privileges, instead, this puts you in more danger. Whoever gets you first, they'll kill you."

Sark looked at him, and answered. "Thanks to you Jack, Covenant thinks I'm out, and working for them and CIA knows I'm cooperating with you. If I don't show up, then, Covenant will try to kill me. If I don't cooperate and go with you, then you try to kill me."

Sark looked at him again, and continued. "This woman, Julia Thorne.. If she is that superb, then she'll understand something is wrong."

Jack shook his head, and spoke. "No she won't."

Sark looked at him with interest, and Jack spoke. "Julia Thorne is Sydney."

"Excuse me?"

Jack could see that Sark didn't know that. So, he explained. "You know the fire in Sydney's apartment, and the whole world thought she was dead. What we didn't know was, the Covenant took Sydney, and brain-washed her to be somebody else: Julia Thorne—a contract killer and an agent of the Covenant."

Sark laughed. A hearty laugh from his chest, and looked at Jack. "God. Believe me Agent Bristow, this is a thing even I wouldn't think and dare to do."

Jack nodded and went on. "There's more."

Sark looked at him, and Jack spoke. "Irina Derevko is her boss."

Sark was listening carefully.

"Irina Derevko found her before I did. I don't know how, but she made herself Julia's boss. They work together. I think that was a precaution-"

"To what?"

"To me. Julia doesn't know or remember me. But Derevko does."

Sark asked him. "And why do you think that they will embrace us?"

Jack looked at him, and answered. "I think that there may be a way to bring Sydney back. Because of this, I'm working with Irina for like 2-3 months. She thinks that I've gone to their side, for Sydney."

"But you didn't?"

"No, I didn't."

Sark nodded, and murmured. "I understand. Now, you want me to act like I was out, I had done all these things for the last year. Plus, you want me to reunite with Irina, and in this case with Julia too. A Julia, who doesn't even remember me."

Jack nodded, and a smirk formed on Sark's cocky British face.

"Well, when do I leave?"

CHAPTER 16 – THE MEETING

"We will inject this transmitter loaded with poison to your blood. With that, we'll be able to monitor your location and vitals via satellite. If you try to remove the transmitter by changing your blood, or taking chemicals to disinfect it, then it'll be armed. There are three different methods which will trigger the alarm system. One, your body system. As I said, if you do try to change this, the capsule will secrete a poison lethal to your organs. Second, there are two detonators. One of them will be with me at all times, the other will be left at headquarters. If one is disabled, the other will work automatically. If both of them become disabled, the poison will work."

Jack looked at Sark, and continued.

"And, for your information, I, and other agents who are authorized for this operation have clearance to shoot you if necessary."

Sark nodded, and Jack began to inject Sark with the transmitter. Jack nodded to agents who held Sark to indicate that he was finished. After freeing himself, Sark spoke.

"Am I free now?"

Jack nodded and spoke.

"As free as you can be. We have rules."

Sark murmured a 'anything better than that hole.'

Looking himself in a mirror, he spoke. "I need a suit. Preferably an Armani."

Jack rolled his eyes, and nodded to agents. With this, a man, who carrying a black suit entered the room.

Exiting from the room, Jack snapped, "Make it quick."

Sark confidently strode into to the center office with agents beside him dressed in the black suit and carrying his tie. Kendall turned to him, but Sark spoke first.

"Good evening."

Then Sark turned to Jack, and asked.

"One of your agents had told me that I'll be informed about what I did in this year. Who will that be?"

Jack pointed to a table where Vaughn was seated.

"Agent Vaughn will inform you."

While walking to the table, Sark rolled his eyes and sarcastically remarked, "What a pleasure."

Sark held his tie, and murmured,

"*Even you* know what happened. That's a shame of me."

Vaughn rolled his eyes, and began speaking.

"First, you were in Italy for 3 weeks to handle money issues."

Sark nodded, and asked. "During my captivity, I heard a rumor that you got engaged."

Vaughn did not answer that, instead he ignored Sark's comment and continued listing Sark's "activities" for the past year. "Then you moved to England. You, again, solved the black money issues of The Covenant before returning to USA."

"It's been just over 10 months and already you're moving on. I'm sure Sydney will be happy to hear that you're got engaged?"

Vaughn shot a glare at him. Sighing, he continued to read. "After returning to the USA, you were MIA for a month."

"You're scared that Sydney will return and find out about your betrayal, aren't you?"

Vaughn stopped reading, and stared icily at him. "You won't get an answer from me."

"Well, that's a '*Yes, I'm scared.*' if I ever heard one." Vaughn opened his mouth to speak, but Sark cut him off.

"Personally, I don't care. Even more, I'm happy for Agent Bristow. I always said that you were too soft for her."

Vaughn was beginning to attack, but calmly, Sark didn't let him, and went on

"But what I really am curious about is, how could you do this in front of her dad.. How come he didn't kill you? When I heard the rumors, I was sure that Sydney's bones were aching and you'd be dead in a week..."

Sark tsk-tsked and tried to continue, but Vaughn blurted out,

"How you dare you talk about Sydney in this manner!"

"How dare I? I'm even going to dare to face her. Besides that, what did I do? I didn't kill and kidnap her. You can not be angry with me about what happened to Agent Bristow."

Sark smirked before giving the knife a final twist.

"And I did not kiss her, then ditched her for good."

With that, two young men glared at each other until Weiss called out.

"Are you ready? Jack's leaving in 5 minutes."

When they left the building, Jack spoke.

"I can not hold a gun to your head all the time. Also, you know about your transmitter, so don't do anything stupid thing."

While getting into car, Sark responded, "Would you be sorry if I died Jack?"

Jack did not answer, and they drove out of the parking garage.

While retrieving the stuff from the couch, Sydney asked.

"Are you sure I can do this? You taught Sark, he knows me."

Irina, who was closing the lap-top, answered.

"I'm sure that you can do it. You always play aliases Sydney. Just forget that he's Sark. Plus, your father gave him no reason to think anything else."

Sydney sighed, straightened her shoulders, and spoke with a cold voice as she became Julia once more.

"I'm sure that I can get along with your employee."

Irina laughed at that, and returned to her work. Sydney smiled too, and styled her hair for the last time.

When Jack opened the door, he knew where they were seated already. Irina, on the couch, Sydn-Julia at the kitchen counter on a stool.

When Irina saw them, she rose with a smile to greet her guests.

"Julian."

Sark smiled too, and spoke.

"Long time, no see."

Irina's smile widened as she asked.

"I heard of your accomplishments. Congratulations."

Sark nodded with grace, and at that time, they heard some noises from the kitchen, and Irina called over.

"Julia, Mr. Sark's here."

Sark was waiting with a cocky grin, Irina shot a concerned glance at Jack, as Julia made herself visible to them.

When he saw her, he hold his breath. *God, blonde?! Julia walked with confidence, and held out her hand.*

"Julia Thorne."

After a second, Sark took her hand in his.

"Julian Sark. Pleasure."

With that, Julia turned to Irina, and spoke.

"I have to change. We'll meet in thirty minutes."

Irina nodded, and Julia disappeared down the corridor. Then, Sark turned to Irina, and spoke.

"Interesting."

Irina motioned him to the couch, and while they were sitting down, Jack went to his room as well. Irina turned to Sark, and spoke.

"I know. She amazes me everyday."

Sark creased a brow.

"She really doesn't remember? Anything at all?"

Irina shook her head.

"No, nothing. Some preferences might still be the same, such as colors, or food... But big things? No, she is totally Julia."

Sark questioned.

"And this doesn't concern you? I thought that you wouldn't harm her."

Irina nodded.

"I'm still that way. But also I know that I can't turn her back into Sydney. Changing her into somebody else was too dangerous. That operation was a one-way street. Now, she is on my side, and I have to protect her still. Even she perfectly protects herself."

Irina looked at him, and asked.

"Don't tell me that you're not glad about this change Julian."

While leaning back against the cushions, Sark shook his head.

"I never said that. This is the first time I've seen her. Of course, I heard things, but never saw her."

Irina nodded understandingly, and Sark asked.

"What about Jack?"

"What about Jack?"

"I'm sure he thinks there's a way to turn her back into Sydney. Do you really think that he's on your side?"

Irina nodded her head, and answered.

"Of course not. I don't totally trust him. I'm sure that he thinks there's a way. But let me assure you that there isn't. He tries for nothing. However, I exploit him for this too."

They both smiled conspiratorially, and Irina went on.

"He willingly gives me the CIA's intel just to see Julia more. Who am I to argue?"

Irina laughed a little, and stood up.

"Now, get ready. We'll leave in two hours."

CHAPTER 17 – THE PLAN

When Sark had found his usual room, he went to take a shower. *Well, this was interesting--a blank Sydney, who needs someone to give shape to her.* Sark grinned to himself. *He can easily do that.*

Sark re-entered the bedroom wearing boxers only to find Syd-damn, *not Sydney, Julia!*, lying seductively on his bed.

"When I first came here, Irina told me that this room was yours."

Sark nodded, still couldn't find his voice to talk. And Julia did it for him.

"I just want to talk with my new partner."

"New partner?"

Sitting up, Julia nodded.

"Yeah. We're going to Italy and you're my partner. I don't like to work with guys I don't know, but Irina said you were the best."

Sark smirked a little, then turned to his wardrobe. While choosing a suit, he commented. "I'm still the best. Next to you, of course."

He turned to her with a suit he was holding, and spoke. "I've heard a lot about you actually."

Julia raised her brow, and playfully asked. "As in?"

While putting on his shirt, Sark answered. "As in, you're a legend already."

Julia smiled, and got up from the bed. Moving towards him, she spoke.

"Well Julian, or should I call you Sark?"

"Sark."

"Well then, Sark... I hope we can get along, and get through this alive. But I have only one rule."

She stood right in front of him, eyeing him coyly and spoke.

"No flirting. Ok?"

Sark nodded.

"That's fine with me."

Julia smiled, and turned to leave.

"See you in 2 hours."

After she left, Sark growled to himself.

"It seems like her preferences have not bloody changed at all."

After Sydney exited Sark's room, she took a deep breath and held it. *Man, it had been a long time since she had seen a bare chest without an aim of to torture it.*

She walked to her room, passing Irina on the way. She nodded to Irina. The game was going good. He seemed like he believed them.

When she got to her room, she undressed, and slipped into bed. She hated Julia. Even if it's Sark, she hated lying to people.

When Sark got to the lounge room again, he found Irina and Jack sitting on the couch talking. When Irina saw him, she indicated for him to be seated in a chair.

"Come on Julian, you need to hear these too."

Sark nodded, and sat in a chair, and listened to Irina, who was speaking now.

"We're going to Rome, Italy. Our cover is that Jack, Julia and myself are posing as a family, under the name of Giovanni. Julian, you are Julia's, Maria's, fiancé. I'm Setra Giovanni, while Jack is Mario." When no answer came, Irina continued.

"We're going to the wedding of Chenta family. The bride, Rosa, is an old friend of Maria's. They haven't seen each other since high school. We moved to USA, and they only connected with phones and e-mails. The actual Giovanni parents are dead, and the real Maria has never contacted Rosa after high school either."

"Why are we going?" asked Sark.

"In that house, many members of the Covenant will be having a meeting. Also, a member of Chenta family is also Covenant. But, besides that, the Covenant think there's a mole in the system. We'll check that, and prepare a safe place for a meeting." Explained Irina.

"The wedding guests... Are they innocents?"

"Yes, many of them. So, we'll be undercover."

Irina turned to Jack and spoke.

"Also, this is a test for the two of you. Julia and I have been working undercover recently, and we're loyal to Covenant. But Jack, you're new. And you, Julian, hadn't done an undercover job like 4 months. And Covenant has changed. A lot."

When they both nodded, Irina stood and gave them their files.

"Memorise them. I have to pack. Meet here at 10 p.m."

When they were leaving, Irina spoke.

"Jack, can I have a word with you?"

Jack nodded, and turned to her, and Irina called over to Sark.

"And Julian, you can wake up Julia? She can't be late."

"I really, don't like that bossy side of you."

Irina smiled to him, and spoke.

"I have to be the boss. I use you, remember?"

Jack growled something unintelligible to that, and asked.

"What would you like to talk to me about?"

Irina spoke.

"I think Sark bought it. If not, he'd be asking me a thousand more questions to find a clue."

"Well, Julia gave him no reason to."

Irina grinned and spoke.

"That was my idea. In my opinion, if they spend some time alone together, and if Sydney plays well, Sark'll believe her."

Jack shook his head.

"I don't like this. Why do they have to be engaged? Why not siblings?"

Irina waved her hand.

"I didn't choose it, you know that. Plus, if they get caught in some room, they can do something."

Jack wrinkled his face in disgust, and turned to leave.

"If that's all?"

Irina spoke while walking towards her room.

"Well, there's one more thing."

They stopped outside her bedroom and Jack turned to face her and asked.

"What is it?"

Holding door knob, Irina turned to him placing her back against the door.

"I did not forget what you did to me this morning. And I won't forgive you either. We'll act like husband and wife, but I swear to God Jack, if you touch me unnecessarily, I'll kill you."

And with that, she entered her room, and closed the door.

CHAPTER 18 – THE BOOK

Moving into the dark room, Sark silently looked at her. Well, it seemed that he was still the best because she didn't even move an eyelash.

He realised from the clothes on the floor that, she's sleeping in only her underwear. Trying not to startle her, he slowly rocked her shoulder.

"Julia. Time to get up." He said quietly.

And with that, he found a gun under his nose and a scantily clad Julia sitting up in bed.

"Get your hands off of me."

Sark jumped back from the bed placing his hands in the air, and shouted.

"Hey! It's me! Hell, do you do that every time?"

Julia slowly lowered her gun while Sark lowered his hands, and spoke.

"Sorry. I thought you were someone else. Jack won't even enter this room. Only Irina would wake me. And she doesn't have a man's hand obviously."

Sark looked at her sleepy face, and spoke.

"Whatever. You should get ready, it's already 9." He grinned devilishly before continuing.

"Plus, I'm not complaining, but you shouldn't sleep in your underwear. You never know how or what will awaken you."

Sydney had frozen with that a moment. However, Sydney no longer existed but Julia did and Julia was quite the playful in the bedroom. She grinned seductively.

"You like that, huh?"

Sark nodded.

"Well, no man can deny that you look wonderful in that teddy."

Julia stood up gracefully, and looked at him.

"Well, thank you. You should pack too."

Sark handed her a file and spoke.

"This is your alias *darling*."

Julia took the file and spoke.

"What did I say to you about not flirt-fiancees. All right..."

Sark bowed to her a little, and exited the room. After he left, she looked at the file. *Great.*

While getting her suitcase from the hall closet, Sydney was thinking that perhaps this family thing would be good for her. She could call them mom and dad again, without blowing her cover in front of Sark and the world. Plus, she was brown-haired again. That was a big thing to be happy about. At that moment, Irina entered the corridor, and smiled to her knowingly, then spoke with a low voice.

"How are you?"

"Good. Trying hard to be Julia but good. Also I'm brown haired again."

Irina smiled, and asked.

"Did you memorise-"

"Si mamma."

Irina shook her head with a smile, and turned to Jack.

"Are you ready?"

Jack nodded, and smiled to Sydney. His smile disappeared from his face when Sark showed up.

"I'm ready." Stated Jack.

Irina nodded, and spoke.

"Then we're leaving."

In the car on the way to the airport, Jack spoke.

"When we get out of this car, we're Giovanni's. I don't want anything denies that. We can not risk anything."

Irina nodded and spoke.

"Definitely. We'll be watched, and we won't know where or who will be watching us. Until the next moment we open our comms, we're undercover."

Julia and Sark nodded, and all of them got out of the car.

"May I see your passports please?"

"Oh! Of course!"

Irina spoke with a thick Italian accent, and held out her passport to the woman as did the others. While they were checking-in, Julia smiled sweetly.

"Honey, did you remember my book?"

Sark turned to her. He knew that they had to present themselves as normal, and get their passports back quickly.

"What book love?"

"My God! You forgot it, didn't you?! What will I do on the plane? I'll die of boredom Pete!"

Jack turned to them and spoke in a warning tone.

"Children..."

"But dad! Sometimes he can be so forgetful-" whined Julia.

Irina turned to them and smiled sweetly.

"Now Darling, I'm sure that Pete didn't forget it on purpose. You shouldn't make such a big deal about this. Your father even forgets me sometimes."

Irina and the woman smiled knowingly to that, a smile only a woman understands. With Sydney pouting, and Sark apologizing for her, she handed the family's passports back to Irina.

"Have a nice flight."

When they were walking towards the gate, the woman called them.

"Miss!"

Sydney held her breath and turned to woman, but woman smiled knowingly.

"You can get books on the plane."

Sydney smiled happily to that and replied a cheery 'Thank you!', before turning back and they boarded the plane.

"I'll die of boredom, Pete?"

Julia shrugged her shoulders to that, and went on to read her book. But Sark didn't give up and spoke.

"If you make these kind of scenes in Italy, I'll put up more of a fight."

Julia looked at him, and spoke.

"Cannot stand to be the stupid one, huh?"

"If it's that good, you can be the stupid one, love."

"Don't call me lo-"

Sark gave her an icy look, and Julia closed her mouth. She then turned to him.

"I'll read that book, and if I'm lucky, I'll sleep some. When we land, then I can be your *love* again, ok?"

Without waiting for an answer, she went on to read her book.

CHAPTER 19 – THE LINK

Vaughn cleared his throat, and spoke.

"Ok, Irina, if you hear me, correct your hair. Great. Jack, cough. Alright. Syd, turn a page. Perfect. We're waiting for Kendall to come on line."

Then, Kendall spoke into the microphone.

"All right. Remember, Sark doesn't hear you, nor knows we're connecting. So, I'll talk."

He took some papers from Weiss, and spoke.

"Ok Jack, the guy in seat 47B. We've identified him as Covenant security. He's watching you. Irina, look at the blonde stewardess. She's our agent, and when you see her exit the restroom, you'll need to 'use' the restroom."

Irina nodded, and took a coffee from the blonde stewardess, while continuing to listen.

"Meat or chicken?"

Sark shook his head, and took the meat, and he turned to Julia.

"Maria, darling?"

Julia smiled sweetly, and spoke.

"I'll take chicken."

When hostess left, Julia glared at Sark, then turned back to Irina and Jack.

"How's it going?" she asked to Irina and Jack.

Irina smiled

"Thank you."

Sydney smiled to her dad too, and turned back to Sark in front of her.

Sark was reading the book, and Julia spoke.

"Give it to me."

Sark shook his head, and replied.

"You sleep. And this time when I wake you, don't try to kill me."

"I'll sleep after dinner. Now give it to me."

Sark looked at her.

"I want it. Now." demanded Julia.

To that, some couples around them giggled. Sark could swear that Julia was blushing, he went into his role and winked at her.

"I'm not sure this is the place love. But maybe I can give it to you at home."

When the other passenger returned to their sleeps or meals, Julia shot a glare to him, and began to eat her dinner.

When Irina went to the restroom and found the lap top, she scanned the files that Kendall sent them. After finishing her job, she left to room to the hostess again.

While returning to her seat, she saw that Sydney was sleeping. But there's one thing: her head was resting on Sark's shoulder. Sark slightly smiled to her as if "*I didn't do it.*" And Irina sighed.

When she sat, Jack questioned her with his eyes, and Irina waved her hand as if nothing had happened.

"She's sleeping with him!" Vaughn yelled in the base ops, looking at the monitor which is letting the view the plane.

Weiss looked at him clearly shock and asked.

"What?!"

Vaughn showed him the view, and Weiss began to laugh.

"In English, we do not call this as '*sleeping with*'—it's called '*sleeping on*'."

Vaughn had rolled his eyes. Weiss was glad that he had calmed down.

"Relax. They're going to sleep together tonight, and oh, tomorrow too. In the same room, and probably in the same bed to keep their cover. You can not do a thing Vaughn. This is her job."

"Sleeping with Sark?!"

"I already said, this is *not* a sleeping with kinda thing."

Weiss looked at him and shot back.

"Plus, you literally sleep with someone else who you're engaged to. Did Sydney make that deal?"

Vaughn robbed his face, and spoke.

"She doesn't know."

"She doesn't know?! How come she doesn't know?! She still thinks you're together!"

When Vaughn nodded, Weiss looked at him hard.

"Man, you're in trouble."

Sydney's head popped up to that. *Oh my God*. She quickly turned to look at her parents, they wore a look of sympathy on their faces.

Sydney heard Weiss' voice in her ear.

"Oh shit Vaughn, the link is open."

Sydney was having trouble breathing. *My God!* That was the time she heard Sark say "-ll right?"

She looked at him, and Sark understood that there was something wrong. She was going to breakdown . Sydney was looking at him and blinking. She was fighting back tears when she heard Vaughn's voice in her ear.

"Sydney, listen to me. I was going to tell you, I swear. I just didn't want to shock you more. Sydney, please,-"

Sydney looked at Sark. It was obvious that he couldn't hear what was going on, but he was wondered about her. And when he saw the tears that threatened to fall, he made his mind quick, and made up a reason for *maria* to cry freely.

"Maria, you sometimes become the most stupid woman I see. I clearly can not see why I love you like this."

And that did it. She began to cry freely. Her heart was aching. There was Vaughn in her ear, and she was crying to Sark's chest. At least, her enemy was true to her.

Sark held his breath. *God, she was crying into his chest?!* It must be a really important thing. He held her in his arms being completely unaware of his attempt to comfort her. When he heard Irina's voice, he jumped.

"Pete, leave her alone. You broke her heart."

When Sydney heard Irina's voice, she raised her tear-stained face from Sark's muscular chest.

"Mom..." she said tearfully.

And Irina made her stand up.

"Come darling, let's go to the restroom."

They left, leaving an angry Jack and a confused Sark behind.

CHAPTER 20 – THE PLANE

When Sydney got to restroom, and Irina gave her lipstick to stop the other frequencies before closing the door, Sydney angrily began to whisper.

"Listen to me. I'm really, *really* angry. Besides how could you do this to me, how could you not tell me this?! After I think that my life had gone to normal?! How could you let me live through this Vaughn?!"

"Sydney, I didn't think eit-"

"You didn't think?!! You didn't think?!!! Vaughn, you got engaged!!! You should have thought about it when you were buying that ring! When you were proposing her!"

Without letting him make a sound, she went on.

"You were over me. You proposed her, you buried me. What were you thinking when you saw me? Having me as your mistress?!"

"Sydney-"

"Do not go *Sydney* on me Vaughn, I won't buy it."

She straightened and talked.

"I'm going radio silent. When I re-open the com, I don't want to hear your voice. And Vaughn, when I come back, we'll have a talk."

With that, Sydney removed her earpiece and turned it off before dropped it into her pocket.

Vaughn rubbing his hand down his face when Weiss saw him. Vaughn sitting in a desk chair with arms, with his left arm crossed over his chest & his right hand on his face.

"How did it go?"

Vaughn closed his eyes with his hand again, Weiss wrinkled his face.

"That bad huh?"

Sydney exited the restroom to find Irina waiting for her.

"Sydney."

Sydney looked at her mom, and Irina smiled with sadness.

"I'm so sorry sweetie. You shouldn't have found it like this."

"You knew?"

"Yes I knew. And don't be angry with me too. I was getting you used to Lauren, and I obviously couldn't tell you that they got engaged. That was something that Michael should've done."

"Which he didn't." Snapped Sydney.

"Sydney."

Sydney looked at her, and Irina spoke.

"Don't go that hard on him. He lived through his hell too. Maybe his decisions weren't the best, but he can't take them back and neither can you."

Sydney groaned.

"But he got engaged Mom. He forgot me."

Irina sighed and opened her arms to her. When Sydney saw this, she accepted the offer, and cried silently to her chest.

When they got out, Sydney looked at her father. That did it. In that second without a word spoken between them, Jack's expression told her how sorry he was for her and angry with Vaughn. And Sydney silently thanked him with her eyes and a slight smile.

When she sat down to her seat, Sark was watching her.

"Alright?"

Sydney nodded and waited for a second, then spoke.

"Thank you."

Sark looked at her, and Julia spoke.

"What you did. It was truly generous."

Sark didn't answered to that. She was right. He was being generous. Julia continued.

"I won't forget that."

Sark slightly nodded, and asked.

"What was it then?"

While turning to her seat to face him, she replied.

"I had a bad dream. A very realistic dream."

While leaning back, Sark replied under his breath.

"Glad I wasn't the one who woke you up, then."

Closing her eyes, Julia smiled to that.

"Maria."

Sydney opened her eyes and saw two deep blue orbs. Waking herself up, she asked.

"Where are we?"

Sark replied.

"Italy. You fell asleep love."

With that, she noticed the stewardess, and smiled at her.

"I'm awake, thank you."

While she was adjusting the seat to its upright position and fastening her seatbelt for landing, Julia spoke.

"I slept on your shoulder?"

Sark grinned.

"Well, I won't complain if you always wake up like this."

Julia murmured.

"I can wake up better than this."

Sark raised his brow to that, but they were landing, and Julia looked outside.

CHAPTER 21 – WELCOMING

“-Bella!!”

Irina and Julia turned to the man who was shouting, and Irina smiled warmly.

“Signor Chenta! It’s been a long time!”

Signor Chenta hugged her, then turned to Jack.

“Mario, mi amigo..”

They also embraced, then he turned to Julia.

“Dear Maria.. You’re just as beautiful as your mother...”

Maria, smiling sweetly, hugged him, and introduced Sark.

