

Flight, a novel

Should be three parts: Part One – Flight from Anger, Part Two – Flight from Fear, Part Three – Flight from Fate

The fate is the EO factor, they love each other, but they really cannot be together.

The boys murdered: Jacob Lewendale, Connor Whickfield, Ricky Schrader, Daniel Richardson, Manny Scheibley, Dominic Hedges, Tyler McFarland

Murdered by Mark: Ryan Daly, Andrew Shaw, and Zachary Calbhach (attacked, but survives).

Hudson University is around 10<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Avenues.

Elliot's family lives on 62<sup>nd</sup> Ave in Woodside, Queens, New York, between 37<sup>th</sup> and 38<sup>th</sup> Aves.

Elliot lives on 50<sup>th</sup> Street between Skillman Ave and 39<sup>th</sup> Ave, closer to 39<sup>th</sup>.

Olivia lives at 250 W. 10<sup>th</sup> Street Apt #84 Greenwich Village, New York, NY 10011

Elliot lives at 38-11 50<sup>th</sup> Street (#11) Woodside, Queens, NY 11377

The 1-6 is located on W 47<sup>th</sup> Street.

Maya's family:

73 - Baladeva and 70 - Priyal Shah

51 - Lavanya Pradesh/Harinder (Anesthesiologist)

49 - Rajesh Shah/Dhavala (goes by Raj; Dentist)

47 - Jaidev Shah/Allison (goes by JD; Oncologist)

47 - Priyani Iyengar/Dinesh (the sister who insisted on being married in Southern India; MoleGen Director at Hudson)

45 - Vijay Shah/Mehal (goes by VJ; Architect)

**37 - *Mayanjula Shah***

Amit Vandayar (guy who's pursuing her; he's 33)

### **Specific episode spoilers:**

Burned

Choreographed

Underbelly

Infiltrated

Informed

Fault

Intoxicated

Serendipity

Slaves

Clock

### **Chronology:**

**Thursday Jan 11**

Olivia is doing laundry and comes across a blue uniform that fits just a bit too snug and smiles.

She thinks of her boyfriend she feels that she is quite literally falling in love with, and thinks that she should do the "Naughty Female Cop" routine for him more often. She thinks to take Jillian and Sarah out for dinner some Saturday just for fixing up she and Jonathan.

She puts in a load and settles back onto their newest case: a fifteen year old boy, Jacob Lewendale, was found strangled and raped on the west side. There were no leads or DNA and the boy's parents hadn't even filed a Missing Person's Report yet.

It appears that the boy's parents didn't like him all that much.

Maya calls frantic because her "boyfriend" Mason is talking about leaving his wife and she really doesn't want him to.

She sets down the file and gets some grape juice from her fridge.

The phone rings, she picks it up absent-mindedly.

"Hello."

"He's leaving his wife!"

She pauses for a moment unsure what she just heard.

"Maya?"

" 'Livia! He says he wants to leave his wife! "

Olivia sighs. Maya Shah's relationship with the married man she was using to cheat on her current boyfriend had been a pain in Olivia's side for the past two years. Maya had been the first person she'd called when she came back from Oregon, and while she had found herself excited at first to hear all the sordid details of Maya's affair, the sparkle had long since faded and she was more annoyed by the situation that ever. She did, however, like the distraction every once in a while.

"What makes you think he wants to leave his wife?"

Maya made a disgusted sound. "Because he just left my apartment saying that he wanted to leave his wife and be with me all the time."

"He's got kids," Liv says going back to her couch.

"I know! The way he says it, he acts like he wants to marry me or something and I just wanted him for the sex."

"Honestly, Maya, I don't think you have much to worry about."

"Why's that?"

"These guys never leave their wives. You know that. Did any of the others leave their wives?"

"No, but this is different. He says he's so unhappy with his wife and he's just a little too interested in the Hindi language and India, in general."

"And, what you don't want any 'light' brown kids running around," Olivia said sarcastically.

"Don't be a bitch. I don't want kids in any shade of brown and I sure as hell don't want to marry him."

"Well, you know what can do, Maya?" Liv says.

"What?"

"Break up with him and stop cheating on Amit!"

"Olivia! Come on. I'm serious."

"So am I. How long do you really plan on keeping this up? Amit's been dropping hints that he wants to marry you for ages now."

"Exactly. How long is he going to drop hints before actually does something?"

"So, what? Are you actually going to stop seeing other people if Amit proposes?"