“Signor, this is my fiancé, Peter.”

Signor Chenta held out his hand, and smiled warmly.

“Welcome to the family young man.”

“Well, this is casa Chenta. Please, make yourself home.”

With that, two little girls came to them running, while shouting to someone still inside.

“Mamma!! They’re heree!”

Sydney stooped down to one girl and asked her name, which was also Maria. She stood back up and entered the house with the others when they heard a young woman squealed.

“Maria?!! Oh God!”

When Sydney turned towards her, she was hugged by a young woman about her age.

Sydney squealed too.

“Rosa!”

Irina and Jack were watching them.

“Setra, darling, this is yours and Mario’s room. Maria and Peter’s is opposite of yours.”

Irina thanked to the woman, and with Jack, they entered their room. The woman then turned to young agents and smiled warmly.

“I hope there won’t be any trouble with sharing the same room. The house is full with guests.”

Maria smiled and answered.

"No, not at all. I know you have a big family." Rosa smiled too and spoke.

"You really became beautiful Maria. I missed you."

Sydney smiled to her too, and with Sark, they entered their room.

The house was warm and welcoming. Whites and satins were all around. Laughter could be hearing from every room. Children and grown-ups alike, . Tthey were all happy and innocent.

Sark spoke, startling her.

"So, love, what first?"

When Julia turned him with an angry face, Sark was looking at her as innocent as he can be. Suddenly, she understood that there was something up. Quickly, she became Maria again, and walking to him, she murmured seductively.

"I don't knooow... what's your offer?"

Holding her tight around the waist, he answered.

"Well, you wanted something on the plane, remember?"

Julia giggled to that, and hugged him.

"You're soo cute when you joke!"

And while she was shouting, Sark whispered to her ear.

"A camera, right behind you. That's I only saw one."

Julia rolled her eyes, and let him go. Then there was a knock at the door.

Sark spoke.

"Come on in."

Irina poked her head in and spoke.

"Oh! Your room is way better than ours!"

That was a response to let each other know if they saw cameras in the rooms, and Sydney smilingly answered.

"Really Mom? If you want, we can change the rooms?"

Irina waved to her, then while closing the door, she spoke.

"Unpack your suitcases, then we'll go to lunch ok?"

They both nodded, and Irina went off.

When they were alone again, Sydney turned to Sark and spoke.

"Well, darling, you go take a shower, and I'll start unpacking the suitcases."

Sark smiled to her and spoke.

"I love you when you do the heavy work."

Sydney giggled and pushed him towards the bathroom, then turned to suitcases with a cold face.

While working on the suitcases, she thought that she could act like Sydney when she was Maria. When she was alone with Sark, she was Julia. Undercover? She was Sydney.

When Sydney heard the water running, she slowly pushed her hair back behind her ear, and she opened her com again. She knew that she couldn't talk, but CIA would know she opened the link.

"All right, you're with us again."

When Sydney heard Weiss' voice, she was relieved. She knew she couldn't handle Vaughn right now. Her pain was too fresh. As if reading her mind, Weiss spoke.

"Syd, I'm sorry I did that. I thought he told you."

Sydney harshly coughed to that, and Weiss smiled.

"I know he's a jerk. But he loves you."

While hanging up Sark's shirts in the wardrobe, she smiled at Weiss' comment as he continued.

"Plus, he's like crazy now. You're with Sark, playing lovebirds. And he is at the edge of losing you? Syd, he's like putty in your hands, believe me."

Sydney held her prideful smile to herself, and thought about it. Vaughn would be watching them at times and would always hear them unless she went radio silent. That would be *good*. As if reading her mind, Weiss laughed.

"I know what you're thinking. And yes, he would be furious about this. I'm his best friend, but between you and me--Syd, I'm with you all the way. Give him back some of the pain you're suffering."

Weiss laughed and went on.

"Well, it would also help your undercover, wouldn't it?"

Sydney smiled to that, and coughed again, then Weiss spoke.

"All right, he's coming. I never said *anything*, understood? I'll update you about the pain-case."

Weiss laughed again, and within a second, he was deadly serious.

"Vaughn, Syd opened up her link now. All right Sydney, can you hear me?"

Sydney sneezed, and Weiss spoke.

“Good girl. Now go back to work.”

While turning to suitcases again, she heard Weiss.

“And Syd?”

She listened.

“I’m really happy that you’re back.”

While the hot water running down him, Sark was in deep thought. She really was acting like Sydney when she was Maria.

That could be her subconscious, he thought. Maria was a happy, young woman in love. Like Sydney was with her Prince Vaughn.

However, Maria has a family. Julia had none, but Sydney had one.

Sark turned off the water. While reaching for a towel, he was sure of one thing: Julia had one soft spot. She was still carrying Sydney in herself even if she was not aware of it.

CHAPTER 22 – THE COUPLE

When Sydney heard the water turn off, she was ready to face him. Or his naked chest.

She gathered some clothes for herself, and when she got up from the floor, she came face to face with him at the doorway to the bathroom?

“So, we meet again.” She said seductively.

Sark nodded a little, and watching her, he spoke.

“You going in? The water’s still hot.”

Sydney gulped a little, and smiled.

“I’m sure it is. I put your clothes on the bed, see you in 15 minutes...”

When she literally ran away from him, Sark laughed a little. She was such a little girl sometimes.

After her shower, while putting her make-up—soft and sand colors, like an Italian—Sydney heard some voices inside the room, and went near the door to eavesdrop. Little Maria was inside talking with Sark.

When Sydney heard that the lunch will be ready in 15 minutes, and little Maria leave, she heard Sark call to her.

"Maria, love, lunch will be ready in 15 minutes! Are you coming out, or should I make you?"

Sydney checked her hair for the last time, and smilingly opened the door.

"I'm back honey."

When Sark turned to her, he stopped for a second. She was beautiful, that was sure. Wearing a white, knee length dress, and curled brown hair, she was both sexy, and pretty.

Satisfied with the look he was giving to her, she smiled and walked sauntered to him.

"Miss me?"

Sark couldn't help himself. He reached out and grabbed her waist to pull her towards him. Her hands landed on his shoulders with her arms resting on his strong chest to keep her from losing her balance when he unexpectedly embraced her. Sydney looked at him breathless-*don't do it!* But he didn't see her expression, and slowly, kissed her.

Shivering, Sydney closed her eyes. She was melted by Sark's kiss! She opened her eyes, and looked at him. It was not a kiss, just a soft touch. She knew what a *real* kiss was like. But he was looking at her so intensely...

Sark slowly came back to reality and spoke softly.

"I guess I missed you."

Then he disentangled himself from the embrace, turned towards door, and left.

"Where were you?!"

To Irina's exclamation, Rosa's mother laughed.

"They're young Setra, you know what they were up to."

With that, the whole table began to laugh. Blushing, Sydney sat down next to her mother, and Sark was her other side.

She looked the long and crowded table. Everyone was cheering, talking, laughing.

Sydney turned to her mother, and spoke quietly.

"Any news?"

Irina, who was drinking her water, spoke slowly.

"None. Just waiting for the satellite intel about the cameras."

Sydney nodded, and turned to her lunch, but heard a young woman who was calling her, and turned to her left.

"Maria! How are you?"

Sydney smiled and spoke.

"Fine, you look great too!"

The man seated to the right of the woman spoke with a happy voice.

"Yes, my dear Frea is looking absolutely wonderful today.."

Sydney memorised her name, Frea, and spoke.

"She always looks wonderful."

Frea and her husband laughed to that, and Frea turned to Sark.

"Peter, right? The man who stole our Maria's heart?"

Sark laughed a little, and nodded, then held out his hand to the husband.

"Peter."

The man shook his hand and spoke.

"Robert. I'm an American too."

Sark smiled, and turned to Sydney, but Frea was talking.

"Rosa and I were thinking about walking in the farm, would you like to come with us? It would be fun!"

Sydney spoke.

"Well, Frea, I'm used to that, but Pete is not a farm guy--"

"Why do you say that love? I can be a farm guy!"

The four had laughed to that, and Sydney gave in.

"Well then, you chose it." She turned to Frea and spoke.

"We're coming."

When they were free, Julia hushed him and whispered angrily.

"Why did you accept?!"

"You're their friend. *You* should've accepted."

Julia sighed, and turned to Irina.

"We're go--"

"I heard."

Irina turned to her and when she saw that Sark was not looking at them, she smiled.

"Try to have fun a little, ok? We can do the search."

Sydney sighed and mentioning Sark.

"With him?"

Irina smiled a little.

"I haven't seen a problem until now between in you two. He believes you, don't ruin that."

Sydney nodded, and spoke slowly.

"I'll try."

Irina nodded too, and Sydney asked.

"How's Dad?"

"Well, he's mad. He doesn't like farms."

Sydney giggled to that, and when Sark heard that, he turned to her.

"Was that a giggle?"

Sydney turned to him and spoke.

"Why?"

Sark shrugged his shoulders.

"Nothing."

Sydney turned to face him and spoke.

"Why?"

Sark turned to her and spoke.

"You, giggling. That wasn't a thing I read about your info."

Julia looked at him, hard, and spoke.

"I'm a human too. Don't you ever forget that."

"How is she?"

Irina turned to Jack and smiled.

"Good. She handled things very well."

Jack nodded, and spoke softly.

"How about you?"

Irina looked at him for a second, but then turned to her lunch and murmured.

"I don't know. I still hate you."

To that, Jack smiled a little.

"I hate you too."

"And this is our-" Frea giggled, and Sark completed.

"Your cow?"

Girls laughed to that, and while the three of them--Rosa, Maria, and Frea--were walking freely in the land, men were lagging slightly behind.

"So, Peter... I heard you make our girl very happy?"

Sydney turned around to face them waiting for them to catch up, so that she could link her arm with Sark's. She smiled and spoke teasingly.

"Don't go hard on him Robert..."

Sark shook his head with a soft laugh. They both knew that Sark could kill him in a second if he wants, but well, they were undercover. Instead, he spoke.

"Well, it seems that I did."

Sydney looked at him questionly. *Why was he being so this nice? He was nice to her, even when they were alone and could be were themselves.* To answer her question, Sark's eyes gave the obvious answer: *You are their queen here.*

But his expression didn't give the real answer of why he was being so nice to her.

CHAPTER 23 – THE STORY

"How'd you guys meet?"

While sitting on a bench, Rosa spoke.

"Yes, I wonder that too.. You never told me about him, what a shame!"

Sydney smiled at the girls. When Robert noticed that there was no room for her, he mentioned Sark to get up. Sark laughed a little and pulled Sydney onto his lap. She was shocked inside, but gave no visible signs that this was unusual. Sark spoke.

"She likes to sit on my lap, don't you love?"

Sydney elbowed him playfully in the chest and laughed.

"Yeah, I do."

In her ear, she heard Weiss' laugh.

"Well, that was unexpected Syd, you never told me that you like doing the lap thing..."

Sydney smiled for real and resisted the urge to roll her eyes while listening Rosa's question.

"You met in college?"

Sark nodded and spoke.

"Well, I knew her from the beginning... But she did not see me... Ever."

Girls squirmed to that, and asked.

"And?"

Sydney was wondering that too. They never talked about their—Maria and Peter's—past. Sark continued as if it really happened:

"One day, I caught her watching me. I was in a meeting, and she shouldn't have been there. Well, I got angry and she fled. She was expecting someone else I think..."

The group was listening to him with a clear interest. To her surprise, Sydney found herself relaxed in his embrace, with his arms wrapped around her waist, and she was playing with his fingers...

Sark seemed unaware of that, or he was hiding it very well. He continued.

"Well, our ways crossed a few times after that. We were always insulting each other, but I was enjoying it."

Rosa asked.

"What about her?"

Sark snorted and spoke.

"She had a crush to someone else."

Sydney reached up to "check her earring" and switched off her com going radio silent. Sark was talking.

"I heard about that crush, but it was too late. She was in deep."

Girls tsked tsked to that, and men both laughed, and Sark went on.

"Her job took her away for a year. When she returned, she had found out that her dearest prince charming had ditched her, and was engaged to somebody else."

Sydney held her breath. He was talking about their real lives. He knew that Vaughn was engaged! She tried to relax again, she was Julia, not Sydney. Julia did not know anything or care about Vaughn. Sark continued.

"Around that time our paths crossed again. She needed a friend. She was totally alone without a friend in the world. And I was there."

Rosa cried out.

"And you fell in love!"

Sydney laughed to that, and Sark looked up at her.

"What do you think? Did we fall in love?"

She knew she didn't have a choice, and she smilingly nodded.

"Yes my love, I think we did."

She kissed him lightly on his lips. The group made a sound of "awwww".

When she receded, he was giving her the shocked look she gave him in the room.

When they returned to house, Jack found them and spoke.

"Maria, I think your mother wants to have a talk with you."

"Oh... Okay..." Sydney went to Irina's room, and Jack turned to Sark.

"She hasn't killed you yet. I take it that you get along well.."

Sark didn't answer that. Jack continued.

"You made friends. That's good. You can check if there's a mole amongst them. We're doing the same with the parents."

"What about the cameras? We can't talk freely.."

"We were informed that the cameras are off during the day. They'll be on at night."

Sark nodded.

"That's good. At least we can be ourselves in the room during the day."

Jack nodded, and spoke.

"Go to your room. Julia will be back in a few minutes with some intel."

Sark nodded and went to their room.

"I got it Marshall, thank you."

Sydney hung up the phone, and handed it back to Irina, then smiled.

"How are you?"

"We talked with some parents, but they seemed to be clear. How did your trip go?"

Sydney nodded and smiled.

"It was good. We connected with them."

Irina nodded, gave her some files and while Sydney was reading, Irina spoke.

"We'll meet at midnight. That's the only time we can talk freely."

"But the cameras?"

"Marshall will handle it."

Sydney nodded, and got up.

"All right. I assume Sark is waiting for me?"

Irina smiled with a laugh.

"Yes he is. And Sydney?"

Sydney turned to her, and Irina spoke.

"I'm so proud of you."

Sydney smiled to that, and left the room.

CHAPTER 24 – SYDNEY

When Julia closed and locked the door, Sark knew he was in trouble.

"Julia,-"

Julia turned to him, and calmly, she spoke.

"Don't Julia me. What the hell were you doing out there? What was it? The story? What happened to classic crush stories?!"

Sark turned to her and warned her.

"Do not rise your voice to me."

"And what? You'll beat me?"

"Julia-"

"Why did you kiss me?"

"Why did *you* kiss me?"

Julia was quick, and replied.

"We were in front of them, and you were asking me if we are in love! I had to kiss you, you knew that!"

Julia put her hands to her waist, and asked.

"You?"

Sark spoke.

"Because we were in front of the cameras-"

"which were off-"

"how could I know that?!"

Julia sighed, and spoke.

"Fine. Do not kiss me again."

Sark smirked.

"Why? Because it gets you hot?"

Julia's eyes went big for that.

"How could you-"

"Oh come on Sydn-"

They both fell silent.

"Who is Sydney?"

Sark was in trouble. *Biiig trouble*. He shook his head, and spoke.

"No one."

"Sark."

"I said no one!"

Sydney was hating herself for pushing him so hard, but she had to. Julia didn't know Sydney. So, she asked again with a stronger tone this time

"Who is Sydney?"

Sark sighed, and not coming up with a better answer, he told her the truth.

"She's the girl I told them about."

Sydney thought she died.

"You what?"

Sark sighed.

"I don't want to talk about it ok? It's history."

"Well, where is she? Do you love her?"

"No, I don't love her!"

She didn't know why, but her heart ached to hear that. Sark was speaking.

"She was just a friend. Maybe not a friend, she was the enemy. But I cared for her, and now she is gone."

"Dead?"

"Killed in action."

"You killed her?"

Sark looked at her with shock.

"Of course I did not kill her! Why would I kill her?"

"You said she was the enemy?"

"And I said I cared for her?"

Julia sighed.

"All right cowboy, calm down..."

Sark snorted, and Julia smiled.

"It's good to know that you are capable of caring for someone."

Sark looked at her appalled, and Julia spoke.

"Inside, I think that you are a good man I think. I saw that in Peter and on the plane in Julian."

Sark shook his head.

"I am not a good man, believe me."

Julia smirked and looked at him.

"I'm not a good girl either."

Sark chuckled at the comment and nodded.

"Yes, I can imagine how bad you are."

Julia pointed a finger to him.

"I can kick your ass for that."

Sark grinned.

"But you won't."

Julia sighed.

"You're right. I won't."

While Sark was studying the files on the bed, Julia, who was sitting across him, spoke.

"That Sydney.."

Sark groaned, but Julia persisted.

"Tell me about her.."

Sark looked at her, and spoke.

"There's nothing to tell, believe me."

"I want to hear. And you'll tell me."

Julia smiled playfully.

"You know you can't resist me.."

Sark laughed to that, and spoke.

"But I want something in return.."

Julia's face fell.

"Now cowboy, hold on there..."

Sark smirked, and spoke.

"Is your brain always there, Julia?"

Julia hit him at his chest, and asked.

"What do you want?"

"Just a kiss from you. From *you*."

Shivering inside, she asked.

"Why?"

Sark raised his brow to that, and spoke.

"You're asking me why?"

Julia nodded, and Sark sighed exasperated.

"Well, I kissed you, you kissed me, but none of them could be called 'kissing'. And I don't like half things."

Julia rolled her eyes to that, but accepted.

"Deal. But no tongues."

"Hey, I was talking about a *real* kiss!"

"Do you want an Oxford dictionary for the meaning of a kiss? I'll tell you: No tongues."

Sark looked at her, and spoke.

"You'll beg me."

"In your dreams."

Sark smirked to that, and Julia laughed.

"Jerk."

"She was smart. Really, one of the smartest people I've ever met."

Julia nodded, and Sark continued.

"She was pretty. If you could make her smile, her face would brighten an entire room. Believe me, I wasn't the one who made her smile."

Julia smiled sadly. Sark looked at her for a second, then went on.

"She had a tough life. She really didn't know her father. I think that they bonded before she died. Her mother couldn't find time to bond with her."

Sydney was listening to him, but also watching him... He was like somewhere else... At that moment, she saw how handsome he was... Cold, but warm at the same time... Distant, but not far...

"She had found love. I want to think that she was happy." Sark looked at her and spoke.

"I didn't like the man. I still don't like him."

Julia smiled a little, and Sark spoke.

"I still can't believe how he be engaged to that woman."

That did it. Sydney looked at him. But Sark was unaware of her, continuing his story.

"Just 10 months. And he got engaged. I know Sydney, if she knew, she'd kill him."

Holding back tears, Sydney smiled. Sark smiled too, and spoke.

"She was a bright woman. She totally deserved a better life than she had. No one can change that now."

Sydney looked at him closely. Without thinking twice, she leaned into him, and her lips met with his.

Sark was startled at first, but he pulled her into his arms. After a moment, they were kissing—*really* kissing.

Sydney moaned a little. Sark pulled her onto his lap. She smiled a little and began playing with his hair, making him shiver. That took her breath away, and she got lost in the kiss.

Getting dangerously close within each second, Sydney noticed that Sark was demanding permission for her to open her mouth. She slowly moved apart from him..

Seconds had passed. They sat still, foreheads leaning against each other.

"I said no tongues."

Sark chuckled to that, and looked at her, then Julia spoke.

"I think you deserved that kiss from Sydney."

CHAPTER 25 – THE KISS

While getting dressed, Sydney heard Sark call out from the bathroom.

"What color are you wearing?"

"Red, why?"

Sark exited the bathroom and didn't answer. To that, Julia murmured.

"My zipper. Now."

While zipping up her dress, Sark spoke.

"Bossy much?"

Julia turned to him and smiled.

"What did you expect? A hug?"

Sark smirked to that, and Julia slapped him across the face and pointed her finger at him while she spoke.

"That kiss was just a one time thing. I did it for your memories, I am not Sydney."

Sark looked at her, and nodded.

"I know, don't think yourself as that high."

Julia stopped and looked at him coldly, then she spoke.

"You'll beg me."

Sark smirked and answered.

"In your dreams."

Julia looked at him and spat out.

"Jerk."

While walking to the garden, Sydney spotted her parents and called out to them.

"Dad! Dad!"

Jack and Irina turned to them, and Jack smiled.

"Maria, you look beautiful."

Sydney smiled warmly and kissed his cheek.

"Thanks Dad. Where are we sitting?"

Irina replied.

"We still don't know. The Garden is full of people."

While greeting some people, Jack spoke.

"I don't like crowds."

Irina smiled and replied.

"Well darling, I got you not used to that."

Sydney giggled to that, Sark shook his head in disbelief, and Jack snorted.

"Maria! Setra! Over here!"

Irina and Sydney moved along that way, Sark and Jack followed. Rosa's mother smiled and showed them four chairs.

"Sit. Dinner will be ready in minutes."

She hurried towards to the kitchen. While they were waiting, Sydney looked around the garden, which was decorated with candles and tulle. A string quartet were playing popular songs while the guests were eating and singing along.

She heard Sark whisper in her ear.

"If you want, we can dance later, love."

Sydney made no sound to that, and turned to her mother.

"You look great Mamma." Irina smiled.

"You too, honey." She turned to Sark, who was wearing a pale blue polo shirt unbuttoned at the collar, which brought out the blue in his eyes, and khaki pants.

"How are you Peter? We couldn't talked that much."

Sark looked at her and smiled.

"Thanks Setra. As you've said before, it's really beautiful here."

Irina smiled and turned a woman seated to the right of to her.

"Oh, hi! Don't you think it's lovely here, too?"

The woman and Irina began to talk, Sydney looked at her father and seeing him roll his eyes, Sydney smiled.

"Bored, Dad?"

Jack growled something to that, and Sydney smiled.

"Want to dance with your little girl?"

With that, Irina turned to them too, and spoke.

"I think that's a good idea. It's been a long time since you two have danced."

Jack shot her a glare, and stood up, taking Sydney's hand. Sydney smiled to Sark.

"See you later."

Sark bowed his head and watched them leave.

Giving her hand to him, Sydney spoke.

"How is it going?"

Jack rolled his eyes, and murmured.

"Well, we haven't killed each other. Yet."

Sydney smiled and looking at him, spoke.

"You don't like farms, do you?"

"No I do not. Really."

Sydney giggled to that, and Jack raised his brow.

"What?"

"When I was a child, I used to be afraid of insects. There were so many at our summer home. But you never seemed to be afraid of them, and you never looked so bored."

Jack nodded and spoke.

"I'm not afraid of them, and about boredom..."

Sydney looked at him and smiled, Jack shook his head.

"Well, it's been a long time."

Sydney sighed, and dancing perfectly, she spoke.

"She's still Mom, Dad."

Jack looked at him, and Sydney murmured.

"She is the woman you went with to the summer house. She is the woman who read me books before bedtime."

Turning, she looked at her mom, who was listening to them through Sydney's link. and Irina smiled to her while holding back tears. But Sydney gave no clue to her dad, and went on.

"I know something happened."

With that, both of her parents went stiff, and Sydney looked at her father.

"I'm not blind. One or both of you did something stupid, and now you're not talking."

Jack nodded, and while turning, answered.

"Well, we are trying to move on about it."

Sydney asked .

"Has the guilty one apologized?"

Jack didn't answer.

"I know they look so cute. It brings up some old memories."

Irina looked at Sark, and Sark continued.

"But if you think that you're going to cry at any moment too, be aware, I have no idea what to say to make you cry freely in public."

Irina had laughed to that, and looked at Sark.

"That's right. And..."

Sark looked at her, and Irina went on.

"Thank you. Helping her that way was truly generous of you."

Sark shook his head to say something, but Irina cut him.

"That's all I want to say."

Sark nodded, and at that moment, Sydney and Jack turned to the table.

While Sydney took her seat, Jack spoke.

"Honey?"

Irina looked at his hand with shock, but she gave her hand.

"Pleasure."

But her eyes were asking something different: *What are you up to Jack?*

While her parents moved onto the dancefloor Sydney noticed that her glass was empty. So she took Sark's and while drinking the water, Sark asked.

"You know they have something, don't you?"

Sydney put the glass back to the table. Turning to him, she responded.

"Perhaps."

Sark smirked to that, and returned to his food. Sydney checked her link, but she found that her mom had closed the connection. Weiss' voice confirmed that.

"She's gone radio silent Syd. But good try."

Sydney smiled and while eating her food, she watched them. They were dancing in perfect unison. Both of them seemed unaware of that fact, instead they were talking with serious faces.

"You know she's right."

Irina looked at Jack, and asked.

"About what?"

"About not apologizing."

Irina shrugged and spoke.

"That is one thing you should have done."

While turning, Jack spoke.

"I'm sorry."

Irina nearly stopped for a second, but she accepted it and spoke.

"Really?"

Jack nodded, and Irina spoke with a soft voice.

"You broke my heart. You know you did."

Jack looked at her, but Irina went on.

"I was closed off for years, and I had opened myself that night, in your words, to my enemy. But you broke my heart."

While turning, Irina shook her head.

"Maybe that was your right, to break me after what I did to you and our daughter."

Irina looked at him, and spoke.

"But it shouldn't be in *that* way."

When the song was coming to an end, Irina spoke silently.

"So, *honey*, if you decide to apologize, at least be honest to me. Don't do it because your daughter asked you to."

With her skirt swirling around her, she while looking into his eyes.

"If you feel sorry, mean it."

The music stopped, and the fourth unexpected thing happened: Jack Bristow kissed Irina Derevko.

"Oh God."

Sark had turned her way and saw the couple kissing. With his eyes growing big, he smirked.

"Well, *that* was unexpected."

Sydney was smiling. *My God*. It has been a really long time without seeing that scene, and now...

Sark was watching her. She was really smiling, and Sark hadn't seen this smile for what seemed like years. He liked whatever caused it.

Irina Derevko was stunned. She hadn't felt this way in nearly 30 years, and now, her heart was racing from a one, simple touch.

When Jack stepped back, Irina opened her eyes and saw his. With a cracked voice, she asked.

"Why?"

Jack, who was holding her close still, simply answered.

"Because I'm sorry."

He slowly squeezed her hand. Irina smiled as she was Setra and moved towards table. They were Giovanni's again, and the table was smiling at them admiringly.

CHAPTER 26 – THE HEART

Weiss was laughing behind a stunned Marshall.

"Did they just kiss?!"

Kendall was like a disgusted frog, *kissing Irina Derevko?! He shook his head.*

"They're married Agent Weiss."

Weiss straightened and looked at a mourning Vaughn, hitting him on the from his shoulder.

"Come on, she'll forgive you, you know that."

Vaughn sadly shook his head no and kept his eyes glued to the monitor which showed the garden, before speaking.

"I don't think so Weiss... She was animate that I stay with Lauren, and now she's learned that we're engaged? She'd hate herself if we broke up because of her. And guess what? She even won't kill me. She'll watch me die slowly."

Weiss murmured.

"Well, she's not kissing him furiously..."

Vaughn shot him an icy look, and Weiss continued.

"Come oon... She's Julia, Vaughn. She was dead, and you deepened her grave today. Did you think it'll be that easy? Besides, she won't see you in the near future, so get a grip. You have to be ready when she comes back. Because she'll make a storm, believe me."

Vaughn looked at him.

"You're *really* are making this easy."

Weiss patted his shoulder, and escaping from the sarcasm, he laughed.

"Well, what are friends for?"

They silently continued to watch the party from the satellite.

Jack, not even looking at Sydney, spoke.

"We'll meet at Midnight."

Sark nodded, and spoke.

"But I think we have to put on a show."

Sydney and Irina looked at him, and Sark explained.

"Well, the cameras will show us sleeping, right? Or something else, so they wouldn't interrupt us."

Julia looked at him and spoke.

"If you think-"

"No, I'm not thinking *that*, love. What I think is that if they suspect anything, we should give them something besides our sleeping forms."

Irina nodded.

"Clever. We should act like we're going to your room, and I don't know, waking you up."

Jack understood, and went on.

"So, this way, if we get caught, op-tech would play that tape. The tape which we decide to come to you."

Sark nodded.

"Exactly."

Julia sighed, and while her parents were busy with getting their meals, turned to Sark.

"If you try-"

"Well, we'll see who'll beg who, darling."

Julia looked at him, and before she could speak, Sark spoke.

"I know, jerk."

Julia laughed.

Marshall was typing like mad and speaking rapidly.

"As I said, Mr. Sark is frighteningly genius."

Vaughn had rolled his eyes at him, and Marshall went on.

"Now I have time to get the frequency, and make similiar tapes. I'll be ready when the party finishes."

Vaughn nodded, and left the room. He sighed. *A show? Damn.*

"Maria! Come here!"

Sydney smiled to the crowd who were dancing, and shook her head.

"No. Nooooo..."

But Frea and Rosa were stubborn too. They came and literally tore her from her chair, dragging her with them onto the dancefloor. When they were gone, Irina murmured.

"We're going inside to sit with parents... You go find her. She shouldn't be alone."

Sark nodded as Jack and Irina left the table to go inside. When Sark was left alone, he began to watch the group of dancers. Frea and her husband were laughing and dancing with Julia. Rosa and her fiancée were moving towards to them smiling. After a second, they told Julia something and all of them burst out laughing.

Sark was seeing her like this for the first time. He knew she had connected with these people and that she was happy being with them.

When he heard the tiny notes of the new song, he made up his mind.

Sydney laughed at Robert, and when she heard the notes of the new song, she shouted.

"I'm going to take a break, this song is slow! You guys dance, ok?"

Robert and Frea nodded. When Sydney turned away from them, she came face to face with Sark.

When Sark made no move or sound, Julia spoke.

"What?"

Sark raised his brow to her, and Julia smiled a little.

"You want to say something, *honey*?"

Sark smirked a little, and spoke.

"You know I have my ways with women, *darling*."

Julia smirked back at him, and spoke.

"Well, as I know, I'm not a man, *sweetie*."

Sark moved closer to her, and suddenly she was out of breath. His face just a little away from hers, he spoke.

"Care to dance, love?"

Sydney, sighing, gave him her hand. He pulled her closer. For seconds, they danced slowly, harmoniously. Sydney could feel his breath on her neck, and slowly noticed that how they fitted into each other. When she raised her head, she found a pair of the bluest eyes looking back at her. She held her breath, and quietly asked.

"Enjoying?"

"You?"

While turning with the elegance he always had, she smiled a little.

"You do know how to dance...and lead."

Sark smiled a little, and holding the little of her back, he answered.

"Education is a good thing, dear."

Sydney looked at him and smiled a little. Then they danced in silence for a moment.

The Italian music can be good, she thought. Usually when she danced, it was for her job. but she was dancing for herself tonight.

Sark's senses were wide open. Her fragrance had filled his nostrils, the soft satin she was wearing was under his hands, and she was in his arms. Not her prince what's-his-name.

He knew that if they'd get along, then they would have a chance. This was their chance, he knew it. Like he said, they were destined to whatever they wanted to do.

He spun her, and when she flung back to his arms, their eyes connected. They were so close, so dangerously close. He could feel the warmth coming from her, and he asked with a soft, seductive voice.

"Enjoying?"

She smiled a bit, and asked back.

"You?"

He searched her eyes, and knowing he wouldn't find a thing, he spoke with a husky voice.

"Yes, much."

It felt like she had stopped for a second. But it was so so faint that, Sark wasn't sure, and Julia (or Maria?) had smiled at him.

"Me too."

Sark could've, should've kissed her senseless right there, but something stopped him. And it was very painful in the heart.

He suddenly understood what stopped him...

His heart.

CHAPTER 27 – THE BATH

When they got back to house, Frea found them.

"We called it night, you?"

Maria, whose arm was linked with Peter's, smiled at them.

"Yes us too. He tired me out."

They both laughed to that, and Robert laughed.

"Well man, it's your honor to make her weaker tonight!"

Sark felt Julia go stiff with that, and he answered.

"We'll see. Good night."

They said their good nights too, and Julia spoke.

"I'll check on Irina. You head back to our room."

Sark nodded, and Sydney went to their parent's room.

When Julia entered their room, she found Sark near the window, watching the garden.

"Honey?"

Sark turned to her and smiled.

"Come here."

When she got to his side, Sark wrapped an arm around her waist, causing her to lean into him. He murmured softly in her ear.

"Got anything?"

Taking ahold of his hand and smiling, she walked to the bathroom with him.

"I think I want to take a bath..."

Sark raised his brow to that and followed her without complaint. Once they were inside, she turned to him and spoke.

"There's not a camera in here."

Sark nodded, and asked.

"So what? We'll sleep here?"

She turned to him, and murmured.

"My zipper."

He unzipped the back of her dress, and she turned to him with a smirk.

"Now Mr. Sark, I'll take a bath."

Sark smirked to her, and asked smugly.

"Want me to help?"

She closed the curtains and handed him back the dress. Taking it, Sark spoke.

"You are the first woman who's done this."

"Well, everything has a first Julian. I'm also the first woman who's not interested in you."

Sark laughed softly to that. As he heard the water turn on, he replied.

"Well, darling, may I remind you that you're supposedly showering with me right now?"

Julia faked a moan, and answered loudly.

"Oh Peter, you have no idea how hot you are."

Sark laughed to that, and shook his head. Julia answered smilingly.

"Do you want anymore moans? You know, this is your 'manly honor'."

Sark looked at the dress he was holding and spoke.

"Well, if I was in there, you'd be screaming by now."

That was it. No sound did come behind the curtains, not even a single breath.

After a long, quiet minute, Julia spoke.

"Well, that's a thing we'll never know."

The water stopped. Sark stepped aside and handed her one of the towels as she got out. Without looking at him, she spoke.

"Your turn. I'll do my hair."

Sark nodded, and without an ounce of modesty, he stripped down to his boxers. Then he got into the bath and closed the curtains.

It was after that, Sydney noticed that she was holding her breath.

While the water was running, Sydney freed her hair from the towel, and brushing it, she spoke.

"We'll make *that* show when we got back. The Covenant will record it for the cameras."

Sark made a sound of *hmmm*, and spoke.

"You'll have a tape with me Julia. How does it feel?"

Julia couldn't help herself and smiled.

"You like this, don't you?"

Sark opened the curtains enough to poke his head out and look at her.

"Can you point me to a man who can reject being with you like this?"

Julia looked at him with a blank face. Sark spoke.

"Except taking showers like this."

When she laughed a little, Sark pointed for the towel.

"May I?"

Julia nodded and held the towel out to him, before turning back to fixing her hair. Then, they stood face to face; Julia, in her white, satin, knee length night gown and Sark in his boxers.

Julia nodded, and smiled.

"Well, honey, let's play."

CHAPTER 28 – THE PLAY

When Julia opened the door, she smilingly stepped inside the room, and giggled.

"Pete, you *areee* evil.."

While walking to the bed, she opened her link, and listened Kendall who was saying.

"In thirty seconds, Marshall will began to record. You have to close your link, we'll work from satellite. I think five minutes or so will be enough."

She sighed while turning down the bed. Sark looked at her and she smiled a little. Sark went to change clothes for bed. Sydney heard Kendall's voice in her ear.

"Don't worry, there are only four of us are here. If there's no need, I'll erase the tape."

Sydney smiled into the mirror, aware of Kendall would see her. Kendall replied to her action.

"You're welcome. Remember, this about your mission, you played several men before."

She nodded slightly and noticed that she was nervous. But she couldn't decide why. Was it because Vaughn would be watching? Or was it only because this time she'd play with Sark? To her thoughts, Weiss whispered into her ear.

"He's out for coffee, or to kill himself."

She looked at Sark with the corner of her eye, and Weiss was speaking again.

"You want to seem convincing to the Italian mafia? Well, my advice can sound harsh, but here it is: He's engaged."

With that, she straightened her posture with a quick move becoming Julia once more. Weiss spoke.

"I'm sorry. But your life is much more important to us. We can clear this up when you come back, I promise."

Suddenly, Sydney was angry again. Weiss spoke.

"Time's up, we're on the air. Close your link."

Sydney closed her link, and walked seductively towards to Sark, who was looking through Maria's perfumes. When he felt her presence, he spoke and turned to her.

"I like this one."

Maria smiled, and leaned into his lips.

"Alright Derevko. After four minutes, make up a *reason* why you need see your daughter this late at night and leave the room. That is the *only* act we want to see from you in that room."

Irina smirked to that, and Kendall continued.

"I saw that. When you get to their room and bust them, make an embarrassing scene. When we finish recording, you'll discuss the items you need to quickly and get back to your room. Understood?"

Irina slightly nodded, and looked at Jack. Jack acknowledged the assignment by nodding slightly. Then Jack spoke.

"Want anything to read darling?"

Irina rose from her make-up chair and went towards the bed. While closing her link, she smiled.

"I don't know... I'm not *that* bored tonight."

Having her near him on the bed, Jack winced a little, and Irina smiled wickedly.

"Something to say?"

Jack laughed a little and smiled.

"Come here."

She obeyed. Knowing his real offer, Irina granted his wish and kissed him. And while holding his hair softly, she closed his link. To that, she felt him smirk, and kissed him again with a smile.

Not expecting the kiss that soon, Sark was startled a little. Smiling, he broke the kiss.

"Darling?"

Maria looked at him behind her eyelashes and pouted slightly.

"What? You got cold feet? You weren't like that earlier."

Sark smirked an evil gleam appearing in his eyes. He knew what she was referring to. *She wants to play?*

He'd play.

He held her close. When their bodies touched in a tight embrace, he felt her stiffen. Smirking, he spoke.

"Near you? I never get cold."

Sydney looked at him. A moment later, she felt his lips on hers.

When Vaughn returned to the room, he saw Weiss seated at a computer screen watching with an 'o' shaped mouth

"What?"

Weiss startled and turned to him.

"What?"

Vaughn gave him one of the coffees he went to get. While sitting down, he asked.

"What's that interest...Oh God."

Weiss closed his eyes and waited for the explosion.

Sydney felt dizzy. Sark was kissing her like there was no tomorrow. And she was kissing him back.

When she felt her lungs ache for air, she pushed Sark away a little. Feeling his mouth on her neck right below her ear, she heard him whisper.

"Beautiful..."

Suddenly feeling *very* weak at the knees, she held onto him. Understanding, he tightened his hold on her waist. Kissing her neck, he whispered into her ear, just to make her shiver more.

"Bed, love?"

She was jolted her back to reality with that comment. Feeling him holding her, she felt her heart pounding. *Mission. Mission. Just a mission.* She looked at him, again noticing her empty lungs, she made her decision.

She nodded.

When she fell backwards onto the bed, he was immediately on top of her. In a second, she forgot all about the mission, the cameras, or why they are doing this. It was obvious that Sark knew his job—perhaps a little too well. She felt like she was floating away, and the only thing they were doing was kissing!

Gently brushing her hair away from her face, he silently asked her permission. She ended the game. This kiss deserved tongues.

Within seconds, her entire body felt like it was on fire. His hands were everywhere. His mouth was exploring her mouth. It was all she could do to keep from arching her body to his.

On the other hand, Sark was having a heart attack. Being able to have her like this, tasting her, touching her...

He heard a soft moan escape from her throat. He was losing it. He literally tore himself away and watched her. She looked at him, and whispered.

"Wait... a little... breathe..."

Beneath him, flushed and with tousled hair, she was looking absolutely stunning. He cursed her prince charming. Smiling a little, he murmured to her lips.

"Enjoying, love?"

She awoke from her daydream and nodded.

"I always enjoy you, honey."

Sark smirked. As he began softly kissing her, he felt her relax into his kiss. Feeling her warm fingers over his neck, he gave her the right: She could make him beg at anytime.

But holding himself, he ended the kiss in a soft way. Looking into her eyes, he smiled.

"You are amazing."

She smiled.

"I know."

He laughed a little, and stealing a kiss, he spoke.

"Don't I deserve a comment here?"

She giggled a little. Sark felt something he shouldn't have in his stomach.

"Well, you're not bad either, happy now?"

Sark nodded, and feeling more relaxed with her, he asked.

"Should I move?"

"Nu-uh. I'm comfy."

He looked into her eyes to see if that was true. Sensing that it was, he didn't move.

Comfy?! Vaughn was close to detonating at any moment. He knew Marshall was scared as hell to be near him, Weiss was waiting for his explosion and Kendall was out of the room. Vaughn pointed out the monitor and spoke.

"Did she say comfy?"

Weiss murmured.

"At least they're not making out anymore. They've stopped Vaughn."

Vaughn turned to him outraged.

"How can you be this calm? They nearly finished it!"

Marshall spoke under his breath.

"They still have their clothes..."

"With Sydney, it takes seconds to get them off!"

Weiss laughed and Vaughn turned to him.

"Do not laugh!"

"But Vaughn-"

"Weiss!" Vaughn warned.

Weiss shut up and Vaughn looked at the monitor. The couple was kissing softly again and murmuring something to each other. They seemed so... so... fitting... and it was disgusting Vaughn.

He looked at the other monitor. Irina suddenly jumped out of bed turned on the light.

"I forgot to give her the pills!"

Jack looked at her questioningly.

"What pills?"

Irina rolled her eyes.

"Birth-control Mario. You know we have to take them everyday."

Jack sighed.

"That's great darling. Share my girl's sex life with me."

Irina laughed a little and grabbed the box off of the nightstand before moving , towards the door. Jack asked.

"You're going to give them to her now?"

Irina nodded and Jack got out of bed with a sigh.

"I'll come with you. You can't go out wearing this."

Setra giggled and left the room with him.

CHAPTER 29 – THE TABLE

Sark murmured something like 'want to play now?' and Sydney looked into his eyes. He was still on top of her, feeling *comfy*. She wondered how Vaughn had reacted to that. Well, she was wondering about the whole action too.

But she closed the thoughts, now was not the time of it. The clock was ticking, her parents would bust them in seconds.

She became Maria again and grinned like the Cheshire cat while she played with his hair.

"What are you waiting for honey?"

Smiling, she kissed him softly. She was dangerously beginning to like the taste of him. He was always soft, giving her space, but also demanding at the same time.

When she felt that he wasn't playing anymore and had gotten himself into real sensations, she heard the door open and her mother's over happy voice.

"Mari-Oh God! Sorry kids!"

She abruptly sat up, and closing herself with the sheets, she squirmed.

"Mamma! Why don't you knock?!"

Sark was hiding his smile onto her shoulder, and Maria held the sheets tighter when she saw her father follow her mother into the room.

"Dad! Oh dear God.."

The meaning on Jack's face was real. Irina held his hand tight as a warning, and she slowly spoke.

"Sorry again... But I'm glad we're on time..."

Sydney blushed a little and asked.

"About what?"

Irina showed her the pills.

"About these..."

When Sark laughed for real, Sydney totally went red. With a dry throat, she spoke.

"Thanks Mom."

When Irina opened her link while tucking hair behind her ear, she heard Kendall speaking.

"All right, that's enough. Wait for about three seconds."

Irina waited silently. When three seconds passed, she sighed and threw the pills on the nightstand.

"All right, we're safe now."

With that, Jack turned his head towards Sark. With the death look coming from Jack, Sark got away from Julia, and quickly grabbed the discarded a shirt and pants from the floor and put them on.

At the other side of the bed, Sydney was still under the sheets, and for the first time, she was embarrassed by her father being there. Sensing this, Irina looked at Jack, and when Jack turned towards Sark again as a warning, Irina held out a matching white, satin robe to Sydney and winked.

When they were all seated at the table, Jack began speaking.

"What have you got?"

Julia answered him.

"Frea, Robert, Rosa and her fiancé Carlo. They all seem like they're clean. But I did a background check on Robert. He's an American as he claimed."

Sark nodded, and spoke.

"Rosa and Frea didn't give a single indication that Julia wasn't Maria. They accepted her rather quickly, in my opinion."

Jack spoke.

"That's because they haven't seen Maria in many years."

Sark nodded.

"That's my point. Isn't this weird? Julia doesn't look *that* much like Maria. Plus, she doesn't even know about their time spent together."

Irina nodded and spoke.

"You're right. That needs to be clarified. If they're Covenant agents too, then that means that they don't know anything about Rosa nor Frea too, this makes it a trap, and someone knows that we are not real."

Irina touched her link and spoke

"We need background checks on Rosa and Frea—along with recent pictures of them."

She addressed those sitting at the table.

"Jack and I had found that Rosa's father might be involved in this with the CIA part. We need to see his files and search his office. If he is really the mole, we're sure to find some clues."

Julia couldn't look at Sark or her father. She was a mole too. Well, all of them were moles. However, Sark didn't know that.

Instead, Julia spoke.

"I'll get the files. I'm used to field jobs."

Jack nodded and spoke.

"I'll make arrangements."

Sark looked at them and spoke.

"I'll come with you."

"No Sark, I work alo-

"I said I'll come with you."

Julia looked at Sark, and Sark spoke with his eyes to her.

"I am your partner. You need back-up. Especially in a small place like this."

Julia looked desperately at Jack. When she saw him shrug his shoulders, she grudgingly accepted.

"Fine. But I'm in control."

Sark nodded.

Watching them, Irina smiled a little. They have already begun to work as a group.

Even though Jack doesn't like Sark, nor Sark does fancy him, she thought.

When Sydney offered to retrieve the files, Irina noticed something—the worry on the men's faces. Jack's was normal, he was her dad, but Sark's was interesting.

He really did care.

Irina and Jack decided to leave after about an hour or so. After discussing all pertinent information, Irina heard Kendall's voice in her ear.

"The house is safe. Now when you return to your room, you'll pretend that this discussion never happened. Sark and Sydney will act as if you just left the room."

Irina turned to all of them and explained: when they leave the room, Marshall will begin recording again. In seconds, Sydney and Sark undressed and were back in bed again. Setra spoke.

"Goodnight—"

"Goodnight Mom... Next time, knock ok?"

Setra giggled and Mario rolled his eyes before leaving. When they were alone, Sark fell back onto the bed, and sighed.

"I hate your mother sometimes."

Maria giggled and kissed his cheek.

"But she loves youuuu... I love you tooo..."

Sark looked at her suprised. After a breathless second, he spoke as Peter.

"Well, that's a dirty thought."

Maria giggled again, and Sark reached over and pulled her onto his chest.

"Well... it's better if we just sleep love..."

Maria murmured on his chest.

"Okay.."

While turning off the lamp on the nightstand, Sark was surprised that Julia hadn't left his chest. He held her closer and closed his eyes.

CHAPTER 30 – ONLY HOPE

When Sydney heard Sark's breathing even out indicating that he was asleep, she silently opened her link. At the other end Weiss yelled.

"She opened her link!"

Sydney smiled a little and listened to the CIA's base of operations—where she was supposed to work. She could hear Marshall's voice in the background and her eyes filled with tears. She missed her world so much.

Then she heard Weiss.

"Well hottie, I hope you are all right?"

Sydney made herself not laugh, and Weiss smiled too.

"You gave us quite a show, if I do say so myself... Our guy's really pissed and could take my head off, believe me. Now he's coming... Okay, goodnight Syd."

She sniffed a little as an answer and heard the comm change hands. When she heard Vaughn's voice, her heart stopped again for a second.

"Sydney?"

"I just want you to listen to me. I know you're angry with me. I also know that you said you were comfortable with Sark just to annoy me. Believe me Syd, you did annoy me."

A pause.

"You don't know how lonely I've been. I was half-dead Syd, I swear. Sitting alone in the bar, holding a bottle tequila, drinking myself into an early grave, talking to myself... As if you were right next to me. I could still see and feel you all around me Syd. You were so vivid."

Another pause.

"I spoke with two women about you. One, Irina, your mother and my enemy. But that night, she was not my enemy nor your mother. She was a listener, a person who knew you. I understand that night that she knew you Sydney."

A sigh.

"Then one day, a woman began to ask me questions. I still don't know how I answered them. How did we meet? When did we fall in love? How long did we kept it a secret? Did we break any rules?... They were asking me about our past. They were getting to know us, and you were dead. I told that woman everything about us, gave her all of our secrets, all of our lives. Just to lessen my pain, just to let my heart bleed."

A deep breath.

"That woman was Lauren. She was there, listening to anything I had to say. One day, our time had exceeded, and we went to a café to talk. Then it became regular to talk with her. Maybe in my subconscious, I was trying to make her into another Sydney. Perhaps by telling Lauren everything about you, maybe one day she would become you."

A sigh.

"That never happened. Instead, I found myself in bed with her. The name I was calling was you. But she understood, she was with me. Then one day, I called her name. It was time that I accepted that I buried you Sydney. In that moment, I could kill myself."

Silence.

"But she didn't let me. I was in pain and tried so hard to find reasonable and rationally thoughts. You were dead, I should move on, but why couldn't I? Why didn't this feel right?"

A sigh.

"I don't know. I still don't know. But in my heart, I want to believe that I knew you were alive and that you'd come back. That was why I never gave up on you, on my hope. Because Sydney, you were my only hope to be me again."

Silence.

"Two weeks ago, Lauren and I went to a trip. The first night, she said she had a surprise for me. I didn't think that it was something very big. But..."

A sigh.

"She's pregnant. She's about ten weeks along."

Silence.

"We both know that I can't leave her. I couldn't leave her. Both of us know how it feels to grow up without a parent. I can't do that to my child. Even if it tears me apart. Even it breaks my heart."

A sigh.

"I love you Sydney. I'm sure of that. Tonight, seeing you like that, in his arms... I know how you feel, how you felt. And believe me, I'm dying with every breathe I take."

Silence.

"When you come back, I will again say these words to your face. I'm not afraid of anyone. Sydney, I do still love you. But my child needs family and I have to build it."

Silence.

"Goodnight."

Beep.

When the link closed, Sydney took a weak breath. He was having a baby.

She felt her eyes began to fill with tears and held herself. This was not the time.

But it was inevitable. The things he had said to her, knowing her reactions, knowing her pain... She knew how he felt, she had felt it too. Even when she had seen him with Lauren, even though she was broken inside, she knew that he didn't give up his hope on her.

She cried silently on Sark's chest. Again. Because of Vaughn. Again.

But something happened: Sark held her tighter and kissed her forehead.

"Shh... Just a dream..."

And she pretended it was exactly that... just a dream. She raised her head to his and smiled weakly. Sark looked into her eyes, and seeing the tears, he held her tighter.

"Scared?"

She murmured to him with pain.

"Sad."

Sark nodded, and while caressing her hair, he whispered.

"Just a dream. I'm here."

She looked into his eyes and nodded. He was here.

CHAPTER 31 – BUSTED

When Sydney opened her eyes, she saw a window with the curtains open allowing the sun into the room. The sky was clear, voices could be heard from the garden. She slowly turned her head to her right and saw two ice-blue orbs watching her. Sark spoke with a quiet voice.

"Good morning."