She's met with silence on the other end. "Yeah...Yes. Yes, I will."

"Good, because he asked me if I knew what your ring size was, a few days ago."

"Olivia, don't be a bitch. Are you serious?"

"Of course I'm serious. Break up with Mason."

"Yeah, I know, I know," Maya says.

"Oh shit," she says after moment. "Mason just popped up on my caller ID."

"Break. Up. With. Him. Marry your Indian doctor and live happily ever after."

"Okay, I know. You're right....but, Liv...?"

"Yes."

"You don't really think Mason'll leave his wife, do you?"

Olivia rolls her eyes and sighs. "Maya, śubha rātri."

"Yeah, good night Livia."

She gets off the phone with Maya and puts the file away for the time being.

As she's getting ready for bed, there's a knock on the door; it's Jonathan.

They go to sleep together.

"How come we never stay over at your place?" She says as they cuddle into bed. "You hiding a wife or something?"

"No, of course not!" He says with jest in his voice. "Not as of yesterday, anyway."

She nudges him and cuddles into bed next to him.

"It's because my place is stark and unloved and designed by an interior decorator. Yours has got you all over it and it has something extra special in it that I just love."

"Oh, what's that?"

Jonathan says nothing, but nuzzles his face into her neck and she smiles into her pillow.

She loves that she doesn't even need to tell him that she's not in the mood tonight.

Jonathan always knows.

Cut to Elliot's house around the same time.

Elliot falls asleep on the couch and is awakened by the news that another boy was found on the west side.

Elliot and Dickie part one

Elliot and Dickie part two

(This entire scene needs to be completely re-written, since the kids aren't technically staying with Elliot. Maybe Dickie's staying over at his father's that Thursday because he took him to a basketball game and it was late. Dickie's friend from...soccer lives in the building down the street from Elliot's, but Elliot says he can't go see him. Also, include a scene with him telling Kathy that Dickie is grounded until he's ready to apologize for sneaking out.)

"Later, Dad," Dickie says with his coat on and heading out the door.

"Hey!" Elliot yells setting down the file for Jacob Lewendale and standing up. "Where do you think you're going?"

"David's."

"It's a eleven o'clock."

"I'll be back by one."

"On a Thursday night."

"Dad, we're gonna be doing homework."

"Well, where the hell were you this afternoon?"

Dickie was silent for a moment. "Out."

"Out? That's all you've got to say. Out."

"Come on, Dad. I'm there a couple hours and I'm back by one. What's the problem?"

"The problem is you had all day to do whatever it was you were supposed to do. I'm not going let you go wandering the streets just because you chose to procrastinate."

"It's due tomorrow!"

"Well, I suggest you use this remarkable invention known as the telephone to call David and do your homework over the phone."

"Dad," Dickie says getting more irritated. "Come. On. Mom would let me go."

"We both know she wouldn't. Now, go back upstairs."

"Jessica's gonna be there!"

Elliot paused and smirked at his only son. "So, it's a homework 'par-tay?' "

"Come on, Dad. I'll be careful and I'll be back at one. It's just down the street."

Elliot glances at the case file now sitting slightly covered by a day-old newspaper and then back at his son. "No."

Dickie slams the door shut. "This blows!" He storms up the stairs.

"Tell me about it," Elliot says to himself as he settles down the casefile.

He allowed the images of the strangled teenager to sit in his mind while attempting to picture the face of the murder. He would probably have an average face, a trusting face. He would most likely have known his victim, got close to him, even become his friend. Elliot could not wait to have the bastard in his squadroom.

A creak on the stairs caused Elliot's eyes to fly open at 1:30 in the morning.

He stood to find Dickie, coat on and one foot at the bottom of the stairs.

They stood for a moment staring at one another; fear building in Dickie's eyes at the rage building in his father's.

"Where the hell have you been!?" Elliot yelled.

Dickie took a deep breath. "David's."

"After I told you not to go!"

"You were being unreasonable," Dickie said nonchalantly and rolling his eyes.

"Unreasonable! I don't care if you ever think what I say is reasonable. When I say no, it means no!"

"Dad, it's just like I said. I was out at eleven and back at one."

"It doesn't matter! I told you not to go and you did it anyway! What, did you climb out your window?"

Dickie stared at the floor. "We got the project done and I'm back home safe. I don't see the problem."

"You don't see a problem with you doing exactly what I told you not to?"