Sydney smiled shyly and spoke.

"Good morning."

Sark asked.

"How are you feeling?"

Sydney smiled awkwardly and sat up a little.

"Fine. Thanks."

Sark nodded, and spoke.

"I'll use bathroom if that's ok with-"

"Yeah, you go ahead. I'll be in the garden, I need some air."

Sark nodded and went to bathroom. When he disappeared, she got up, made the bed, changed, and left.

"Maria! Over here sweetie!"

Sydney turned around to see Frea, and headed towards her... Frea was bouncing from one foot to the other as she spoke.

"Our dresses just came!" Sydney smiled a little. They went to see their bridesmaid dresses...

"Peter?"

Sark turned to Irina and smiled a little. Irina was asking a clear question, and Sark answered.

"I don't know where she is.. She told me she needed some air." Irina nodded, but then they heard Jack, who was looking at the opposite way.

"There." When they turned, they saw her. In a soft yellow dress, her hair was piled onto of her head and framed her face with soft curls, and a soft make up was on her face.

Irina, smiling, spoke.

"You look amazing." Sydney smiled to them, and spoke.

"Thank you."

Sydney turned to Sark with a sweet smile and asked.

"Where is my bracelet darling?" Sark got the clue, and nodded.

"Sorry, I forgot to bring it." Sydney smiled to him, and linking her arm with his, she spoke.

"Well, let's go get it then... Shall we?"

Once they were alone in the corridor, Julia let go of Sark's hand, and whispered.

"Third room on the left."

Sark nodded and gave her the lead. Julia opened the door with a soft click and stepped inside. Following her, Sark carefully closed the door, and turned to see her playing with the safe behind the painting on the wall. With her talented fingers, she was listening the clicks, and watching Sark who was digging through the papers on the desk.

At the same second their eyes met, the safe opened. Julia turned to wall, and while gathering the papers, she whispered, shoving the small device to him.

"Scanner."

While Sark was scanning them to Irina's laptop, Julia searched for other safes behind the paintings. When she found another, she looked at Sark with a question in her eyes. Sark looked at his watch, and mouthed 'five minutes'. Julia nodded. She could do it.

In the mean time, Sark was putting the papers back and closing the first safe. He then turned to Julia, and walking towards her, she smiled and opened the second safe. Retrieving the files, he whispered.

"You're good. You know that, right?" Julia turned to him with a wicked smile and nodded.

"Yeah."

Smirking, Sark began to scan them too, and Sydney continued searching. They heard the noises in the hall and their eyes met.

"Presto! Presto!"

Signor Chenta burst into room with a few men behind and looked at the view, stunned.

Sydney held onto Sark's jacket and waited. Her back was to the entrance, and Sark was holding her waist tightly. She was sitting on the big desk and her legs were hurting on the side of the desk. When she heard Sark, she focused on the job.

"Oh, sir..."

Sydney made herself blush in a second, turned to Signor Chenta and squeaked an apology.

"Signor, I'm so sorry!"

Signor Chenta looked at her desperate face, and smiled a little.

"Maria..."

Sydney jumped down from the machine, and closing Sark's jacket with her body, she talked.

"Sir, really, I'm sorry."

Signor Chenta sighed, and looked at her.

"All right Maria. But don't let this happen again."

Sydney blushed for real this time, and nodded. Signor Chenta continued.

"Young man?"

Sark looked at him and Signor Chenta smirked.

"Your zipper."

When Sark bowed his head to his pants, Sydney stifled a giggle. She knew that Sark didn't even feel that. After Sark fixed himself, Sydney turned to Signor Chenta and slowly stated.

"We shall go."

Signor Chenta nodded, and they quickly left the room hand in hand. When Sydney was halfway down the hallway, she let out a deep breath. She was really scared that something would happen. They could've seen the papers in Sark's jacket.

When they turned the corner, she felt Sark's hand grab her wrist. She was being pushed backward into the wall with a quick move.

"Sa-wha-"

She couldn't speak anymore. He was kissing her.

Sydney's heart was pounding with the kiss, but she shoved him off a little

"What's going on?!"

Sark, nibbling her earlobe, whispered into her ear.

"They're in the corridor."

Her legs were jelly, not because they were being watched, but Sydney couldn't think of the cause.

She looked into his eyes with a fire in hers. Sark smirked a little.

"You always play with zippers love?"

Sydney couldn't keep herself from giggling a little. Seeing that, Sark moved his head a little, and looking at her face, he whispered.

"I must admit though, you do know your job. I didn't even feel it."

Julia raised her eyebrows to him and smirked.

"Just as you didn't feel it again."

With that, Sark bowed his head. Giggling, Julia raised his chin with her perfectly manicured finger.

"I was lying."

Sark smirked and leaned into her, his eyes playful.

"You naughty, naughty girl."

He kissed her again. Sydney was wanting to cry, but Julia was in control. She held his jacket tighter and pulled him closer.

Sark, feeling her hands in his chest, growled a little and pushed her against the wall more as he deepened the kiss. God, he loved his job.

When they returned to garden, Irina found them.

"How'd it go?"

Sark took a deep breath, but Sydney was ready.

"Good. Besides, we made copies. He has them in his jacket."

Irina nodded and they walked towards to ceremony area. Sydney saw Signor Chenta talking with her father. She turned to Sark.

"You said that they-"

"I lied."

He turned his head towards her and smirked.

"And you didn't feel it."

Sydney looked at him with a clear shock in her eyes. She held herself together and turned to head back to the house.

"See you at the wedding."

When she walked away, Irina turned to Sark.

"What was that?"

CHAPTER 32 – THE MOLE

"Si."

When the bride and groom began to kiss, little white flowers were thrown their way.

After a second, Rosa turned to Maria and screamed with laughter.

"I'm married!!!"

Sydney, smiling wide, hugged her and jumped up and down with her. Then, Frea was with them and they all began screaming like little girls.

Sitting with the rest of the guests, Sark was snorting. He knew she wasn't acting. Why was she so happy? These people meant nothing to her. Ok, maybe a little. But it made no sense that she could be so happy for them.

"What's the matter Peter?"

Sark turned to his right to see Irina, raising her brow. He shrugged and spoke.

"Nothing. She's just so happy."

Irina turned her head towards her daughter and spoke.

"Maybe. Maybe not."

Sark looked at Irina, and Irina asked.

"Is everything alright? With her?"

Sark nodded. Irina turned to her thoughts to business.

When Jack returned from the office inside, Irina turned to him.

"Yes?"

Jack nodded slightly and Irina turned to Sark. With a look, Sark knew what he should do. So he got up and moved towards to Julia, who was talking with Frea.

"Love?"

Sydney turned to him and remembered who she really was and why she was here. She sighed a little and turned back to Frea.

"He can't stay alone for too long."

Frea laughed and vawed.

"Yeah, yeah, they're men!"

Sydney laughed too and escaped with Sark, she asked.

"What happened?"

Sark shrugged.

"I don't know."

As they approached Irina and Jack, Jack turned towards Sydney and spoke.

"I found him."

Sydney looked at him shocked.

"What?! Robert?!"

Jack hushed her and nodded.

"Yes. I saw him in the office, making a phone call while the wedding was taking place."

Sark raised a brow and Jack explained.

"He was telling someone about seeing Julia here."

Sydney felt Sark stiffen beside her and she asked.

"And?"

"We'll do nothing."

Sydney turned to Irina, who spoke for the first time, and asked.

"What?"

Irina explained.

"We'll do nothing. If they're so desperate, then let them make the first move. They'll make a mistake, that's for sure. We're ready for them."

Sark asked.

"Are we?"

After a disturbing silence, Sydney murmured.

"I left my gun in the room."

Sark murmured beside her.

"I've got mine."

Sydney nodded and they went to retrieve her gun. After they disappeared inside the house, Irina opened her comm link and whispered.

"Michael?"

Once Vaughn had replied, Irina pretended like she was talking with Jack.

"We found the mole. It's Robert, Frea's husband."

"This is ridiculous." Said Julia.

Sark watched her as she was strapped the gun to her leg and smirked.

"Where did you put your gun?" asked Sark.

Julia rolled her eyes and looked at him as if he never spoke.

"Me, waiting. I'm the one who has to kill him." Stated Julia.

"And I truly believe that will eventually happen."

Julia nodded and turned towards the mirror. She quickly fixed her hair as she spoke.

"I look forward to leave here."

Sark moved towards her and asked.

"Why love? You seemed that you were enjoying yourself."

When she didn't answer, he pushed his luck.

"You seemed that you were enjoying your alone time with me too."

Julia turned to him and looking into his eyes, she spoke.

"I said no flirting. I kiss you, that's for my job. You kiss me, that's because you're a jerk. When we get back, believe me, I'll make you pay."

Sark looked at her and raised his brow.

"How? By opening my zipper?"

Julia grabbed her purse and spoke.

"Why not? You won't even feel it."

Then she left the room.

As she was walking through the corridor, she opened her link. The voice on the other end replied.

"Vaughn."

Irina looked at the house with a bad feeling and spoke.

"She's up to something."

Sark was descending the stairs when he saw Jack and walked towards him.

"What happened?"

"Where is she?" demanded Jack.

CHAPTER 33 – THE BULLET

Sydney cocked her gun and began to sneak down corridor keeping her back to the wall... She realised that she didn't know how big the house was... She was now on the third floor, and because of everyone was at the reception, the house seemed empty...But her senses were telling her something entirely different. So was Vaughn.

"Syd, this is dangerous. You need back-up."

"Who, Sark?" murmured Sydney, focused on the doors.

"Yes, even him. You shouldn't be alone in a big house like that."

Sydney sighed a little and opened the door slightly. Seeing it was empty inside, she closed the door and continued down the hallway to the next room. She spoke to her former guardian angel.

"You're with me."

She heard Vaughn's frustrated sigh. She knew he wouldn't tell her parents about this as she had requested.

When she felt a strong hand grab her wrist, she wished he wouldn't keep his promise.

"Where is Maria?"

Irina smiled to Rosa.

"Oh darling, she just went to the ladies room... You know how she wants to look pretty."

Rosa smiled and when she left, Irina turned to Jack. Opening her link, she spoke.

"Agent Vaughn, if you lie to me now, as much as I'd hate to do it, I'll kill you."

Sydney turned quickly to find herself face to face with Sark. Gasping, she asked.

"What are you doing here?!" Sark, leading her towards the door, slowly answered.

"In fact, I should be asking you the same question. But to yours, I do what partners do." she looked at him, he spoke.

"Back up."

She looked at him one more second, and sighed.

"Okay."

When they entered another empty room, Sark murmured.

"Do you know where is he?"

"Do I look like I know?"

Sark turned to her.

"I mean, did you follow him here?"

Julia shook her head no and spoke.

"I'm sure he's around somewhere..."

Sark, who was looking outside to spot Irina and Jack, spoke.

"Yes, he is around indeed."

Julia walked over to him and looked at the garden.

"Oh God."

Jack had seen Robert too. He looked at Irina, who was talking with Frea.

He looked around to get some help Sark and Sydney were on the third floor, looking directly at him. Quickly, Jack and Sydney made the plan with their eyes. When he saw they were running downstairs, he made his move towards Robert, who was near Frea.

"Robert!"

"Oh really? Where are you from Robert?"

Robert nodded to them and smiling, he answered.

"Like I said, America... Just like Peter..." Irina nodded. At that time, she saw Sark and Sydney running towards them. Irina turned to Frea and asked.

"Frea, darling, want to go to ladies room?"

Frea gladly accepted that offer. While they were heading towards the rest room, Sydney snuck up behind Robert.

"Hey Robert. I heard you were looking for me."

Robert went to check his gun. Sark tsked tsked and took his gun out of the inside of his jacket in one swift move.

"Cocking a gun to a lady is unacceptable."

Robert grumbled something like 'What do you want?'. When Jack murmured something, Sydney looked at him.

"There are more. It's a trap."

Sydney wrinkled her face in confusion. When she saw that Frea was coming back alone, her heart stopped for a second.

"Mom."

After removing a second gun from Robert and getting up, he saw Julia looking somewhere behind him. When he turned away from Robert to see what interested Julia he felt a sharp pain in his back. Then he heard Julia shout.

"Sark!"

He turned back and elbowed Robert in the face, causing Robert to fall to the ground on all fours. Sark then pointed his gun at Robert's head. Julia was readying her gun, and she speaking softly to Jack with urgency.

"Trap? What are you talking about?!"

Sark looked at them and asked.

"Trap?"

Jack smacked the back of Robert's head with the butt of his gun knocking him unconscious. Women screamed and began to run away, pointing to the guns. But it was too late.

When Sydney heard a gun shot, she grabbed ark's shirt and pulled him on the ground. For a second their eyes met, then Sydney was back in action. She got up and pointing to the man at the window, she screamed.

"We're open for target! We've got to get inside!"

Jack helped Sark up and the three of them ran inside the house to escape from the bullets.

When they got inside, Sark closed the doors of the first room. Then he turned to them and asked.

"What trap?!"

Sydney turned towards Jack too, but he was busy reloading his gun. He answered, rushed.

"They're after Sydney."

She froze. Why he was talking about Sydney now?! Sark was frozen too, but she couldn't let him know she wasn't brainwashed. She asked.

"Sydney?"

Jack looked at her and nodded. Seeing this, Sark felt frustrated. There was something going on and he didn't know what it was. So, he shot the men who were running towards them with his best, and asked.

"Where is Irina?"

CHAPTER 34 – RUN AWAY

Sydney opened the door and whispered, "We have to find her."

When Jack, who was behind her, did not immediately respond, she asked in a frightened voice, "You don't think that she's..."

"No, I don't. Go on."

Sydney was slightly relieved by her father's comment. However, when she realized that her comm link had been shut down by a third hand party, she became frightened again. Sydney walked slowly down the corridor until she reached the ladies' room. Her world turned upside down the moment she opened the door.

"Mom?!"

Jack rushed towards Irina, who was lying unconscious on the floor. Trembling inside, he placed two fingers on her neck searching for a pulse. After a second, he found one and moved to carry her.

"She's alive."

As he stood up with Irina in his arms, Sark entered the room. Sydney's back was towards the door as she was fighting back tears. She quickly got her emotions in check before turning around.

"Is she all right?" asked a concerned Sark.

Sydney ushered him out and Jack followed with Irina.

Once they reached the garden again, people were still running and screaming everywhere. When Sydney heard someone shout 'Find the woman!', she yelled to Jack.

"Go! Take her somewhere safe!"

Jack turned to her with a clear 'no' on his face, Sark spoke up.

"I'm here. Go."

Jack glared at him while he quickly considered the options, and a few moments later he voiced his decision.

"We'll be in the woods."

Sydney nodded. A moment later, they were gone.

Then she looked at Sark and spoke.

"I've got to show myself to buy some time."

Sark nodded his agreement. When she began to walk in front of the car they were hiding behind, he murmured.

"I'm here."

Sydney threw her hands up and began to walk in the garden, the gun fire stopped.

She yelled

"I'm here!"

She saw a man behind the window, but she couldn't identify him. She heard a voice from behind her yell.

"Get down!"

As she began to obey, she heard a gun fire from behind her and heard Sark order.

"Up! Now!"

Without hesitating, she ran back to join him as they continued running furiously into the woods.

Sydney shouted to him slightly out of breath while they were running.

"Who are these people?!"

When Sark didn't answer, Sydney stopped for a moment and grabbed the front of his jacket to force him to look at her and asked again.

"Sark! Who are these people?!!"

Sark looked at her for a second and spoke.

"I don't know. I swear. Jack and Irina had the intel."

Sydney looked at him hard, trying to determine if he was telling the truth. Sark looked at her with equal scrutiny. Then she nodded.

"Okay. We have to find them."

Sark nodded, and turning their backs to each other, they glanced at the thick forest. She spoke in a tiny voice.

"I didn't notice this forest was this thick."

Sark sighed a little, and he spoke

"Let's try this way."

When they began to walk away from there, they heard someone shout.

"Search the forest!!! We can't let them escape!"

Sark and Sydney looked at each other and an unspoken understanding passed between them, and in a breath, they took off running again away from the voices. When Sydney thought they couldn't run anymore, they heard a low, sharp voice.

"Sydney!"

When they turned their backs, and saw Jack, Sydney sighed with a relieve

"Thank God."

Once they entered the cave, Jack closed the entrance with branches and Sydney asked.

"How did you-"

"Irina and I went for a walk the first day here to designate possible safe places incase an emergency occurred..."

Sydney turned to look around the rest of the cave. her back, She saw Irina sitting at the far end of the little, dim-lighted cave and whispered.

"Mom."

Sydney moved to sit near Irina, she smiled a little.

"How are you? What happened?"

Irina, smiling weakly, spoke.

"I wasn't ready. It was my fault. I'm fast though. I made her believe that I was dead, but when she left, I fell into unconsciousness."

Sydney smiled a little, and Irina asked

"What happened to you?"

Sydney spoke with a soft voice.

"Sark and I drew attention to buy you time, then ran away. And here we are."

When silence filled the cave. Sark spoke for the first time.

"I think I've waited long enough for my reaction... But..." When they all looked at him, he turned to Sydney and asked.

"Who are you?"

CHAPTER 35 – WHO ARE YOU?

Sydney sat up straight and turned to him.

"Sark..."

Sark stepped back and looked at her.

"*Just one name.* That's all I'm asking. At least under these conditions."

Sydney sighed and looked at him.

"Sydney."

Once darkness fell on the forest, Jack spoke.

"We need to get to the extraction point now. Careful and fast."

Irina nodded and Sydney asked.

"Are you all right?" Irina smiled to her and answered.

"Yes sweetie. I may not be young, but my body is trained."

Sydney smiled and looked at her Dad.

"Sark and I will leave first... If something happens, we'll let you know. We're younger and faster."

Jack nodded. Sydney turned to Sark. She knew that her parents were talking about which direction to run, so Sydney spoke in hushed tones to Sark.

"Sark.. I know you're mad at me. But until we get out of this..."

Sark looked her in the eye for the first time since finding out he'd been deceived, and Sydney continued

"Can I trust you?"

Sark looked closely at her. While they were exchanging glances, Sark saw something—hope. It was little and tiny, but it was there. He determined that what he was seeing was not different than Julia—at least the Julia he knew.

So he nodded.

Sydney, holding her gun tighter, began to run with Sark followed closely behind. Once she was sure that their pursuers were not around she turned on her flashlight, and gave the signal for all clear, and waited for theirs. When her parents began to move, Sydney and Sark again began to run.

When they reached the landing, Irina spoke.

"There should be a car waiting for us somewhere around here."

Sydney turned to her to ask why, but Irina replied.

"Kendall thought it would be wise to have a vehicle around here. " While nodding, Sydney heard Sark exclaim.

"There."

They walked to the bushes, and uncovered the Jeep. While getting in, Irina spoke.

"Sometimes I like the CIA."

The CIA Safehouse, Rome.

Sydney exited the bathroom in her robe to find Sark in her room. Sark turned to her and spoke softly.

"You made me talk about you."

Sydney nodded guiltily. Sark turned to her and began his list of accusations against her.

"You took information from me. You made me trust you. You went undercover with me."

Again, Sydney nodded. Sark asked.

"Why? Is this some sort of a plan?"

Sydney stepped forward and spoke softly.

"This is not a plan. At least not your involvement."

"Then tell me *the real plan*."

Sydney shook her head no and spoke.

"I'm not allowed. It's classified."

Sark stepped right in front of her and growled.

"Tell me."

Sydney looked at him, but remained silent and Sark talked with a dangerous tone.

"What do you want from me? You made believe. You took all of the information from me. You learned all you could...all my tricks. And now, why don't you tell me? In the end, you know I'm going back to a CIA cell! So, why not?"

Sark looked at her, and repeated in a much controlled voice.

"Why the hell not?"

Sydney took a deep breath, and looked at him.

"Because I'm dead."

"I'm dead, Sark. Sydney no longer exists. I am Julia."

Sark laughed a little and stepped back. Sydney looked unbelievably at him.

"Why in God's name this is such a big deal? You lied to me several time--"

"I never lied to you!"

Sydney was taken aback with surprise. Sark quickly regained his composure and when he spoke again it was with a normal, but angry tone.

"I did not say some things to you, but no, I did *not* lie to you."

Sydney sighed defeatedly.

"So what? We're enemies Sark!"

Sark looked at her and laughed.

"Are we?"

Sydney looked at him confused... as Sark walked towards her.

"We're still enemies? After *all of this*?"

Sydney closed her eyes when she felt Sark's hands on her waist and took a deep breath. Sark murmured in her ear while pushing her a little backwards.

"You showed me your world. *You trusted me.*"

Sydney opened her eyes and when she tried to say something, Sark asked.

"Didn't you? Remember, no lies."

Sydney kept quiet and closed her eyes again, fighting the whirlwind of emotions she was feeling inside. Sark took that as a yes and dropped his hands from her waist and took a step back.

"I knew it. And now, now you feel guilty. You feel guilty for feeling guilty."

No sound.

"It's nice to have you back Miss Bristow."

When she opened her eyes, he was gone.

CHAPTER 36 – NEW UNDERCOVER

"I'll be what?!"

Sydney looked at her dad in shock. So, Jack repeated the assignment.

"You'll be an agent for CIA again Sydney."

Sydney sat dumbfounded on the couch and looked towards Irina for an explanation. Irina began.

"They know you're alive. We don't know how they found out, but they do. So, we're switching sides."

Sydney looked at them.

"With what?"

When his beeper went off, Jack stood up.

"We can't be late. It's time."

Sydney looked at them confused and asked.

"To do what?"

Irina stared at her.

"To go home."

Los Angeles

Sydney took a deep breath and looked nervously at her dad. Jack smiled softly to reassure her.

"You'll be fine. The building hasn't changed."

Sydney stepped forward and murmured.

"Yes, and I'm always walking with two criminals."

Two steps behind Sydney, while Sark remained mum, Irina glanced at him, and spoke.

"Sark."

Sark turned to her and spoke quietly.

"I'm with you, and you know it. Everybody knows my loyalties are flexible."

When Irina smiled, Sark added.

"But my only allegiance is with you, and you are here."

Irina stopped and turned to him.

"Thank you."

Sark nodded and followed her lead.

"Sydney!!"

When Sydney heard the voice, she ran towards the person arms outstretched.

"Weiss!"

When they hugged, Irina was smiling. Before Sydney could disengage from Weiss' bear hug, everyone else suddenly appeared out of nowhere.

"Syd!"

"Marshall!"

While she embraced Marshall, Kendall and Vaughn were round the corner. Kendall smiled.

"Miss Bristow?"

Sydney took a deep breath and turned to him. And after a moments hesitation, Sydney hugged him too, catching the stotic Kendall off guard. Jack was sure Kendall was blushing.

Then Syd and Vaughn finally came face to face, no sound could be heard. Sydney broke the awkward silence.

"Hey."

"Hey."

Sark watched them rolled his eyes, he looked at Irina. That was the moment Marshall noticed the other visitors in the office and asked with terror.

"Why are they here? No offense, Mrs. Bristow-I mean - Derevko-"

"Irina would be enough Marshall."

"Yes, sure, *Irina*."

Kendall looked at Vaughn and Marshall, and explained.

"From now on, we have two undercovers: Irina Derevko is the first as you know. She has been a tremendous source of information and help to us, which I'm still shocked about it." Irina gave Kendall a look annoyance, and Kendall went on with a cocky grin.

"The second undercover is new to us. Well, not to our group, but to the CIA: Julian Sark."

When Sydney and Vaughn turned to Kendall, Sark saw them speak in unison.

"What?"

There was a big, no, *giant* silence on the headquarters, Sark murmured under his breath.

"How lovely. Everyone is happy to have me, I feel so at home."

Sydney hushed him with a flick of her hand in the air and turned to Kendall.

"Kendall, this is crazy. I mean, Mom? Yes. But Sark? No."

Sark looked at her intently with this allegation, but Sydney turned to him, pointed an accusing finger at him before snapping at him.

"*Don't* look at me like that! This is business!"

Sark looked at her with bewildered eyes with a slight gleam, he asked.

"So, it wasn't business in the Bahamas?"

Vaughn frowned.

"Bahamas?"

Sydney looked at him confused.

"Quit making a fuss!"

She then turned to Kendall and with a firm voice, she said.

"No."

Kendall only smiled and opened his arm to his office.

"Please, my office NOW."

Once Sydney, Sark, Vaughn, Jack and Irina had all settled down in their chairs and Kendall sat down behind his desk, he locked his fingers together and looked all of them.

"As you may have know, we have a big problem ahead of us : the Covenant."

All of them remain silent and Kendall continued.

"Solving this matter is our first priority, along with saving one of our finest agents, Miss Bristow." Irina and Jack nodded to that and Kendall went on.

"I can't deny that Irina Derevko has helped us a lot and she mainly showed which side she was working for." Irina raised an elegant brow to that, but Kendall ignored it and continued. "However, I can't say the same about Mr. Sark, but I will accept the fact that we need him as much as he needs us"

With that, Sark, who was sitting with a relaxed expression on his face, right next to Sydney, spoke up.

"And why is that exactly?"

Kendall turned to him.

"Mr. Sark, you're not sitting in a cell right now, are you?" Sark raised a brow and asked slowly.

"Because you have a weapon in my blood, which can be triggered easily by half of the agents of CIA?" Irina soundly smirked to that, and Jack shot her a glare, Irina shrugged and Sark went on smugly.

"Also, as I'm sure, you know that I'm a gentleman. I wouldn't do such thing." Kendall looked at him hard, and spoke.

"Mr. Sark, I can kill you."

Sark glared at him and Kendall went on.

"But I'm not, and if you behave, yes, *behave* Mr. Sark, I will not kill you either." Sark silently looked at him and Jack asked instead.

"So what does this, *behaving* means?"

CHAPTER 37 – TROUBLE IN PARADISE

"Mr. Sark will help Miss Bristow or Mr. Vaughn to be exact."

Sydney looked at Kendall exasperated.

"What will this help be?"

Kendall turned to her and explained.

"Miss Bristow, I'm sure you've heard about the engagement of Mr. Vaughn."

The room was so quiet you could hear a pin drop. Sydney finally found her voice after several moments and replied weakly.

"Yes?"

"And if she didn't, what a way to break the news to her gently." Remarked Sark sarcastically.

Kendall nodded and continued.

"This means, on the extremely dangerous occasions, or on the occasions we need Mr. Sark's help, he'll help you."

With that, all three of young agents spoke at the same time.

"I don't need his help!"

"You'll let *him*, help *her* in a very dangerous occasion? *Him?!?*"

"I am not going to carry another person's responsibility for your own sake!"

While Jack rolling his eyes and Irina sipping her coffee, Sydney turned to Sark causing him to squirm.

"Carrying an another person's responsibility? *As if*, Sark! Who carries who?"

Sark smirked, turned to her fiercing gaze, and asked.

"You carried me dear? When did that happen?"

Sydney was about to spat something back to him, but Kendall raised his hand and spoke strongly.

"Enough."

"Since Mr. Sark will live our under eyes, he'll be very closely monitored, and won't be in contact with anyone besides our regular agents," Kendall again turned to Sark and before continuing

"also him carrying a weapon in his blood, which can be triggered easily by half of the agents of CIA," he again turned to Sydney and Vaughn,

"I'm sure that we can handle the situation. We handled Mrs. Derevko before, so this situation shouldn't be problem."

Irina looked at him and spoke for the first time since entering the office.

"Kendall, I was in a cage for *a year*."

Kendall turned to her and asked with a saccarine sweet voice.

"But you escaped, didn't you?"

Irina held her chin high to that and smiled. Kendall turned to young agents once more. "Mr. Vaughn and Miss Bristow will work together again, until Miss Reed shows up. After that--"

Sydney held her hand up and asked.

"What?"

The room fell silent again.

Kendall got up to his feet and spoke firmly.

"All right. Mrs. Derevko, I'm sure that you need your time and space. Jack, I need your reports. Mr. Sark, you have to come with me to the medical wing. And Mr. Vaughn, I'm sure you'll need my office for the next half an hour."

When no one objected to this plan, Kendall nodded.

"Move."

Once they were alone, Sydney turned to Vaughn and started grilling him.

"Miss Reed showing up? *What is going on?*"

Vaughn looked at her and spoke with a soft, soothing voice.

"Syd, calm down. This is something we couldn't foresee or stop. Lauren will come here."

Sydney looked at him with horror and asked.

"It's bad enough to lose you and have to closely work with you everyday. But to subject me to have to work with both of you. Why?"

Vaughn took a deep breath while his brow furrowed, and answered.

"She works at NSC and they are pushing Kendall hard. And since we have a *connection* with Lauren, Kendall and I,-" Vaughn stopped,"and Jack,-" he hastily added and spoke faster. "We um... we thought that with her being here, we could breathe a little easier under NSC.. that sums it up."

Sydney looked at him with hurt and disbelief in her eyes and then without a word, she walked backwards towards the door of the office...only to literally crash into the other man she least wanted to see.

Sark.

"Well well well... trouble in paradise?"

Sydney quickly regained her composure and spat.

"What are you doing -- eavesdropping?"

Sark walked in with ease and took his jacket from back of the chair where he had been sitting. And while doing that, he shot a glance at Vaughn, and smirking, he turned to Sydney and spoke with a unusual mocking tone.

"Sydney my dear, it will be a pleasure working with you. After *Miss Reed* shows up of course."

Sydney sneered at him and after Sark left, she shot a hurt look at Vaughn before escaping the office.

CHAPTER 38 – ROOMIES

"Okay. Now Miss Bristow will live with Mr. Sark, and-"

"Excuse me?" snapped Jack.

Marshall, who wore a brown jacket and a blinding orange tie today, looked terrified at Jack and spit out,

"Um um. Yes. D-d-didn't you know?"

"Do I look like I knew?"

Marshall pleaded silently with Irina. who was looking at the devices scattered around Marshall's office with a bored look, responded.

"Yes, Jack, they'll live together.."

"Why?" thundered Jack.

Irina turned to him and smiled slyly.

"Because that's what Kendall wants."

"And this is your desk.."

"Thank you Weiss. It still feels the same. I don't know why, but it does.."

The young man smiled at that. Turning to Sydney, he answered.

"Cause it *is* still the same. You and me were here, saving the world. Yeah, same old song."

Sydney smiled brightly to this. while pulling out her chair to sit down, they heard a male voice behind them--Sark. Sydney stiffened up and tried not to roll her eyes

"Hey Roomie, shall we go?"

"EXCUSE ME? BUT ARE YOU TRYING TO KILL ME KENDALL?! BECAUSE YOU KNOW, THERE IS AN EASIER WAY. HERE'S A GUN, PULL THE TRIGGER!" exclaimed a furious Sydney as she dropped a pistol on Kendall's desk.

Kendall, who was sitting behind his desk, took the gun and placed it in his drawer before standing up. answered with complete calmness .

"I'm not trying to kill you Miss Bristo-"

"Don't go all Miss Bristow on me now Kendall!"

"Alright then, *Sydney*, I'm definitely not trying to kill you. Actually, it's the exact opposite, I'm trying to keep you alive."

"How?? By making me sleep under a roof with a known killer?"

"You've slept under the same roof as him before. What's the problem now? *Sydney*.."

"That's was different! I was armed!"

"Different how?" Kendall let out a chuckle. "Armed? *Sydney*, you're always armed and dangerous."

Sydney, realizing she was losing the battle, looked at him with her arms crossed and asked.

"Why, then?"

"She's gonna live with Sark?!"

Marshall, nodding to Vaughn, answered.

"Why do only I know this? Was this classified?"

Irina was standing near an irate Jack. She responded to Marshall's inquiry with a smile.

"I don't think so Marshall... I think Kendall wanted to keep his head attached just a few minutes longer..."

Suddenly the door of Kendall's office flew open, and *Sydney* stormed out. Seeing the group of people in front of her, she demanded an answer to her question.

"Where's Sark?"

Men's bathroom...

Sark was standing in front of a mirror checking to see how his suit looked. He smiled a little when he heard the angry footsteps of a woman in heels stop outside the door. He easily guessed their owner . A moment later, the door opened and *Sydney* entered.

"I hate you."

Sark turned away from the mirror to face her. Speaking sweetly, he replied.

"Oh my dear. How do I love thee? Let me count the ways..."

Sark moved to exit the restroom. *Sydney* slammed the door in front of him with a bang. Sark looked at her amused and spoke.

"What now? Hate sex?"

Sydney's reply was an evil glare, and after that, she spoke

"You know why we are being tucked under the same roof. I'll do what they asked me to do. You can be sure of it Sark."

"And what exactly is that love? I'm quite interested."

Sydney stared at him in disbelief before answering.

"One: I'm an agent again--legally. Two: You are a mole in the Covenant, and I'm your handler--"

"I'm quite satisfied with that--"

"Three: Since there are other agents who know of your loyalties, somebody has to put a collar on your neck, which I'll enjoy--"

"And I'll be happy to oblig--"

"Four: Since NSC will be here, you are helping me prove that I'm still loyal to this country. You know I am. So, this means I take this job very seriously."

Sark gave her a serious look for the first time since the conversation started and young woman nodded.

"We'll live in the same house and I'll be watching your every move. That is the deal they are offering me. You won't be allowed to communicate with outsiders unless it is business related and CIA approved. With us living under the same roof, the Covenant will think that we are together. They still don't know that I'm Sydney and not some brainwashed drone. Only the higher CIA people know that and know that it's a potential problem if leaked to the wrong people. So we have to keep up our facade still."

Once she finished dictating her little order, Sark looked at her and murmured.

"And what will I gain from this deal?"

Sydney looked him in the eye and honestly answered.

"If you behave, I mean really behave, I won't be too hard on you. Mom thinks you are with us. I don't think so. No one else believes that either. But if you're with us, you may show it now."

"By living in the same house with you with manners?"

"Manners are a thing you are accustomed to Sark. You've always been a gentleman."

He smiled at that remark, then answered flirtatiously.

"You're smart."

Sydney, arching a brow with a little smile, held out her hand and asked.

"I know that you'll betray me on this, but deal?"

Sark looked at her outstretched hand. He stood still for a moment contemplating her offer. Then he took her hand and gave her a firm shake while speaking.

"Deal. And I won't betray you on this one."

Sydney looked at him confused for a moment before dropping his hand and turning to leave.

CHAPTER 39 – HELL FROZE OVER

"You accepted it?"

"He accepted it."

"Of course he'll accept that Sydney! He loves to take advantage of you!"

Sydney crossed her arms and asked with a calm voice.

"Oh does he, Vaughn?"

With a frustrated sigh, Vaughn looked at her and spoke.

"I'm sorry, but he's a traitor. He's betrayed us before and I'm afraid that he'll do it again. Only this time he'll be bringing down you along with the country."

When Sydney didn't answer, he looked deep into her eyes and continued in a tender tone.

"*You* are my first priority."

After a moment, the young woman spoke.

"No Vaughn. Your fiancée, your child, and your country must be your top priorities Vaughn. I'm the fourth. You chose it."

After she walked away, door of the men's room opened and Sark exited. He looked at Vaughn and said with a fake sympathetic tone.

"Aw, don't worry. I'll be there to dry her tears tonight. It's sad really. She continually cries herself to sleep."

Vaughn glared at him, Sark smirked.

"Thanks to you."

"Same deal goes for you two too. You'll live together. The CIA will think Jack controls Irina and the Covenant will think Irina controls Jack."

"Which home?"

Kendall turned to Irina and answered.

"A new one on neutral ground that is conveniently located between the CIA and Covenant."

Irina nodded, Kendall continued.

"Sydney and Sark's home will be across town. This way, your paths shouldn't cross..."

Jack, looking at him, asked.

"Any surveillance devices at the houses?"

Kendall nodded and answered him.

"There will be a few. I need to show my superiors some new devices, but Marshall will give you and Sydney first crack at anything he has available. You two will be able to turn them off if you need or want. There will be limitations of course."

Jack nodded, but Irina spoke.

"How unexpectedly sweet of you Kendall."

Kendall smirked a little, then responded.

"Perhaps hell froze over, Derevko."

Irina smirked and with Kendall's approval, Jack and Irina both stood up to leave.

Center area of base ops...

While organizing her new folders, Sydney saw Sark enter the main area. The young man sensed someone looking at him. When he saw that it was Sydney, he walked over to her.

"Ready?"

Sydney looked at him from where she was seated behind her desk and spoke softly.

"You heard, didn't you?"

Sark nodded and spoke.

"That's not my business. However, if it ever becomes an issue, let me know and I'll be more than happy to lend a hand."

"How can it be your business Sark? We are not even friends..."

While Sydney stood up, Sark looked at the young woman in front of him. Then quietly murmured words caused Sydney to freeze.

"We are beyond friends Miss Bristow."

When she looked at him surprised, Sark took the box which was on the desk, containing her new files and spoke.

"You know it."

He turned and walked away and Sydney followed him to the car.

Leaving the office, Jack murmured.

"I don't like this. He was too easy on us. Kendall must be up to something."

Irina, nodding while walking, spoke.

"I'm sure he is. Kendall always is up to something and there's nothing you can do about it. So, we'll know it when it happens..."

They entered the center area, Jack spoke.

"Isn't it weird that you'll have a desk here?"

Irina, smiling, turned to him and spoke.

"I won't have a desk."

Jack, who came to *his* desk, turned to her and questioned.

"What? Where will you work?"

The beautiful woman smiled slightly, causing Jack to sigh.

"I can't believe it. He really thinks that I'll be your handler?"

Irina smiled a little broader and took the folder on the top of the box to the left of Jack. She spoke playfully.

"I don't need a desk, Jack. You know it... Plus, it will be fun to sit on top of this table and play with papers, pens and pencils and watch you squirm."

Leaving him wordless, Irina walked away knowing that he'll follow.

CHAPTER 40 – ROOM ARRANGEMENTS

A classy house painted in browns, yellows, and soft colors was totally furnished...

All the cupboards and refrigerator were full of everything they could need. Surveillance devices are settled from CIA and in the middle of all of it, two young agents, one legal, and the other one, half-legal: Sydney and Sark.

"Okay, let's see the rooms..."

Following her, the young man nodded. Sydney opened the first door to see a room in neutral colors with a bed, desk, wardrobe. There were some drawings on the walls. In short, you could easily fool some normal person that you lived here for years.

The other room across the hall was decorated a little different. It didn't have a neutral color scheme, this room was all black--the sheets, wardrobe, carpet, and loveseat.

"I guess this is mine."

Sydney, smiling a little, nodded.

"One room?"

Irina, who was in the kitchen, asked.

"What?"

Jack, entering the kitchen, muttered.

"Nothing..."

Irina turned to him with two cups of coffee in her hands.

"One bedroom I assume?"

Jack, sitting on one of the chairs, nodded. Irina placed one of the cups in front of him and said.

"I think Kendall really likes you Jack. In my opinion, I think that he's trying to get you to forgive him for what he did to Sydney..."

"How? By throwing us in one bedroom?"

"Which can be easily arranged if we want, you know it. He only gives you friendly advice to act up on your feelings."

"Which is?"

Irina, sipping her coffee, shrugged.

"I don't begin to understand men."

Jack rolled his eyes to that and Irina smirked.

Sydney was in the kitchen looking through the cupboards, spoke.

"We have everything. Literally."

On the other hand, Sark was inspecting the books in the living room, answered.

"I agree. We have everything."

Sydney, closing one cupboard, turned to him as he entered the kitchen and spoke.

"When shall we communicate with the Covenant?"

"Whenever they want us to. Don't tell me you forget how to be a double?"

Sydney, leaning on the counter, smirked at him. Sark nodded.

"I thought so."

With a sigh, he spoke.

"I'll take a shower now. If you don't have any urgencies?"

"Nope, go ahead. But-"

"I know, I'll behave."

As Sark disappeared down the corridor, Sydney walked into the living room to check out the books in there...

Sark left his bedroom wearing new clothes, heard the sound of water running coming from the only bathroom in the house. He decided to have a closer look around, then he entered the living room silently.

When Sydney left her bedroom with a towel in her hands for her hair, she smelled something that wasn't there when she got out of the shower. It was something...nice.

Frowning a little, she walked down the corridor, ready for anything. Leaving the towel on a chair on the way, Sydney stepped inside the kitchen and stood still due to shock.

There, in the kitchen, one of the best assassins of all time, the man who can lie without blinking an eye, kill in coldblood, was doing the last thing that she expected:

Cooking.

"What are you doing?"

"Something you should do, but I'm not complaining..."

Sydney looked around while walking towards him, she saw that everything was prepared for two. Next to the refrigerator sat an empty wineglass waiting to be filled. Sydney looked at him wordlessly, causing Sark to turn from the salad he was working on to the fish that he was getting ready to place on the grill and spoke.

"You do know that I have British education, right?"

"They make you learn how to cook too? Functional."

Smiling, Sark picked up his wine glass. Sipping a little, he turned to her.

"I had to learn how to survive, Miss Bristow. You can't always find maids and cooks everywhere."

Sydney, smiling at him, spoke.

"You survive by knowing how to grill fish? I think you should learn about herbs. That's something you'll find when you can't find maids and cooks."

"Smart. Wine?"

CHAPTER 41 – WHOSE GAME IS IT?

"Jack, dinn-"

Irina stopped when she saw that he had fallen asleep on the bed that he had laid down on to read a book until dinner.

Smiling a little, she moved inside the room. Taking a blanket from the back of the sofa, Irina silently covered the sleeping man who began snoring loudly. Looking at him, she shook her head and sighed.

"Always leaving *me* to decide, typical."

Turning her back to him, she turned on the little lamp on the nightstand and closed the curtains. Walking to the wardrobe, she leaned down and took a sheet and pillow, stood up, and leaving silently.

"Then I always made my food when it was available. Or not trustworthy."

Sipping her wine, she smiled sweetly. Leaning over the counter, Sydney spoke flirtatiously.

"This means, you'll be making the meals from now on... I'm not trustworthy, you know."

Looking at the fish, Sark smiled and answered.

"It always goes both ways darling. How will you eat my food?"

"One, I'm not your darling. Two, I'll eat *your* fish and you'll eat mine."

Smirking a little, he transferred the fish onto the plates. Turning to her, Sark spoke.

"Too bad. I forgot which was for whom."

Smiling, Sydney spoke.

"Yeah, right."

Sark gave her the right plate. Once Sydney sat down she joked.

"Tell Mom and Dad that I love them, okay?"

Nodding, Sark took his wineglass from the counter. Sitting across from her, he raised his glass and made a toast.

"To your death."

Sydney laughed a little and the glasses clinked.

"Why are they so happy? They haven't even had one simple argument!"

"There was no need to argue. Geez Vaughn, relax a little."

Vaughn, who was ready to leave work 30 minutes ago exploded.

"I don't understand. She says she loves me. She says she is in pain. She says that she hates Sark and would kill him in a second if she has a chance. Yet here they are flirting!"

With an exasperated sigh, Weiss turned to him and spoke.

"And you wonder why?"

Vaughn looked at him perplexed, Weiss explained.

"Let me spell it out for you-- you left her. You gave up hope is what happened. Oh don't tell me that! I believed that she was dead too. This is not the case Michael! Her parents didn't believe that. After everything that we've seen, we should know that no one actually dies in this world. You abandoned her after a very, very short period of time!"

When Vaughn opened his mouth to speak, Weiss raised his hand and continued.

"I'm not saying what you did was wrong. However, it was not very nice. And now, you're going to be a father. Your fiancée is coming tomorrow and you have to be ready. Because Sydney is ready. This is her proof of that! She's been through hell Vaughn. Geez man, she's *still* there."

Vaughn closed his mouth and Weiss went on in a soft voice.

"She and Sark have a history. They've worked together--lie or not. And he is her partner from now on, whether you like it or not. Apparently they are trying to make the best of a bad situation. If that requires them to use aliases, let it be."

Weiss, looking at him, spoke.

"We have to let her do it. It's *her* game now. You are no longer a part of it anymore."

Entering the code, Sydney shut off the surveillance devices. Leaving her room, she called loudly.

"Sark?"

To her question, he came from the living room, speaking.

"I've made sure that all of the doors and windows are secure. Don't worry Love, it's safe now."

"Oh, I'm relaxed."

Smirking a little, Sark bowed and murmured.

"I'll be glad to find your corpse tomorrow morning Miss Bristow. Are there any last requests?"

"Yes, kicking your ass would be awesome. May I please?"

Chuckling, Sark stood up. Looking her in the eye, he spoke.

"Good night Sydney."

Leaving her speechless, he entered to his room.

CHAPTER 42 – NIGHTMARE, DREAM, REAL.

“What are you doing here?”

Irina opened her eyes to the sound of Jack’s voice. Turning towards his voice, she faced a sleepy, confused, and angry Jack.

“I woke up and you weren’t there, why?” he demanded.

Frowning, she propped herself up a little on her elbow and slowly answered as her mind was full of sleep.

“Because we are not sleeping together?”

“Don’t we?”

“Do we?”

Jack, looking at her, didn’t answer. After a few moments of silence, he spoke.

“I’m going to bathroom now. When I get back, you better be there.”

After he left, Irina tilted her head slightly, confused.

Sark opened his eyes and heard moans. Getting himself out of bed, he searched for his gun, but he couldn’t find it. Cursing, he remembered that this wasn’t his home. Slowly he opened his door and entered the hallway. He noticed that the moans were coming from Sydney’s room. He smirked a little. Kitten was playing in the dark? *Nice.*

Jack entered the bedroom again and Irina wasn’t there. When he turned towards the door again, he came face to face with Irina.

Sark stood outside of her room and listened closely. There was definitely moaning coming from inside and he was sure that it was from Sydney, but it sounded nothing like a moan of pleasure. Nor was it a moan of pain. More so, it was a pitiful moan full of torment. It made Sark frown a little in concern and open the ajar door.

“You want me? Say it. I’m not your slave.”

Jack, looking at her, stood still for a second and then spoke.

“I want you. Now, get in bed.”

Irina clearly wasn’t expecting that. She looked at him blankly and then without an option she walked towards the bed.

Sydney's bedroom was pitch black. Sark moved slowly towards the bed. When he saw that she was having a nightmare, his shoulders relaxed a bit. First, he moved sharp objects out of arms reach, then soft objects, and finally, the second pillow. Then he slowly, sat down on the bed next to her and whispered.

"Sydney, it's all right love, relax a little..."

Sydney became even more alarmed when she heard his voice. She turned to him and attempted to hit him, but Sark was fast and grabbed ahold of her wrists and whispered fast.

"Shhh love, you're safe. They're not going to take you away. Can you hear me Sydney? You are *not* going to be taken away. You're with me. And you're safe. I'm here and I won't go away. You can hold onto me, you hear? Shhh love.."

Gently moving aside her hair, he continued speaking as he laid down next to her. He didn't even stop for a second, allowing Sydney to get used to his voice. In the end, Sark helped Sydney relax.

Never closing her eyes even for a minute, Irina was wide awake. She had not slept in the same bed together with Jack for 30 years. She's had sex with him. She had cuddled with him the morning after, but not just sleeping in the same bed together.

Jack was not having a problem with that!

He was already sound asleep on his side of the bed. The same side that he used to sleep on when they were married. She was not the same person she was then.

Turning onto his side, she looked at his face. Jack was sleeping peacefully and she sighed a little. He was trusting her. Why? Love? Of course he still had some affection for her. Yet, he wanted her in his bed and next to him the first night and it seems for the rest. It made her confused.

But as confused as when Jack reached over, put his hand on her waist and pulled her back to his chest in one single move. Irina held her breath. He kissed her neck, then whispered a soft '*Sleep now.*' Irina bit her bottom lip to determine if this was a nightmare, a dream, or real.

Sydney sighed and rolled to her left. When her nose met with a solid chest, she smiled a little. She buried her nose into his nice smelling chest.

He.

Sydney's eyes flew open. When she saw Sark's sleeping face, she hardly kept herself from screaming. After her heart stopped racing, Sydney forced herself to relax by taking a deep breath. She laid still and at that moment, Sark opened his eyes.

"Hey."

Sydney, wrapped tightly in his arms, nodded and Sark smiled a little.

"You okay?"

Young woman again nodded. Now she remembered what had happened. Sark still had that same little smile was looking at her.

"We should make a little arrangement at night in my opinion... your room, or mine?"

When she frowned, Sark leaned into her and murmured.

"You react to my voice Miss Bristow. It would be bad if you happen to say something about CIA while you are alone with the Covenant listening to you."

Sydney, gulping a little, looked at him. Sark, seeing that she was cornered, repeated.

"And, let me say, you are not dead."

Sydney looked at him and replied in the same tone and volume.

"I hate you."

Sark, smirking a little, leaned in and whispered.

"But why? I love you."

Then he kissed her.

CHAPTER 43 – LET IT GO

A bedroom and a bed...

On that lovely morning, two people were kissing on the bed, slowly. The young man rolled on top of a confused young woman pinning her beneath him. The young woman couldn't understand what was going on, but she was not rejecting him either. The young man, noticing that, began to kiss her harder.

Sydney felt Sark leaning into her. She moved her hand up Sark's back grabbing the collar his shirt. She felt that his neck was stiff and all of his attention was on her. Suddenly, Sydney became aware of what was going on-

"Wait."

Sark raised slightly on his forearms and looked at her. Raising a brow, he asked.

"What?"

"You're kissing me."

"And you are letting me do it."

"No, I'm not."

Sark looked at her lying beneath him, while disentangling himself from her. She raised up and spoke.

"Sark, I'm not interested in you-"

"Am I?"

"I'm not saying that,- "

"Then what *are* you saying?"

Sydney took a deep breath and looked at the man before her.

A lazy kiss on a neck.

"Wake up."

Smiling, Irina turned towards him and spoke with her eyes closed.

"No I won't."

Smiling, Jack looked at her beautiful form and the stubbornness that drove him wild, as she still refused to open her eyes, and asked.

"Why?"

Beside him, she muttered an answer still keeping her eyes closed.

"Because I'm not sure if you'll act the same as before. A part of me wishes for you to be cold, like you've been to me previously, but--"

Jack looked at her closed eyes and silently waited for her to continue. A moment later she did.

"Yet a part of me, perhaps it's the Laura part, she wants Jack to be that sweet guy whom you are being now. And it hurts me."

Jack frowned a bit and Irina asked in a seductive tone with her eyes still closed.

"Should I open my eyes Jack?"

"Look, you've been in a prison cell for like what, a year? And um-I wasn't exactly a free girl either. I didn't let a guy near me for so long, and--"

"Where are you going to, I wonder..."

Sydney raising up her hands, looked at him sitting on the bed, and answered.

"You have needs. I have needs. But I don't want to fulfill my needs with you."

Sark sat a little with silence, looking at her, *inspecting her*. She was uncomfortable under his gaze, but she was not stepping back either. Finally, he spoke.

"You're scared that you may lost it with me, aren't you?"

Sydney looked at him sharply. Nodding, Sark continued.

"You're scared that I can make you feel good, satisfied, and happy. You're scared that I can fulfill *you*, not only your needs."

Sydney opened her mouth to protest, but Sark was faster.

"You didn't see a man in front of you for a year Sydney? I haven't seen a woman either. And you know what? This thing will drive both of us crazy. *You are desiring me.*"

"No, I'm not!"

"Yes, you are. You went nuts on the bed in Italy. You are reacting to me and you can do nothing, *absolutely nothing* about it."

Sydney was literally gaping at him and Sark went on.

"You want me. From the first moment you saw me in Irina's home, you wanted me. You nearly lost it in Italy. You can lose it in a minute if I decide to push you to the edge. Right?"

"Yes."

Sark looked at her.

"Yes, I want you. You are a good looking man, and you can be very sexy and charming. And yes, I want you--physically."

Now, Sark was gaping and Sydney continued.

"But my heart doesn't want you. Only my body wants you, and you know it too. We are living in the same house. If you continue like this, trying to push me to the edge, it'll be very hard to live together. I'm not planning to sleep with you Sark. I've always wanted things, but I choose wisely."

A coy smile appeared on Sark's face and it was slowly making her angry.

"Why are you smiling like that?"

"Because you are telling the truth--only your body wants me. You'll go crazy with desire and I'll be happy to make you crazy."

"Oh no, you won't. 'Cause it goes both way baby. If you play, I'll make you hurt."

"Oh would you?"

Sark slowly began to hover over her, but he refrained from touching her. Sydney, cornered, looked at his face, couldn't speak. Then Sark spoke.

"I'm not your baby, Sydney."

Sydney, who wasn't breathing at all, looked at his face in front of her. After a second, he leaned in, whispering.

"Now be a grown up woman."

When their lips met, she moaned.

Loudly.

Dropping onto the bed, she was pulling her t-shirt over her head and discarded it on the floor. She whispered.

"Lose it."

The man above her, smiling to her lips, didn't oblige. Taking her neck into his hand, he pulled her closer. When their bodies crashed together, feeling her hotness, he needed to get rid of something too. He pushed himself back and raised his arms up and slipped out of his t-shirt. Again, leaning into her, he murmured.

"Bra."

"You lose it."

Smirking and kissing her neck, he found the clasp. Opening it with one single flick, he felt two small hands on his bottom. Closing his eyes, he took a deep breath. Leaning his head to the pillow below her head, he let her take it off. Once she was totally free, she turned her head to him. Without a second to think, she pulled him to her, and kissed him hard.

"You want it? I'll give it."

Sark, laughing to that, opened his eyes and looked her beneath him, and spoke.

"*I am* giving it."

Sydney, pinching his shoulder, pulled him to her, and murmured.

"I'm letting it go Sark, make yourself useful..."

"I thought you chose wisely my dear?"

Sydney, all flushed from the kissing and caressing and some hard pulling and pushing, looked at him above her.

"I chose. And if you don't do something now, and play around a little bit more, you'll see why I'm without a man for a ye-oh god."

Her eyes went wide. Sark smirked and pulled himself back, causing her to frown and become a little angry. At that moment, he pushed it again, causing her eyes close, as he whispered to her ear.

"You'll go crazy Sydney."

Sark couldn't believe his ears when he heard Sydney hissing with pleasure after he spoke.

He had found the keyword.

"I thought I was the one in need?"

"Shut up-oh god..."

Sark, smirking, let himself fasten the pace. This caused Sydney to hold onto him, and holding her small waist, he, kissing her neck again, murmured.

"Say you want me Sydney."

All he got was a "humph" as an answer. He stopped, *that* really caused her to react.

"Hey!"

"I told you what I wanted Sydney."

"Don't call me tha-oh god! Don't do that!"

Smirking, Sark pulled himself up.

"All righ-"

"Sark!"

"I'm doing what you want love. You should do the same too. That is the basic thing-"

"Are you crazy?! Is this the time for it?!"

Giving the young woman her right, he watched her body, who was in need of a fulfillment. *Quickly.*

"Say you want me Sydney, and I'll do what you want now."

Sighing, she looked at him and spoke.

"Isn't it obvious that I want you?"

"Say it."

"I want you-hmph!"

She couldn't finish her sentence as Sark leaned in and kissed her hard, all the while pushing hard into her, holding her waist tight and caressing her hair. All of a sudden, it was *too much* for Sydney. She was getting closer. She could feel it.. She was feeling all of the touches, even tiny ones, and he was kissing her like he'll die if he slows down, and she-

"Oh god."

Pushing him from her face, she drew in a deep breath and tried to calm down. She closed her eyes strongly and patted Sark's neck to let him know that she was still in the world, but she was floating away, she could feel it.

CHAPTER 44 – JACK HAS A HEART, SARK HAS NEEDS.

"Open your eyes."

Irina did as she was told and looked at Jack's face with the open question in her eyes. Jack spoke.

"Good morning."

Irina nodded, still not talking, waiting for Jack's decision. She looked at him and he spoke after sighing.

"I can't be that sweet man. I just can't Irina."

Nodding, Irina remained still on the bed, but Jack continued.

"But I'm giving you my trust. At least as much as I can give. And that should mean something, because I vowed that I'd never, ever trust you again. God help me, because I'm sure I'm making a mistake, but I *do* trust you."

Irina looked at him silently and Jack went on.

"I loved you. Your body, your soul, your charms. I really did love you. Laura, Irina, whoever that woman was. Yet when you died, I died. I mourned for years. I couldn't even look at my own daughter because she reminded me so much of you. I loved you that much. Maybe more than my love for Sydney.

"And then, one day, you came back. How could I trust you? You, *my wife* was in front of me, and I could do *nothing*. You were a traitor to your family, to me, to my country. You stood for all the things I have been fighting against. My daughter was in your circle, getting closer to you each day. I was watching her, helpless, as she turned away from me, *to you*."

"Jack, no, I never--"

"I know. *I know*. If you had any intention of that sort, you could've gone with it to Sydney in the beginning of all this. I know, Irina."

Irina, nodding to him with tears in her eyes, let Jack continue.

"And now, here you are--on my side, in my house, in my bed, beside me. You and Sydney are now mother and daughter, how it should've been years ago. She trusts you and loves you, and I don't *want to* do a thing about it.

"I can't resist you. If I have to, I can and you know it. I did it for solid one year, you know."

Irina, laughing at him, dried her eyes and nodded. Jack, smiling, went on.

"I can do it again, but I don't want to. However, if you betray me again, I'll kill you. If I can't kill you, you'll be dead to me and I wouldn't sleep if I were you.

"But, you didn't betray us. Now you work for us, which I'm thankful for as I know what you are capable of and how much you can help us. Also Sydney is in good hands. Sark, and even Kendall sometimes, listens to you. You are making yourself needed."

"Yes, that is my evil plan, actually--"

"I know, until the day you turn your back against us again, I'll make it harder for you each day. Last time, that decision hurt you, but let you remain alive. This time, if you ever, ever make that decision again, I'll make sure that it'll kill you."

Irina looked at his determined eyes and Jack nodded.

"It won't be easy this time Irina. If you go, you'll never come back. If you stay, you won't go again. The choice is up to you. I can kill you, even though I loved you."

"You love me?"

"I love Laura. I respect Irina."

"So you don't love me?"

Jack looked at her and spoke.

"You have to make your decision."

"What for? I don't care about this country, intelligence, or anybody living here. I care only for you and Sydney. And I have to know, do you love me?"

"If I loved you, would you stay?"

"Probably. I'm not young, you know."

Jack, smiling, looked at her and spoke.

"Don't say that."

"But I'm not--"

Jack, kissing her, spoke.

"Don't say that."

Irina nodded.

"All right, I'm 20."

Laughing, Jack pulled her towards him again.

"Back to Earth yet?"

"Argh."

"Shall I take that as a yes?"

Sydney turned her head to him and spoke.

"Argh."

Sark, smirking a little, murmured.

"I didn't know I had this effect on you, Miss Bristow. How long have you been desiring me?"

"I'm not desiring yo--"

"Don't start again."

Sydney, sighing, answered.

"One week."

"Only one week? I'm more sexy than that!"

"I had a boyfriend. You were the enemy."

"Am I not now?"

The young woman turned her body towards him and answered.

"I don't know. Can't this be a one night-morning, stand, whatever? I needed it, you needed it. We did it. Tension is released. Can we just forget it? You always wanted me Sark, but am I saying anything that makes sense?"

Sark, smirking under her, answered.

"I never said that I didn't want you Sydney. You were the one running."

Sydney smiled down on him and spoke while patting his forehead.

"Good then. Now that I've made your fantasy come true, get over it."

Sark pulled her to him and kissing her lips softly, he murmured.

"You'll want me again."

Sydney, her hair falling onto his face, spoke knowingly,

"Maybe. But until then, we are again sworn enemies."

"I'll look forward to that moment."

"It may be forever Sark. I'm back to my own world now, remember?"

"Your own world? Where are the men, Miss Bristow? I didn't see a queue?"

"I never wanted a queue, it's dangerous. Plus, I don't have to explain myself to you."

"Ooh, can I bring a lovely lady home then roomie? Please?"

"That's funny, but no."

"But I'm a man, I have needs--"

"Then CIA will fulfill your needs--"

"The CIA is a woman now?"

"You understand what I meant! If you have needs, talk to Kendall, not to me!"

"But you're my handler!"

"It doesn't involve sexual needs!"

"It involves everything! You have to find a cure for my disease young lady. Believe me, I'm a hard man to satisfy."

Sydney rolled her eyes at him and spoke.

"No women in the house. Plus, you won't hit on our agents too. I'm serious Sark! If I ever see you flirting with woma--"

"Jealous love? I'm getting quite happ--"

"-n, I'll kick your ass. And not for pleasure."

"I always flirt with women, you know that. If they answer me, then I try my luck. See, you answered."

"You're a jerk. I just wanted to have sex and you were the closest body."

"Ooh, I'll make sure tell that to Mr. Vaughn too."

Sydney's eyes grew wide at that.

CHAPTER 45 – MAGICAL CUPBOARD

"HOW DARE YOU THREATEN ME LIKE THAT?!"

"Is that a threat to you? I thought you guys were broken up? I wouldn't *have* sex with you if I knew you belonged to him. Sorry, my mistake."

"I can't believe this! You planned it, didn't you? You bedded me just so that you could rub Vaughn's nose in it, didn't you? As if you're still in high school!"

Sark, still under her on the bed, spoke.

"I think you are the one who is left in high school. If you break up with someone, you can still have sex, Sydney. And let me remind you: he had sex *several* times with her. One resulted a little cute tiny baby."

Sydney looked at him in shock and Sark went on.

"You didn't think of it that way, did you? You accepted that he had moved on and became engaged to someone else, *even had a baby*. But you didn't think they were sleeping together, did you? Miss Reed touched your Prince Charming's skin and now carrying his child. You should've done that, shouldn't you?"

Sydney had gone teary eyed, but kept eye contact. Sark could tell by looking at her that she was still in shock and continued with a calm expression.

"In the back of your mind, you were taking revenge on Vaughn by with sleeping with me. His enemy, the man who he hates with all his being. I live with you. I'm your partner. I'm all things he wants to be, yet he can't. By sleeping with me it means sleeping with him and with his enemy."

Sark rolled Sydney slightly off of him as he squirmed out from under her. He spoke while getting out of bed, without looking at her.

"Congratulations Miss Bristow, you've got your revenge. Now if you want, I can kill him with this. But I won't say anything to him for now."

He left the room, not ashamed of his nakedness, leaving a very confused young woman inside.

Irina was in the kitchen preparing the breakfast. She was quickly thinking about the all of the things that occurred last night. She needed to think logically, similar to how a computer runs a program.

It was confusing, yet it wasn't.

Jack told her that he accepted her. It seemed they were together again, but she was not sure of that. They were partners now. If she happens to make a mistake, Jack would kill her.

That was just the basics.

What would happen now? She was not used to being relaxed around Jack. He had told her that he'd be relaxed when he's around her and he would sleep without any alarms in his brain, and *that* was a big thing. Jack Bristow was never a deep sleeper. To sum it all up, Irina was downright confused.

And she was definitely not used to that.

Sydney took her bag from the couch, checked her gun one more time, and put it back into her bag. When she still didn't see that Sark was ready, she spoke loudly.

"Sark?"

No answer.

Sydney sighed and walked around inside the house. She loudly called out for him.

"You playing any tricks on me now? As if you didn't hurt me enough for one morning? Sark, I'm coming in-Sark?"

When Sydney saw young man's body, she rushed to his side. Squating down, she checked for a pulse. She found a steady pulse and reached for the phone. Suddenly her wrist caught by the young man and she turned towards him.

"You all right?!"

Sark nodded and raised himself up with her help and spoke.

"I don't know what happened. I just blacked out. I only opened that cupboard--"

Sydney looked at him and got out her gun. Slowly she opened the cupboard. Sark saw her fall and at the last second he caught her head.

Irina, filling her cup with coffee for the second time that morning, spoke.

"Should I make arrangements as we'll use one bedroom?"

Jack, scanning the newspaper, nodded silently. Watching him, Irina continued.

"Should I greet myself as Mrs. Bristow to the neighborhood too?"

Jack nodded again. Irina was wide eyed at that agreement. She decided to see how well he was paying attention and murmured.

"I slept with Sark once."

Jack turned his head to look at her faster than she could wink. Irina replied with a sweet smile and raised eyebrows.

Sydney, feeling that she was on a soft mattress, opened her eyes.
"Sark?"

"I'm here."

Sydney turned towards the voice and found him changing his clothes, buttoning his shirt to be exact. Sitting up on his bed, she asked.

"What happened?"

Sark chose a jacket and answered.

"It seems that your op-tech guy doesn't trust me enough to leave his favorite girl alone here and put devices in the cupboards that makes anyone on eye sight faint in a second."

Sydney, standing up, spoke.

"Marshall?! He wouldn't do that!"

"Well, it seems that he did. I just spoke with him and made him disable everything. He's a little crazy as I remember him. And he is afraid of me as he is of Hell. I like it."

Sydney, rolling eyes, spoke.

"Well, he was right. Look at me, you damaged me the first day!"

"Hey, you were screaming from joy an hour ago!"

"Jerk."

"At least a sexy jerk. Shall we?"

Sydney sighed exasperated and walked through the opened door with Sark following her closely.

CHAPTER 46 – TODAY IS THE DAY

"You didn't."

"You're right, I didn't. But the expression on your face was priceless."

"Don't do that again. I always listen to you and you know it."

"Well...You used to,- "

"I *still* do."

Irina nodded to him and murmured.

"Are you sure about Mrs. Bristow?"

"Well, yes. I'm a legal resident of this country and you're not. Plus you look like you're about 20, so that makes me charismatic."

Irina, laughing, stood up and turned towards the counter while speaking.
"How will you explain it your daughter then?"

"I'll tell her that you are my second wife."

Irina froze. His breath was on her neck suddenly. She hadn't heard of him coming closer and that was dangerous. Jack spoke again, taking her thoughts away.

"A very beautiful, sexy, smart, know-it-all wife."

"I'm not a know-it-all."

Jack, smiling to her neck and dropping a light kiss on her shoulder, murmured.

"Yes, I know."

Taking the cup from her hands, he slowly put it on the counter. He turned Irina towards him so that they could speak face to face.

"I'll make you wonder, Irina. You won't know if this is the same Jack you lived with previously. The answer: Yes he is, but be advised that he won't be like this in the office. There, you are Derevko and I'm Bristow. But here, you'll be my wife. I'll let myself have that."

"Will I let you have that?"

"Yes you will, because you want it badly. I can see it in your eyes. You can hide everything to everyone, but not this. Not to me."

"How can you tell?"

"Because your voice cracks with *sexual* tension when I'm close to you like this. No one else could fulfill your needs, did they? No one could make you close your eyes while you have sex. No one made you totally lose it. Did they?"

Irina looked at him and didn't answer. Jack smiled a little.

"In this house, we are both defenseless. Accept that. You are a realist who sees the facts before everyone else, like me. Only this time, I'm faster."

Smiling, Irina looked at him and nodded.

"All right."

"All right?"

"All right."

Jack slowly leaned into her, kissing her softly, he spoke.

"We'll have sex tonight."

At that moment Irina could swear her knees gave out like she was in college, hearing this for the first time from his mouth.

Base ops...

"Good morning Weiss. Could you check Sark's blood values for me please? I'm afraid Marshall's device may have done something to his thing in his blood..."

Weiss nodded and showed Sark the way. As two men walking away, Sydney took a deep breath and walked towards her desk.

Today was the day it would all blow up to her face.

Today, Lauren would come.

CHAPTER 47 – THE BOMB IS TICKING

It was about noon at base ops and Sydney was feeling restless already. She just wanted this to be over. She wanted to see Lauren face to face, lie to her, and move on with her life.

Like that was possible.

Moving files around on her new computer, she sighed; this was not easy. Seeing Vaughn everyday was hard enough already, but now having to see him with her, it would just be wrong.

As if to answer her thoughts, Sark chose that moment to enter the center area. showing yet another thing wrong in her life.

As if she didn't have enough problems already.

Sydney didn't know what to do with him. She wanted to kick his ass for starters, but it wasn't enough, not anymore.

Kill him? No, that wouldn't be enough either. She wanted something else, she just didn't know what.

She hated , no, despised the way he treated her. Sark treated her like the woman she used to be. It was like when they were at SD-6 and they were partners in crime. As if it was 'destined to be this way' in his words.

She could see that Sark was happy and it was killing her.

Sydney always knew Sark...What, fancied her? Liked her? Wanted to fuck her? Now, even though it was just angry sex and nothing more, she felt like she had given him the most coveted toy that he ever wanted.

Sydney was so angry that Sark was taking very good care of it.

He always had his eyes on her, checking on what she was doing, opening the doors for her, always leading her first to talk. All in all, he was just being Sark, and she HATED Sark.

Sydney didn't know why she was thinking so much about Sark right now. Perhaps hating Sark was the most normal thing in her life. It had always been this way.

Looking around, she saw her mother walking towards her like she owns the place. If Sydney didn't know better, she would have been fooled that Irina was a CIA agent for years, working non-stop to save her country from evil people.

As if.

Sighing again, she looked at her mother, who seemed distracted for some reason today. Sydney spoke to her while handing her some files.

"I've done them. I thought you said you'd take them an hour ago?"

Irina took the files and answered.

"Something else came up. I'm just a bit distracted today-"

"By what?"

Irina smiled a little, looked at her, and answered.

"By everything."

Nodding, Sydney didn't reply. Her own problems were weighing heavily on her mind today, distracting her so that she barely heard her mother say.

"I think they're here."

Standing up, she cautiously glanced toward Sark. His desk was two feet in front of him and he was eyeing Lauren closely. Sydney sighed. When she saw the look of disapproval on Sark's face, Sydney smiled for no reason and turned towards to the couple that was walking with Kendall.

Sark looked at the woman who was with Sydney's Prince Charming and he was utterly disappointed. This was whom Prince ditched Sydney for? Laughable. Fine with him though, who was he to argue?

Jack, seeing that Irina was turning towards the entrance and Sydney standing up, he understood that the moment had arrived. He walked towards them. At that moment, Kendall was introducing the blonde to the group:

"This is Lauren Reed. She is transferring from NSC and will be assisting us when she and her information is needed."

Smiling a little, Lauren nodded. It was easy to understand that she was nervous. Casting a uneasy glance at Irina and Sydney, she flinched slightly, but stood still. Vaughn was beside her, and they couldn't do anything to her.

"Lauren, this is the group that you'll work with mostly. You already know Michael., This is our op-tech guy, Marshall. Dixon and Weiss, field agents, like the rest of the group. Jack Bristow, manager of field operations and the father of this young lady, Sydney Bristow."

Kendall gestured to each in turn as he introduced them.

Nodding to Sydney, Lauren was still.

Lauren couldn't read Sydney's expression, she was polite, but not very welcoming. That was expected. Kendall continued pointing to a man who was near Sydney and spoke:

"This is Julian Sark. I'm sure that you've heard of him?"

Lauren nodded and spoke.

"Of course. Actually, I'm rather surprised to see two of the most wanted criminals inside of these walls with your most qualified agents."

Jack, glaring at her, answered coldly trying to intimidate her.

"I can see that you have not been properly informed of the recent updates. You will be briefed shortly. However, as you will see, there won't be any harm done. They are working for us."

Nodding, Lauren didn't say a word. Kendall spoke.

"And last, but not least, the most charming of all, Irina Derevko."

Smiling at Kendall, Irina spoke softly.

"Watch out Kendall. Otherwise, I'll think that you like me."

Kendall, rolling his eyes, went on.

"As you can see, we have some dysfunctionalities around here. We'll gather in the meeting room in five minutes. Miss Reed, come with me."

Kendall walked towards his office. Lauren turned to Vaughn and smiling softly, she followed Kendall without saying a word. Once she was gone, Sark murmured, causing everyone to relax a little.

"Well, wasn't that interesting."

"Don't go anywhere near Lauren. Do you understand me Sark?"

Looking at Prince Charming, Sark smirked a little. He slipped an arm around Sydney's waist before he spoke.

"I thought I shouldn't have even looked Miss Bristow's way. Have the rules changed?"

Rolling her eyes, Sydney wiggled out of his grasp and spoke.

"Meeting room."

"This is killing her."

"I agree. If she, Vaughn or Miss Reed doesn't do something about it, I'll handle it."

Walking next to him, Irina turned to Jack and asked.

"What? What can you do Jack? Kill Vaughn? Or Lauren?"

Not answering her for a second, Jack opened the door for her and spoke.

"Anything is better than this drama."

Sighing, Irina entered the meeting room, followed by Jack.

Sitting in her usual chair, Sydney spoke pointing to another chair.

"No Vaughn, you should sit there, not next to me."

Frowning, Vaughn looked at her strangely.

"Why? I always sat he-"

"I know, but you shouldn't anymore. Sark, sit here."

Without asking why, Sark strolled over there and sat next to Sydney, all the time looking at Vaughn's face. It was a priceless moment.

Looking at Sark for a second, Vaughn turned to Sydney and whispered harshly.

"Sydney, this is not the way. Lauren knows that we work together-"

"Worked together."

Looking at her, Vaughn was speechless, but Syd had something to say.

"We worked together Vaughn. Now I'm working with Sark, Weiss, and/or Dixon, but not with you. At least not for a while."

Then, looking him in the eye, she continued.

"Lauren has to know that I'm not after you, which I'm not. Yes, I love you. I'm sure that I'll continue loving you, but under these circumstances, nothing can happen."

Looking at her face, Vaughn stood still for a moment. Then turning his back to her, he sat right next to Weiss, fuming over what just happened. A few weeks ago she was crying on his shoulder begging for him to say that he loved her. Yes, Vaughn was still in love with her. Now this?! He could not understand the sudden cold shoulder from her.

Sark. It was all because of him, Vaughn knew it. He was certain that Sark had made Sydney change her mind about him. And he was going to pay.

While Vaughn was thinking of his sweet revenge, Irina and Jack entered into the room, and a moment later, Kendall and Lauren entered too.

The bomb was here. Now, the seconds were ticking.

CHAPTER 48 – SYDNEY, MOTHER OF ANDREA.

"Now you're telling me that Sydney was not brainwashed and working for the Covenant for a year. Irina Derevko is good and was looking for her. Jack was also searching for Sydney. Julian Sark was in custody of the CIA, but he was released for fooling the covenant operation. He thought that Sydney was Julia, but now that he has learned the truth, he is still willing to work for the CIA. The Covenant doesn't know any of this. We don't have anything to stop Irina Derevko from doing something dangerous, yet we have some bio-weapon floating around in Sark's blood."

Everyone nodded to Lauren and she continued.

"This is crazy! You want me to approve your operations? With *them*? Two of the CIA's most-wanted criminals? And they're sitting right in front of me without cuffs?"

Looking at Lauren, Irina mumbled.

"Well, cuffs are useless on masterminds like us. Any *intelligent* NSC agent should know that."

Lauren glared at her for a second and then turned to Kendall.

"Remind me. Why is she here?"

Sighing, Sydney answered.

"Irina is a valuable source of information. She is also our handler and is running our operations for The Covenant. Plus, she is willingly helping us. No one is telling or asking her to do it. Yet again, she has proven herself to be useful. And we need useful and strong agents."

Looking at Sydney, Lauren tried to respond, but Sydney cut her off and continued.

"Before you ask why Sark is here, it is because he knows what we are doing, who I am, and he needs us as much as we need him to keep his mouth shut. Also, he is a talented field agent and knows how to work with me, which is a good thing, because we are not doing simple field jobs. We play dangerous—it's life and death out there."

To this explanation, Marshall was worried. Weiss was alarmed and Dixon remained calm. Jack's expression was blank as usual, while Irina's was thoughtful. Vaughn frowned, causing the wrinkles in his forehead to appear, Kendall looked bored and Sark wore an amused look on his face. Sitting up straighter, Sark leaned forward and placed his arms on the table, then he spoke.

"Well, thank you Sydney, I'm touched."

Looking at him, her eyes were saying *'don't say a word'*. She was sure that Sark understood the message. Yet he couldn't say anything, because Kendall was speaking.

"Since we now understand why we're all here, let's get back to the business, shall we?"

"Andrea Williams. Six-years-old."

Looking at a cute little girl's picture on the screen, Sydney opened her mouth, but Kendall spoke faster.

"No, she doesn't know why she is important."

Upon hearing this, Weiss asked.

"Why is she important?"

Sydney, looking at him, answered.

"She is the daughter of a very powerful Covenant member."

Weiss, raised a brow and signaled her to continue, but Kendall spoke instead.

"She has a photographic memory and she saw something she shouldn't have seen. Now, she is in The Covenant's hands and they want to know what she knows."

Dixon wanted to ask a question, but Jack answered before he could speak.

"She saw her father murdered. On that day, she learned a lot of intel without realizing it. And now The Covenant wants to learn what she knows."

Vaughn looked at him and spoke slowly.

"But if he was a member of The Covenant, then someone else must know what he was up to. What does she know that The Covenant doesn't already know?"

Irina looked at him and answered.

"Because her father was a double."

Frowning, Vaughn looked at her. Kendall nodded and spoke.

"We don't know what her father knew or what The Covenant or his other alliance was up to."

Sydney, looking at him, spoke.

"And what do you want me to do? Be her new mommy?"

Smirking, Kendall looked at her and answered.

"Exactly."

"What!? You can't be serious."

"Unfortunately, yes I am. Derevko knows it too. Soon you'll be offered this job by The Covenant."

Sydney looked at her mother appalled. Seeing that this was true, she exclaimed.

"But I'm not a mother! Nevertheless, *Julia* is not a mother! How can they want me in this?"

Looking at her, Kendall spoke.

"Well, first of all, you are their best agent. You are a master of aliases."

Lauren was watching Sydney intently, but Sydney was also a master of avoiding gazes. So she focused all of her attention on Kendall as he continued.

"This is an alias which is very, very easy. They want you to be a caring, loving woman, which you already are, so no big deal."

Looking at him, she spoke defiantly.

"*Julia* is not that woman."

Looking at her, Irina spoke.

"But Sydney is. And Sydney *is* Julia, they know that. They'll think that your inner Sydney is on the job. It is the perfect test for them to determine if you are on their side. They

give you a kid to protect and they want to see if this'll awaken your inner Sydney. If it does, then you will be in training again."

Sydney looked at her horrified and spoke.

"That can't happen."

Irina nodded and Kendall continued.

"Also, they'll want you to protect the kid. They think CIA will be after her, which is a correct assumption. The father's alliance will also want her. You'll have to protect her at all costs."

"How will I reach her? She must be under some guardian--"

"Yes she is. You'll adopt her."

"I can't adopt her all of a sudden."

"Yes you can. With money, power, and good references, you can do anything. The Covenant will give you the money, the situation, and good references, also a good image."

Sydney looked at him doubtful and asked.

"Image?"

"Yes, image. As we are the good guys, you'll have to help her accept what happened. You lost your parent when you were six-years-old, you know how to cope. You'll have to win her trust; she can't be brain-washed."

"I learned to cope with it with help of Dad, Kendall."

Kendall looked at her and smirked again. Sydney immediately knew what he was going to say.

"I'll give you a father too."

"Excuse me, but no."

"You don't have a choice in this matter Mr. Sark."

Looking at him, Sydney agreed with him for the first time today. Turning to Kendall, she spoke politely.

"Excuse him, but no."

Sark was nodding too, but Kendall pressed on.

"I'd gladly assign Agent Vaughn. I'm sure you could do better with hi--"

Sydney's eyes grew wide. When Sark was about to agree, Sydney kicked him hard under the table.

"Ouch! Bloody hell!"

Sark turned to her with a pained expression on his face. He saw the fear in her eyes and a clear 'No' on her face which caused him to frown. She stood up abruptly from the table and grabbed Sark's arm.

"Excuse us for a minute."

CHAPTER 49 – SARK, FATHER OF ANDREA.

"Where are we going? My answer is not going to change."

Ignoring him, Sydney opened the door of Kendall's office and ushered him inside. Closing the door, she turned to him and spoke.

"Sark, please, you have to say yes."

Frowning, he crossed his arms and looked at her. He spoke.

"Why?"

Looking at him, she repeated exasperated.

"Why?"

"Yes. Why?"

Sighing, she looked at him and responded.

"Because he'll give me Vaughn and I don't want th-"

"He can't give you Vaughn. He's not working in the Covenant."

"He may work in the Covenant. Believe me, Kendall will find a way. Even if he can't do it, he'll send the three of us into the same house and we'd have to keep him invisible all the time as well!"

"So now it's 'we', how nice."

"Sark!"

Looking at her, he spat.

"What? What do you want me to say? You don't want your ex around, so I should say yes?"

"You don't have a choice here!"

"Then why are we arguing?"

"Cause if you agree to this, Vaughn won't come with us!"

Looking at her, Sark had already made his decision, but she didn't know that and pressed on.

"Come on Sark, you don't want him around either. Or do you? Well, for different reasons of course, but still-"

"I thought you loved him?"

"I do. I do, but I can't. This is Lauren's first day and scurrying off with her fiancée to play house is not a good thing. She is a newbie here and she'll need assistance. And under the circumstances, no one will be happy to help he--"

"First of all, you think of yourself that high. Secondly, how are you able to think *this* nice of her after she did all of *those things* to you?"

Looking at him, she answered.

"First of all, I *am* that high. They are my friends. Second of all, *Lauren* did nothing to me, *Vaughn* did."

"And you are giving him to her without a fight."

"I have no choice. We shouldn't talk about my personal life--"

"But you must order me around for your personal life's sake?"

Sighing, she looked at him and honestly asked.

"Why are you being so hard-headed on this? I told you, I can handle the op. You don't even have to see the kid; if that is what you're scared o--"

"I'm not scared of anything, especially not a six-year-old."

"Then what is the problem?"

"I just...don't think that this is a good operation. Come on playing with kids?"

Looking at him, she asked.

"*That* is why you are running away?"

"I'm not running away, I just said no. We've just returned from a romantic vacation, and now we are asked to be parents. What's next? They'll want us to have one?"

Smiling, she looked at him and spoke.

"You are scared to be nice around a kid with me watching."

Looking at her, he replied.

"No, I'm not."

Getting her chin up, she dared him.

"Then show me."

Looking at her, he laughed heartily and spoke.

"Sydney, I'm not a kid. And this is not high-school my dear. I'm not a fool like that."

Looking at him, she answered.

"I know, but just for the sake of it, can't you help me out on this one?"

When he didn't answer, she played her last card.

"I'll give you something in return. Now, what do you say?"

Now *that* caught his attention.

"Are you *that* desperate?"

"I'm not *desperate*. I'm just bargaining."

Looking at her, Sark couldn't believe his luck. He would have said yes if she asked one more time, but *this*, this was much better.

Setting his chin up, he looked at her and murmured.

"What's your offer?"

Shrugging, she answered.

"I don't know, you pick."

Seeing the smirk on his face, she added while pointing a finger at him.

"Nothing sexual."

He smirked even more. She rolled her eyes and dropped her hands to her sides then spoke.

"Look, yes or no?"

"Without waiting for my want?"

"I know it'll be nasty. Out with it already."

Looking at her, he spoke.

"I want a public display."

"What?!"

"You heard me. I want a realistic public display of affection where your Prince Charming can see and hear us."

"Why would you want that?"

Shrugging, he answered.

"I want to cause him pain."

She looked at him confused as he continued.

"I want it to be realistic--no professing your undying love for me. You better make him believe what he sees and hears or *I'll* make him believe."

Sighing, she looked at him and nodded.

"Okay."

Returning to the meeting room five minutes after they left, Sydney spoke.

"Okay, Sark is accepting it."

Looking at her, Jack spoke.

"What did you give to him?"

Smiling a little, Sydney spoke.

"Nothing, he is a wise man. Aren't you Sark?"

Sitting down, he murmured something no one could hear. Sydney was happy as she sat in the chair next to him. A pair of angry eyes glared across the table at her.

"Why are you doing this to me?"

Releasing her arm from his grip, she whispered back.

"Vaughn are you crazy?! If Lauren sees us--"

"Lauren doesn't have to do anything with this! This is between you and me. Why are you punishing me all of a sudden?! You weren't like that!"

"Well, get used to it. I wasn't like *this woman* I became a year ago Michael."

Looking at her, he spoke softly.

"Sydney, I love you."

"I love you too, but this has to stop."

"Why?"

"Why?! Why? How can you ask me why?! You're going to be a father, that's why!"

Seeing his painful expression, she slowed down and spoke softly.

"I won't be the other woman, I told you that. When I said that we can be together after this thing is over, it was before I knew of the baby. That is *not* something I can ignore. I won't cause a nightmare to a child."

When Vaughn tried to protest, she spoke defiantly.

"I'm sure about this Vaughn. I love you, I really do, but I can't do this. Not anymore."

Seeing the pain his eyes held, she took ahold of his hand and smiled a little. Masking her pain, she spoke.

"You know I'm doing the right thing."

Dropping his hand, she turned and walked away, leaving him alone.

CHAPTER 50 – I LIKE SARK, LAUREN

"All right Miss Reed, I wanted you to be in the meeting. We don't have much time left for formalities now, I need your approval of the case right away."

Lauren, nodding, saw Vaughn and Sydney enter the center area, and sighed.

"Excuse me for a moment."

Without waiting for an answer from Kendall, she walked towards them.

Seeing Lauren coming towards them, Sydney flinched slightly. But to their expectations, Lauren was thinking something else. She spoke directly to Sydney in a polite manner.

"May I talk to you Miss Bristow?"

Walking to a corner, Sydney murmured.

"It's Sydney, please."

Smiling, Lauren nodded and spoke.

"I just wanted to speak with you for a moment in private, before beginning all this. As I'm sure that Michael told you how I came into his life. I just wanted to say that I'm sorry for what happened. I feel like I'm in the middle of y--"

"No Lauren, I mean Miss--"

"Lauren."

Smiling, Sydney continued.

"No, you are definitely not in the middle of *anything*. When I *died*, Vaughn was lucky to have you. I'll always be grateful for that. If you hadn't been there, he could've gone mad."

Nodding, Lauren spoke.

"I know, but you two had something so special and Michael is afraid to hurt me--"

"Lauren, we have nothing."

The two women stood looking each other. Sydney smiled a little.

"You have nothing to be worried about. I'm happy that you wanted to talk with me about this. And again, you didn't do something bad."

Lauren nodded silently and breathed a sigh of relief before speaking.

"I was just, I don't know, so alone. You were his life Sydney and I saw that. Now his life is back."

Sydney didn't know what to say. So she just smiled a little.

Sark walked into the center area. He was bored of this. On his way there, he had scared Marshall into clearing all of the smart tech out of their house.

Their house? When did it become *theirs*?

Shaking his head as if to erase the thoughts, he entered the main area and passed by two ladies. He heard Sydney's voice.

"Believe me, I'm with someone else. Sark to be exact."

And he stopped dead in his tracks.

"Excuse me?"

Laughing with a nervous laugh, Sydney nodded.

"Weird, isn't it? But it was just boom! There!"

Lauren frowned and murmured.

"But Michael told me that you hated him?"

"*Hated*. Past tense. I don't love him though, I'm just moving on with my life."

With that, Lauren looked at her and Sydney smiled a little.

"Vaughn was a big part of my life Lauren. But there is a difference. He didn't know that I was alive, but I knew that he was seeing you."

"You did? And you let him?"

Sighing, Sydney nodded and spoke.

"I hated you, that's for sure. But at that time, I was not coming back. Ever. And I couldn't do anything about it. Also, Vaughn had someone to rely on and that was making me happy inside. Jealous, but happy."

Lauren looked at her sadly, but Sydney went on.

"And then there was Sark. He was beside me as my partner and things slowly changed. They are still progressing though."

"So you like him? You are over Michael?"

"I don't like Sark and I'm not completely over Vaughn. I won't lie to you about that, but you have no danger of me. That you can be sure of."

Sighing, Lauren smiled and looking at her, she spoke.

"Michael always told me that you were one of the smartest and loveliest people he knows. I'm glad to see that this is true. You could've hated me, with right--"

"Hey, I do hate you."

Lauren smiled a bit to that and spoke.

"And I'm jealous of you, if that makes you happy. Michael will never love me like he loved you. I'm quite happy to approve this operation and send you away from here actually."

Smiling to her, Sydney spoke.

"I'm glad we had this conversation Lauren."

"I am too. And right now, I'm sure that Michael is out there killing someone because he's wondering what are we doing."

Sydney nodded her head in agreement and Lauren held out her hand, speaking.

"It's nice to meet you Sydney. I hope after everything that has happened, we can still get along."

Shaking her hand, Sydney smiled and spoke.

"Same here."

Smiling, Lauren walked away. After she left, Sydney closed her eyes and took a deep breath. This was worse than her mom. This was worse than Sark. This was worse than Julia. This was worse than anything she went through--Sloane included.

She placed her hand on the wall for support and tried to calm her nerves. Lauren was a lovely and nice woman and Sydney *hated her* for that.

"You all right?"

Sydney jumped at the sound of the voice and opened her eyes. She looked at him and spoke.

"Please, give me something to banter with you, quickly."

Smiling a little, Sark spoke.

"I didn't know that you've enjoyed our banter as much as I did."

"I don't enjoy them, it's just a habit with you."

"I'm glad for it then. Do you need to sit down or a glass of water?"

"No and don't baby-sit me. I'm fine."

"I know. I was just trying to be a gentleman. I can't help it."

Laughing at him, she rolled her eyes, but with the words she heard next all of her newly found joy vanished.

"So, you like me huh?"

"If I don't answer, will you let it go?"

"No."

Sighing, she looked at him and spoke.

"I had to say something. Something believable."

"And *you*, liking *me* is believable?"

"Sort of. She doesn't know what we've been through and she desperately wants me to find someone else than her fiancé. Even though you're a cold-blood criminal, she can marry us off, believe me."

"Don't tell me that we're going to get married in the end?"

"No, of course not, but you can keep dreaming about it."

Looking at her, Sark spoke.

"You know what? You've been relying on me a lot this week. If I didn't know better, I might say that you started to trust me."

Without waiting for an answer, he turned and left.

"I leave here for five minutes and everyone is crazy. What happened now?"

Without looking at him, Irina replied.

"Lauren talked with Sydney, probably about Michael. Then Lauren left and Sark talked with Sydney, leaving her dumbstruck in the end. Now all four have gone off separately."

Turning to him, she spoke lightly.

"Me. I was organizing your computer."

Jack Bristow was famous with his non-existent facial expressions, but *this* caused him to flinch, along with the words.

"You what?"

Smiling broadly, she replied.

"I organi--"

"I heard. Why? And tell me you are joking. Please, I'll even laugh."

"Promise?"

"Promise."

Sighing, Irina stood up from his chair and spoke.

"I wasn't. I was just looking at some intel."

Sighing with relief, Jack moved towards his chair, but felt Irina's hand on his chest and she demanded.

"Laugh."

Looking at her, it was impossible not to laugh. These moments were so rare with Irina Derevko; to see her defenseless, like a little girl.

So Jack laughed, a bright laugh that he hadn't given to anyone in years, making his wife smile broadly.

"How will she become a mother? That was an alias she went by just once."

"She won't be a mother. She'll be an adopter, which is exactly her case."

"And then what? Andrea will get attached to her, and then lose her second mother."

Sighing, Irina looked at him and spoke.

"What do you want me to say? I can't say what you want me to say and you know it. This is better for the kid in the long run. She'll tell Sydney what she knows and then she'll be returned to safety and won't be involved with this mess anymore. Or would you prefer her being interrogated in The Covenant's hands?"

When Jack didn't answer, Irina nodded.

"That's what I thought."

Dropping his pen, Jack looked at the woman who was standing against his desk facing him. Jack spoke.

"But this is just too cruel, even for me. Children should stay out of this. She has lost her father *and* mother. Irina, I saw a little girl who lost her mother when she was six-years-old. Believe me, it was definitely *not* good."

Guiltily looking other way, Irina didn't answer and Jack continued.

"And that little girl lost both of her parents in one night. In front of her. That's catastrophic. We are playing with her mind."

Looking at him, she spoke.

"I believe that you played your daughter's mind too?"

"That was for her safety."

"And so this is."

Sighing, Jack nodded. Seeing that the conversation was over, Irina pushed herself away from the desk, speaking slowly.

"Now I have to give my daughter a few words of motherly advice. Like how to kill herself when she needs to."

Smiling to her, he nodded and turned towards to his computer. The other agents wouldn't believe that they would have sex that night.

CHAPTER 51 – A MOTHER’S GUIDE: HOW TO PLAY DEAD

"Sydney, she'll become attached to you. So, you should try to keep your emotional attachment to a minimum. I know that it will be hard. Just don't sympathize too much with her."

"It's not that easy Mom. She's in the same situation I was when I was six. Sloane was monitoring me after you "died". There's someone watching her too. And she has no idea. At least I had Project Christmas..."

"Your father would cry hearing this 'at least'..."

Smiling at her mom, Sydney replied.

"Well, it has saved my life dozens of times. Yet, look at the mess I'm in, *again*."

Shrugging, Irina replied while washing her hands.

"Mess is our life style. The sooner you accept it, the messier your life becomes."

Laughing at that, Sydney opened ladies' room door to exit.

"No, CB-14 style bombs don't need these type of cables. I wouldn't use them."

Frowning, Marshall looked at Sark and asked.

"Really? What would you do? I mean...of course tell me...um, only if you don't have to kill me after telling me your secret..."

"It's not a secret. And I promised that I would not kill you."

Breathing out a breath he was holding, Marshall nodded and asked again with enthusiasm.

"So?"

Sark smiled a little and showed what he was holding in his hand, then spoke.

"You see this electronic organizer? Well, this can be deadly if you think how you can change it with a flick. Look at this cable..."

Sark tore the organizer apart while continuing to talk. He instructed Marshall how to make a deadly organizer, without realizing that Sydney was passing by and stopped to watch them for a while.

"Why is he helping him? Sark wants Marshall on his side, so he can cheat on u--"

"Vaughn, calm down, he *has to* play it nice with us, remember?"

"I don't care, Marshall is innocen--"

"Marshall is a good op tech and agent. Also, he can kill you with his brain and he is half the field agent that you are. So, no worries."

Looking at his best friend, Vaughn replied.

"I don't care. I don't like Sark talking with my co-workers, my friends, my..."

Weiss raised his brow and looked at him, waiting patiently. Exhaling, Vaughn finished his thought.

"My ex-girlfriend."

Nodding, Weiss replied.

"**Ex** is the keyword here."

"So, mommy dearest, who is our child?"

Turning to Sark, Sydney answered.

"Andrea Williams, a beautiful little six-year-old. She knows how to play piano, has good grades--"

"Which are so hard I believe--"

"Don't mock me. According to her teachers, she relates well with people and her communication skills and grades far surpass those of the average six-year-old."

Taking Andrea's file, he asked.

"Does she know combat? Guns? Tech?"

Frowning, she murmured.

"I don't know. We'll stay with her. We can understand what she is capable of-*I hope.*"

Nodding, he looked at her and spoke.

"I'm not going to brain-wash her."

Nodding, she spoke too.

"We can't. She already has her brain protection--"

"Like you?"

"Like me. We'll get the information the easy way."

"Easy and the slowest way."

Nodding, she smiled. Looking at her, he spoke.

"That is so not going to get me."

Laughing, Sydney answered.

"I'll win in the end. Either way, you'll be a daddy and you'll be nice to mommy, and I'll get to watch you being nice for free."

Looking at her, Sark put Andrea's files to the table and murmured.

"It goes both ways darling. You'll get to play nice with daddy and I'll get to enjoy it, not only watch it."

Looking at him, she didn't say a word and that made her see a little smirk on his face.

Kendall, who was walking into center area, spoke fast.

"Okay, Sydney, everything is set. You'll be getting her this afternoon--"

"That fast? Kendall, you should be working at social services."

"I already am. Now, go pack and check into your new house. Then go get your daughter."

Nodding to him, she was about to leave, but Kendall stopped her.

"Where's Sark?"

"Getting his op-tech from Marshall."

Kendall walked with her to Op-Tech. Once there, they found also Vaughn and Lauren with them. Kendall spoke.

"All right people, we've got a job to do. Mr. Sark, you'll meet your daughter this afternoon."

"That fast?"

"Yes, we Americans work fast. Accept it. Here are your rings. I want them back, once this is over. We've lost so many rings this year, I think my agents are selling them."

Taking her ring, Sydney spoke.

"You can count on it, I'll be happy to bring this back."

Upon hearing this, Lauren frowned and looked at her. Sark spoke.

"She's joking. Right, dear?"

Nodding, Sydney smiled and answered.

"Yes, joking. I'll make this mission last as long as it possibly can."

Smiling, Sark held her shoulder and spoke.

"That's my girl."

Watching the scene unfold in front of his eyes, Vaughn was about to show his shock, but was interrupted by Kendall, who was saying it was time to go.

"Mommy, Mommy, Look! I finally got engaged!"

Laughing at her, Sydney smiled too. Breaking her façade, she spoke.

"Kendall said it's time to go, wanted to say goodbye to you guys--"

"It's not goodbye. I'll see you from time to time to get your reports--and also as Andrea's grandmother."

Smiling, she turned to her father.

"You? Granddad? Please?"

Smiling a little, Jack spoke.

"I don't know, we had not arranged that. Irina still has to talk with her superiors, but if I can, yes, I'll see you too."

Nodding, Sydney smiled. When she heard Sark call her name, she placed a quick kiss her father on cheek. She then turned to her mom, who was speaking.

"Don't forget my words. You are not her mother. Remember: You'll leave her."

Sighing, she nodded and spoke.

"Didn't you leave me?"

"I am your mother. I'll never leave you."

Smiling, she nodded and kissed her cheek. Turning she ran towards to door to an awaiting Sark, who was getting both anxious and impatient by each passing minute. She spoke.

"We'll be spending more time with each other than we care to. Why were you yelling my nam--"

She fell silent when she felt Sark's lips on hers.

Sydney was being kissed.

In corridor.

By Sark.

She opened her eyes and stepped away from him. She looked at him confused, then seeing a raised eyebrow, she heard him whisper.

"It won't be that hard. Right, dear?"

Hearing this, Sydney swallowed her pride. She realized that Vaughn was watching them. Leaning into his lips, she whispered.

"No, not at all."

She kissed him lightly in the corridor. For more emphasis, she dropped her bag to the floor and reached up to grab ahold of his collar. She began pulling him closer and closer. Then she was kissing him and was being kissed with more passion than she wanted, yet it was good. Familiar. Warm. Sark.

Kissing her and knowing that no one was watching them, Sark pulled her closer to himself. She was leaning against him with her hands on his face, holding it like she wants to, and putting up her little fight about who has more power and control in their relationship-*relationship*.

They were parents now and that meant bright days in his dictionary.

CHAPTER 52 – WE’LL MAKE LOVE

"So, grandmother?"

Smiling at him while walking into house, Irina answered.

"If so, then you are a granddad already."

"A *very* young grandfather."

Laughing, Irina went in the kitchen and made a cup of coffee. She spoke.

"I'm younger than you. Prettier too."

Upon saying this, she suddenly felt his breath on her neck, Irina heard his voice.

"Precisely."

Forgetting about the coffee, she turned towards him. Seeing the eager look on his face, Irina questioned.

"Now?"

Smiling a little, he asked.

"What now?"

"We'll-we'll-we'll do what?"

Looking at her, Jack asked.

"You're speechless?"

Hitting him, Irina didn't speak. Yet she heard him.

"We'll make love."

Suddenly out of breath, she asked.

"Love?"

Jack, leaning onto her, murmured.

"Yes, but later. Now I have to have you."

Throwing her head a little back to open up a kissing space on her neck, she whispered.

"Why the rush?"

Kissing her temple, Jack answered.

"I was about to yell at my daughter to get lost to her mission just because I was thinking about this."

Smiling, she closed her eyes and pulled him closer. She found his lips blindly and kissed him.

Stumbling through the house, kissing and shedding their clothes at the same time was never this enjoyable, not even when they were younger. Back then, they hadn't missed each other. Nor were they Bristow and Derevko, super-spy legends, who were in a love and hate relationship. Now, they were in their room, kissing. Irina felt his hands running through her hair, she remembered how fond he was of her long curls, color, and smell.

"You smell so good, and not a bit different still--"

Smiling a little, she kissed his shoulder and pushed him towards bed. She spoke.

"Cause I still use the same shampoo."

Smiling, he let her kissing him while laying on the bed. He didn't answer, he just inhaled her smell, her body. Then he turned over on top of her pinning her to the bed, he looked at her: she was just beautiful.

"You were always angelic--"

"Yet, I'm no angel."

Leaning upon her, he whispered.

"I know. That's what makes the sin more enjoyable."

Smiling a little, she kissed him. Feeling him on top of her, she took a deep breath: he was just wonderful.

Kissing her temple, he was not saying sweet nothings or whispering about love, future, a new life, hope and dreams. Yet, he was promising everything. Irina, closing her eyes, gave herself to him. She didn't know if Jack knew, but she already did; she has lost the war. She's not a bit sad as he was the only enemy she could lose to, happily.

She didn't know that the man who was resting his forehead on her neck was still in love with her, now more strongly than ever, and was not about to let her go anywhere again. Jack was whole now and he was willing to surrender his ways. Irina was about to do anything to keep his heart safe in her hands.

"I love you."

"I love you."

Hearing this, he frowned and raised his head. He murmured, giving her a chance to take it back if she wants.

"Excuse me?"

Looking at him, she whispered.

"I love you."

Nodding, he murmured.

"I see."

Then the silence came and she, caressing his hair, whispered.

"You don't have to say anything."

Looking at her, he replied.

"I didn't say anything."

"You said 'I see'. You only say that when you can't decide what to say."

Looking at her, he blinked once. He never realized that and he whispered.

"I didn't know that."

"What? The expression?"

"No, you loving me."

"Oh."

Nodding, Jack waited and Irina smiled.

"I love you Jack. You knew it already. I just said it--"

"But you can't say it. That was a rule--"

"No, we never established a rule like that. You said that you were going to be the husband Jack and I get to tell my husband that I love him. I said it, that's it, no big deal."

"But you want me to say it too."

"Only if you feel it."

"I can't say it."

"I know.. *I know.*"

Looking at him, she went on.

"I just wanted to say it."

Nodding, he leaned in and kissed her, saying it in his own way.

Resting his forehead on her chin, he whispered.

"Can you say it again?"

Smiling a little, she kissed the top of his head and whispered.

"I love you, Jack."

Nodding, he raised his head and looked her flushed face and shining eyes. He spoke.

"I heard those four words for years in my head, but I never thought I'd hear them outloud again."

Nodding, she whispered.

"I can say it as much as you want sweetheart..."

"I don't need that either."

Smiling to him, she nodded and pulled him close to kiss him once more. She heard him whisper against her lips.

"Don't go again."

CHAPTER 53 – A NEW NAME, A NEW LIFE

"I hate you, you know."

Playing with his *wedding* ring, Sark replied while looking at the building.

"Oh really? And why is that exactly?"

Standing up straight from the car that she had been leaning on, Sydney replied.

"Because you make it seem like this is an easy operation. We'll go get the item and return home, but it's not!"

Sark, raising an eyebrow, smoothly replied.

"How so? Do you think she'll kill us in our sleep? While we are in the same room and in the same bed? Oh, and also at exactly the same time?"

Growling inside, Sydney didn't answer and returned her gaze to the building. She hated this. She hated him. She hated everything except the little girl. She was innocent, just like she was once. And just like she had been bruised, now someone was going to bruise the little girl. Herself and Sark to be exact. And Sydney hated it.

A young lady, who was unaware of whom she is giving Andrea to, was speaking with that young little girl, blonde, blue eyes, smart looks, and a sad face. Here was Andrea. Just as simple as it was.

"Andrea, this is Julian and Sydney Collins. You're going to live with them. They want to be your new family if you let them."

Sydney, smiling honestly, nodded to the little girl and spoke.

"Hello Andrea, do you think you're ready to go? We can wait if you want."

Little girl shook her head as a no and young woman smiled to them sadly. Sark held his hand out to her and spoke.

"Thank you so much for your help, I'm sure we can handle this from here."

Young woman shook his hand. After giving one last look to Sydney and Andrea, she turned and left, leaving trio alone.

What are we going to do now?

Sark could read it in Sydney's eyes. Then he turned to little girl and with a calm and 'you can trust me' tone, he spoke.

"Andrea, if you are ready, we can go home. What do you say?"

Andrea nodded her approval. Sark bent down and took her small suitcase. Then he held his hand out to Andrea, to Sydney's shock.

Why do you think she'll give her hand to you stupi-

But Andrea accepted his hand. Walking with Sark, she walked past by Sydney with a silent glance at car, leaving a dumb-founded Sydney behind.

Sydney, who was driving home, was silent. Sark sat silently in the passenger seat while Andrea was quiet in the back seat.

Everyone was silent and Sydney was not enjoying it. Luckily, home was finally in sight. When the car came to a stop, Sark opened the door. While he was busy with the

suitcase, Sydney walked around the car and opened the door for Andrea, freed her from her safety belt, and helped her out of the car.

Little girl stood in between them and for the first time, she spoke.

"This is a nice house."

When she began to walk towards the door, Sark and Sydney looked at each other.

"Are you hungry Andrea? Or thirsty?"

"No I'm not, thank you."

Sydney nodded and looking at her, she spoke.

"Do you want to see your room then?"

Andrea nodded. Sydney held her hand out to her and once Andrea took it, the young woman smiled. She was still a kid, but she needed someone she could trust.

Holding her little hand, Sydney lead her to the staircase and they went upstairs. Once they were gone, Sark locked the front door, and quickly checked the house for intruders-just in case.

"Do you like it? Do you want a change in decor?"

"No thank you, it looks nice."

Sydney sighed for a young girl, yes, this was a nice room designed by CIA therapists and architects, but it didn't feel right. So Sydney sat on the light blue covered bed and looked at Andrea. She smiled.

"Andrea, we're going to be together for a very, very long time. And I know you don't know me, but you can trust me, all right? I want you to know that."

Andrea nodded and Sydney saw that her hands were in little fists. Sydney reached out and pulled the little girl to her. She wrapped her hands around Andrea's tiny fists, while murmuring to her.

"You can trust both to me and Julian, Andrea. We're here for you and we want to be there as long as we can. I know you are scared, believe me."

Little girl didn't respond, yet she was listening: her head was down, her little blonde curls hiding her face, her fists rested in Sydney's hands, standing in middle of her legs, in front of her.

"I was in your place when I was your age. I've lost my mom and my dad was away."

Upon hearing this, Andrea raised her head and looked at her face for the first time. Sydney nodded and went on.

"I was scared. I thought no one would care for me again, or would protect me from harm. But I was wrong. I had a lot of trust-worthy friends and new families in my life, and now, I'm here."

Andrea was still looking at her face and she asked in a tiny voice.

"Does Julian care for you too?"

Smiling, Sydney replied.

"Yes Andrea. Julian cares for me too. And he loves me. That's why I married him. He really wants to take care of you and love you too."

"Why don't you have children? Why did you take me?"

Sydney, realizing that Andrea's fists are slowly but surely opening, answered.

"I have learned that I can't have children Andrea. But both Julian and I wanted to love and take care of one child, who needs love, and we found you. We're happy to find you, you must believe that."

Nodding, Andrea didn't reply, but spoke faintly.

"The other kids... They told me that you'll be my new mom. I don't want a new mom, I love my mom..."

Unshed tears began to form in Andrea's eyes.

"Andrea that's totally okay, please look at me... "

Seeing her bright blue eyes, Sydney went on with a steady pace.

"I know I'm not your mom and I'll never be your mom. I don't want to pressure you to call me Mom, do you understand? You can call me Sydney as long as you want. And also you don't have to call Julian Dad, you can call him Julian. We know we are not your parents. It's totally okay for you to miss your parents."

Andrea, looking at her, asked.

"Do you miss your mom?"

Sydney nodded and replied honestly.

"I do. She was one of the best mothers in the world and I miss her so much. After her, I found an another woman, like my mom, but also different and I love her too."

Nodding, Andrea smiled a little and whispered.

"This house looks nice. And you look nice too. I don't feel scared."

"That's good Andrea. Thank you for telling me this. Now you can tell me and Julian anything, all right? We are always here to listen to you."

Nodding, Andrea smiled a little more, and spoke.

"I like blue."

Changing the subject like she wants, Sydney beamed.

"You do? That's great! Your eyes are blue too, and it looks good on you. Look, mine aren't like yours."

Looking into her eyes, Andrea smiled and spoke.

"Julian's eyes are blue too. Are you jealous of him too?"

Smiling a little, Sydney whispered.

"A little."

Andrea smiled at their first little secret, unaware that Sark was listening to them on the otherside of the opened door.

After touring the rest of the house, Andrea and Sydney found Sark in the sitting room, surfing through channels.

Andrea gingerly walked over and sat on one of the cushions, while Sydney sat beside Sark. Like they've been doing this for years, she took the remote control out of his hands and changed from the news channel to a music channel while talking.

"Andrea liked her room Julian. You were right. You both like blue."

"Do we?"

Julian turned his head to the little girl, only to find her little insecure smile, and he spoke.

"Which color do you like the least Andrea? I hope we can beat Sydney in that too?"

Thinking for a second, Andrea didn't reply, but then she decided.

"I think green it is."

Smiling a little, Sark replied.

"I don't like green either and Sydney doesn't like it too. So we are on consensus on this one."

"What's consensus?"

Looking at the little girl, Sark replied.

"Consensus means agreement, understanding, or general decision in Latin..."

"Do you know Latin?"

Smiling boardly, he answered.

"No I don't, but I'd like to learn it."

"Julian likes to show off his talents Andrea. What do you say? Shall we prepare dinner together and he can learn Latin by himself?"

Smiling a little, Andrea replied.

"He can't learn Latin that fast."

Again raising his eyebrows, Sark questioned.

"You think?"

Smiling, Andrea replied.

"I know. I learned it in 2 years, not in 20 minutes."

Sark, cooling a little, spoke.

"Do *you* know Latin?"

Andrea didn't reply, but nodded as a yes. Sydney whispered.

"Why did you learn Latin Andrea?"

Shrugging her shoulders, she replied.

"Mom thought it would be useful... And it was fun... Latin is a nice language... Not like German, it was hard to understand when someone spoke too fast..."

"You know German too? You little bookworm!"

Sydney was paralyzed for a second to Sark's reaction. Andrea didn't seem to like that, so she relaxed a bit further and added with a smile.

"Yes, I know German too, but I'm still learning it."

Looking at her little blonde figure, Sark pointed a finger.

"You'll help me learn Latin then, deal?"

Nodding with a smile, Andrea nodded. Clearing her throat, Sydney murmured.

"Andrea, go find the kitchen. Let's see if you remember it's location correctly..."

To a game as simple as this, Andrea left her cushion with smile and rushed to the kitchen, leaving her new *parents* alone.

"Two extra languages? She must have be four when she learned those. I was twenty and it was hard already!"

To her exclamation, Sark didn't respond, but murmured.

"Someone, probably her mother, was building her brain functions very carefully. I wonder what other talents she has and thinks that they are normal..."

Looking at his profile, Sydney spoke.

"We have to make her believe that they are normal. So, this way she'll let us know. Look at her, she opened herself like a rose within a minute!"

"Because my tactic was perfect..."

"Because you are a show off. Also, I made her relax a little, we had a talk upstairs..."

"Yes, I heard..."

"You heard? Okay... Was I any good?"

Hearing her insecure voice, Sark turned to her and spoke.

"Yes, you were good. Even I started to like you."

Snorting, Sydney patted his head and got up.

"You can check her suitcase while we're in the kitchen, I'll keep her in there..."

Sark nodded. After she left the sitting room, he listened to the girls' voices for a while, then he got up and went upstairs.

CHAPTER 54 – LONG TIME, NO SEE

"Sydney! Sydney! We're home!"

Upon hearing that, Sydney closed the computer, stood up, and yelled back that she was coming.

Downstairs, the duo was busy unpacking the stuff they bought. It's been one month and no one would ever have dreamed of this situation--Sark was good with children. Really good, even.

Going downstairs, Sydney was thinking how different Sark was around Andrea. He was soft, gentle, caring, and smiling a lot. He was nice to her too. He kept the girls laughing, talking, and cheerful. Sydney was actually happy when she was around him during the day.

Nights were different. They reminded her of what Sark is really like. He was the agent that Sydney knew all along, talking on his phone, checking their *shared* computer, doing his stuff. He never asked for any guns or data; it was like he was on a vacation-and he was enjoying it.

Opening the door, Sydney smiled at the sight in front of her.

"Did you buy anything for me?"

"Of course we did! Dad, show her what you bought!"

Sydney froze at those words, but Sark acted like it was normal. As if Andrea had been calling him dad for years. He hoisted one big box into the air. Walking towards Sydney, he spoke.

"You may not like it, but we can't change it. It was the last one and on sale--"

"She'll like it!"

Sydney looked at him shocked. Her eyes screaming about what had he done to Andrea, but Sark was insanely normal, shoving the box to her. In the end, Sydney accepted it. When she opened the box, she found a huge white teddy bear the size of a big balloon. *Very big.*

"You like it? I *knew* you'd like it! Look at her face!"

Sydney cracked a smile and spoke.

"Yes dear, I like it very much. Thank you." Then she hugged Andrea. Andrea then asked if she could take the bear - '*His name is Silky!*' - to Sydney's room.

Once she was left, Sydney turned angrily to Sark. She wanted to scream, hurt him-

"How did you make h-" but her suddenly her lips were covered with his. Sydney closed her eyes, and despite struggling with him, she kissed him back. Sark's kisses were always soft and warm. He was slowly leaning her back against the wall. Sydney sighed, then heard him speak softly.

"I didn't *make* her do anything, she *chose* to call me 'Dad'. We've adopted her Sydney, and I believe that 'mom' is near too. You are far too nice to not be called like that."

He leanded towards her again for another kiss whenshe spoke.

"You better not call me *that-*" laughing, he kissed her, and it was all good again.

Andrea placed Silky in the middle of the bed with her little hands. Smiling to herself, she made him stay steady with pillows, then stepped aside to look her handiwork. It was good.

Looking around her parents' bedroom, she walked slowly towards the laptop computer that was on stand-by on the desk. She knew Sydney would be here soon. Sometimes they let her to play on the computer. Thinking it would do no harm, Andrea sat down in front of the computer.

When her cell started ringing, Sydney pushed him away a little and answered it. Marshall was on the other end asking her why the hell she was accessing a restricted CIA area-

"I'm not, I was out-" Sydney pushed Sark further away and headed back to upstairs. She asked Marshall to hold on. Opening the door, she saw Andrea on the computer-

"Andrea, what are you doing?" Sydney closed the monitor, yet Andrea was smiling.

"It asked me some stuff, like that game we played yesterday, but I got in! I got it, it wasn't that hard. Game was harder."

Sydney turned back to Sark, who was taken aback as well.

"Andrea, honey, did you play that game before?"

"I don't know. Dad, my real dad, made me play lots of games. I could've played it, I don't know."

Sark and Sydney were sitting side-by-side, looking at the little girl who was sitting on the coffee table with wide eyes. He asked .

"Andrea, that was a very hard game. Did you play any other computer games like that, only much harder?"

Andrea nodded yes, Sydney asked.

"Do you remember those games?"

When she nodded yes again, she explained.

"Those were harder, and I remember them, because it took me days to figure them out. Some of them have combinations, like this game has, but some of them not."

"If we give those games to you, do you think you can enter the play them again?"

"I think so. Dad always said that I was like a magician, that I saw that numbers like a magician."

Smiling, Sydney spoke.

"You are like a magician Andrea. Those *games* are *very* hard to play."

Smiling, Andrea said nothing.

CHAPTER 55 – GO SEE THE WIZARD

"A child genius. Now that's what we needed."

Smiling, Irina answered.

"Calm down Jack. It's good to know that what her parents made her do. This way, we can make her "play" more-

"Like making her break the codes of literally *everything*. Yes, what a *joyful* childhood."

Laughing, Irina said nothing, but that caught Jack's attention.

"You approve of this?"

"Of course! She has a wonderful ability. Why not educate her about this and make her a useful person?"

"She may turn against us-

"She definitely will if we *don't* treat her right. If we get her to trust us, then she'll never sell us out to anyone."

Looking at her, he said nothing.

"Allright Andrea, do you remember this? No? This?"

Andrea nodded her head yes. Sydney looked from Andrea to her mom, then spoke.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. I've been here before. Let me..." The young girl took control of the keyboard. Fifteen seconds later, they were in.

The Covenant.

"She was the hacker that the Covenant was after! That must be why they were after her father. They must've thought that he was the hacker or knew who was-"

"When he refused to tell them..."

"They killed him. She was there, the little girl, and no one suspected her. I wonder if she knows that all this was because of her ability..."

"That is not an ability Sydney. That's who she is. I think they both brainwashed and educated her."

"Don't you think it's a bit unnatural Dad? You can't brainwash a child that much. She sees those systems and she hacks them. It's like a game to her!"

"I know! And she is playing the most dangerous systems. Can you imagine what will happen if she *plays* with CIA system?"

Sighing, Sydney said she knew. Sark, who was watching the quarrel, spoke.

"She can stay with us, right?"

Turning to him, Jack answered.

"No. Even though you are becoming more and more trustworthy, which makes me nervous, I can't let a child to stay with you. Period."

Sydney knew what he was going to say, she *knew*, and she didn't stop him.

"What if we had a child of our own? Sydney and me? You'd let a child stay with us then?"

But Jack was already a step ahead. He answered calmly.

"Since you two are *not* having any children, we don't need to discuss it. Or do we?"

With Sark's silence, the discussion was over.

"Why did you say that?"

Andrea had already fallen asleep in her bed and Sydney wanted some answers without interruptions. Lying side by side, , Sark turned to her in bed to find her facing him and asked.

"What?"

"Us, having children? You know that's not going to happen. So why did you ask about it?"

Smiling, he answered.

"I didn't ask *you*, Sydney-"

"No. Instead you asked permission from my *father*, Julian-"

"I like you saying my name,- "

"I don't. It's obligatory. Now answer me. Why did you-"

"I want to keep Andrea safe. And if we can protect her, what is the harm of her staying?"

" So, what will I say to 'our daughter' when you go and ditch us someday for someone or something evil? *'Sorry darling, your daddy found more money and beautiful girls, so he left us and we're on our own now? How's that sound?'*"

"It sounds like it's not gonna happen-"

"You can't expect me to believe that, can you?"

"Why not? I've been behaving very good recently-"

"Very good, yes. It seems like you have orders from someone else."

"Like who? God?"

Rolling her eyes at him, Sydney laid on her back. Staring at the ceiling, she spoke.

"It will never happen. Never. You can always leave us at a moment's notice. And that's a risk I'm not willing to take.."

Sark studied her profile carefully, he asked.

"Why are we having this conversation? Are you pregnant? Or did you sign the adoption forms?"

Looking at him, she smiled, answered.

"You wish, don't you?"

"Yes, very much so."

There were no words for Sydney to say.

CHAPTER 56 – DO WISHES COME TRUE?

"Do you really?"

"Do I really what?"

"Do you really wish for? Kids? Or Andrea, for that matter?"

Sighing, Sark didn't answer at first, then he replied.

"Sydney, your life is a mess. Do you remember how we started this? You were pretending to be a cold-hearted killer, yet you were this Sydney? You seduced me and wanted me to open up like a little kid?"

Refusing to look him in the eye, she remained silent. He continued knowing that she was still listening.

"Then? You didn't let me go, not to your agency nor to your bosses. You wanted me around for your security, your *emotional* security. You wanted me to prove that I could be just as good as Vaughn and I did. I can do it again--willingly and gladly. Not that I want to see him in pain for the sake of my evil side, but for what he did to you."

Turning to look at his face, she found him smiling while speaking.

"I'm not a nice man. You know me. I may be warm sometimes, but I'm *not* nice. I won't be Prince Charming or Daddy Dearest. But you know me Sydney. Possibly better than anyone else-including your mother. And believe me, she knows me well."

Smiling, she said that she knows. Sark spoke again.

"She lets me to stay here. You know that she can fool anyone she wants to. She could've found a way to send me away, but she didn't. Even your father lets me stay and you know how hard it must be for him."

Sighing, she didn't answer, but Sark didn't need one. He kept going.

"I like you. You know I do--I've been saying it for years. It's in my blood or something. It's constant and it's there. We kiss. We laugh. Anyone meeting us would swear that we've been married for years."

Laughing, she nodded. Sark smiled too.

"I make you smile and comfort you. You're not having any more nightmares. And if you do, you know that I'll take care of you."

"You're getting all sappy."

"No I'm not. You're trying to escape the inevitable and you know it."

"And what is that exactly?"

"Us. Spying and living together--happily ever after."

Laughing, she asked.

"Us? Happily ever after?"

"Well, for about a week or so, but then we'll kill each other..."

Smiling, she looked at him and asked.

"What are you offering Sark? Marriage?"

"I can do that if you want, but I'm not sure your father would like the surname Sark."

Smiling, she raised her head and kissed him lightly and whispered.

"You're dreaming."

Kissing her back, he answered.

"No I'm not."

He pushed her back onto the mattress and covered her body with his. Taking her wrists in his hands he placed them over her head. With his lips so tenderly on hers, he whispered.

"We can do anything we want. I've told you this before, we are each other's destiny Sydney Bristow, one way or another."

Smiling, she raised one of her eyebrows, he spoke.

"I can do flowers and the chocolates as well, I assure you."

"You? Really? Did you ever?"

"Jealous are you?"

"*Julian Sark!* Did you buy chocolates for some young ladi..."

Kissing her fully on the lips, he didn't let her finish that sentence. Once he made her forget what she was talking about, he whispered.

"So, what do you say?"

Opening her eyes, she spoke.

"What do I say to *what?*"

"To us."

"There is no *us.*"

"Yes there is. And you know it. So, don't make me angry."

"What will you do to me if I make you angry?"

Smirking, he murmured.

"You're getting nasty now, aren't you?"

Smiling, she didn't answer, instead choosing another path.

"You still haven't asked me anything. We can't adopt Andrea for real. She needs a better education and real parents. She needs to be constantly watched. Even though I hate that kind of life, it's important for her to be safe. It's better safe than sorry."

"Yes. Even though I like her, I can't be a father to her. We've already told her too many lies."

Getting incredibly softer inside with this, Sydney whispered.

"Are you manipulating me?"

Smirking, he answered.

"No I'm not. I don't want any lies in my family. That's if I have one someday, but that depends on you."

"You always lie to me."

"If we become a family, I won't. I promise."

He kissed her again. He could tell that she was contemplating his proposal. Pushing it further, he whispered.

"Your parents are back together again and so far they haven't killed each other. It's been a month already, and I daresay, they'll be together forever."

"Where did this '*forever*' come from?"

"I don't know. From eternity?"

Kicking him a slightly due to the limited movement of his body covering hers, she laughed. Sark continued.

"Girls like forever."

"I don't."

"All right, then we'll have an expiration date then my dear. How does that sound?"

"Bad."

Smiling, he spoke.

"You want this, don't you?"

Not answering to him, they remained silent for a while. Finally, she spoke.

"I can't trust you."

He laughed.

"You already trust me. I've been laying on top of you for ten minutes solid. No one could've achieved that much."

"Hey."

He smiled and she smiled back. Realizing he was right, she whispered.

"How would I know that you're not faking? Or lying?"

"What would I gain from a relationship with you? Nothing but personal gain. Now my dear, you're a smart girl and can do better than that."

"It's not easy to think right now."

"I know. That's why I chose here to talk."

Laughing, she raised her lips to his and kissed.

CHAPTER 57 – LA VIE EN ROSE

3 months later...

"We have a new assignment. Sark, stop. Stop it..."

Pushing Sark away, she began to read the briefing, stopping here and there with her comments. Sark started nibbling on her ear lobe.

"It's in the Bahamas. Nice, I can get a tan."

"And others would see your gorgeous body in a bikini? No thanks. We can get a tan here too."

"Where, in bed?"

"Perhaps."

Smiling, she let him kiss her on the lips. Holding the paper where she could read it out of the corner of her eye, she continued skimming the page. When it became impossible for her to concentrate on the brief, she guided his head to her neck and gained some more time...after all, it was for the country.

"The kids are going to Bahamas."

"Irina please, stop calling them kids. *Please.*"

Laughing, Irina sat down in a chair next to the table. Handing him his coffee mug, she spoke.

"Okay. How about '*our daughter and her husband*'?"

"Less painful, more acceptable."

Smiling, Irina asked.

"What are you working on?"

"I'm sending Vaughn away."

"On an Operation? Jack, he'll have a baby soon. Isn't it dangerous?"

"I'm sending him away to an *another office*. It's for the best."

Irina looked at him puzzled. She thought about asking if he was sure, but Jack was always certain, so she sighed instead.

"It's your call. I know Julian will be happy. "

"Also Sydney..."

"And Lauren..."

"And *us*."

Laughing, Irina spoke.

"You make him sound like an intruder or something. Vaughn took good care of our daughter when we weren't around. We owe him."

"That's why I'm not sending him to an office in another *state*. They can still see each other. However it will be when ever they *want* and not because it is dictated by the office."

"As usual, you know best."

Looking at her, Jack said nothing and returned to his work. After a moment, Irina got up to go into the living room, he murmured.

"I love you."

Turning back to him, she looked at her husband who was also the love of her life and father of her daughter. She smiled warmly.

"I know."

And she was not going to go away again.

THE END

Hard to believe, but the end. It's been 3 years since I started this story, my FIRST english story, and now I'm here. Many of you read this, left this, or now here, with me, reading the ending, seeing the ending, feeling the ending.

Some of you may not like it, but I'm calm with it. I didn't intend to do a second season-like operation for them, my plan was always this, and I wrote what I planned.

I'd like to thank YOU for being here firstly, getting to the end, bearing with me and with my mistakes, I know I've made many, but if I gave a little of what I thought, and if you got that, then we're good. I hope you guys got much more than 'little'.

Then I'd like to thank Lisa, for always being there for me with this story. She is not only a Beta, but she is my friend too, and believe me, she made this thing read-able, all the applause should go to her, if there are any, of course :P

So yes, thank you all, for leaving me reviews, for pushing me to write, for encouraging me, and also telling me my mistakes, offering me plots, thinking and imagining with me. This wouldn't be here if you weren't there.

Thank you all, hope to see you again with different stories,
Dilso

06.10.04
15.09.07
26.09.07

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