"You were being unreason-

"Unreasonable! You don't even know why I told you no! No, you know what? All that matters was you disobeyed me just because you thought you could get away with it."

Dickie just stared at floor. "What if something had happened to you? I'm expecting you to be here and safe, and you're out wandering the streets with whoever!"

"Not whoever. David, Jessica and a few other peo-"

"I don't care! I need to know where you are at all times."

"You knew where I was going."

"No, I knew that I sent you up to your room and you should have been there until breakfast tomorrow, this morning!"

Dickie was just staring at his shoes by this point, but Elliot was so angry he wanted to shake him.

"Go to your room. You're grounded."

Dickie's eyes grew wide. "For how long!?"

" 'Til I say so."

"How the hell long is that gonna be?"

"Until you learn you are not going to run the streets whenever the hell you feel like it!"

"I wasn't running the streets! Dad, I was at David's working on 'homework' for Chrissake!"

Elliot threw his son a cold glance at the use of God's name in vain and Dickie fell silent immediately.

"You talk to you mother like that?" he said sternly.

"Mom would've let me go."

"If you hadn't waited 'til the last second, I would've too, but you did, so I didn't and now you're grounded."

"For how long?"

" 'Til I'm not pissed about this anymore."

"Fat chance that's ever gonna happen."

"Well, then I hope you had good time with your friends tonight because you won't be seeing them anytime soon."

Dickie started stomping up the stairs. "What, are you going to lock me in my room?"

"I'll do what's necessary."

"Whatever. I gotta go to school in the morning, don't I?"

"Dickie!"

Dickie took the finality in the sound of his name to heart and raced up the stairs slamming his bedroom door shut once he reached it. Elliot sighed as he settled back down on the couch. He held his face in his hands and closed his eyes. Things were easier when the kids were little. For the most part, they did as they were told. Now that they were older, it seemed like they were all turning against him at the same time. He sighed, not knowing if this was just his children acting as teenagers or acting out because of what had happened with he and Kathy.

Elliot gets the call

Elliot's cellphone rang at a quarter after four. He'd fallen asleep on the couch, for not much more than an hour before his phone began chirping him out of his sleep.

"Stabler," he said exhaustion in his voice.

Another boy had been found.

He called Olivia while putting on a new shirt.  
The phone rang twice before a less than familiar, groggy male voice answered the phone.  
"The West side of Olivia's bed, speaking."  
Elliot was silent for a moment while he could hear some slight rustling and then Olivia  
say, "Give me the phone."  
"Benson," she said after a few seconds.  
"Olivia, there's been another one."  
He tells her where and she says she'll be there shortly.

## **Friday Jan 12**

**\*\*Kreider knew Jacob Lewendale.**  
In his adopted family, his cousin was Jacob Lewendale's father.  
Jacob was his nephew.

They meet victim #2 and Drover  
"You sure it's the same guy?" Elliot ask Warner as he's approaching the scene.  
"I can't say for an absolute certainty yet," she says, "But I'm willing to be he is. He was  
left nude, beaten and raped."  
"This is only a couple blocks away from the last crime scene."  
"We're starting the canvass of this area," a uniformed officer informed Elliot. "This guy's  
gotta be local."  
Elliot just nodded and stared at the body of a young boy who could have very well have  
been Dickie. Brown hair that looked like it was once blond. Same height, roughly  
the same age.  
"What've we got?" He hears Olivia's voice.  
"Preteen kid," the uniform says, "Maybe twelve or thirteen."  
"It looks like it might be the work of the Lewendale boy's killer," Elliot said flatly.  
Liv snapped on some latex gloves as she took a look at the crime scene.  
They ask questions of all the uniforms and the guy who found him, one Jeffrey Drover.  
Drover is fit with light brown hair and eyes. He has an average face, a face someone  
could trust and for some reason, Elliot cannot stand the fact that Drover has kept  
his hands firmly shoved into his pockets the entire time.  
"I can't believe someone would do this to Connor," Drover said shivering against the  
January wind.  
"How well did you know him?" Olivia asked, readying her pen over her notepad.  
"I used to coach his U-10 soccer team. I've trained him and some other kids on and off for  
the past couple of years." He sighed. "I just can't believe someone would do  
something like this to him."  
"What are you doing out here this early in the morning?" Elliot asks little sympathy in his  
voice.  
Drover seemed a bit caught off guard by the question. "I was just going for a run. I  
haven't been able to sleep recently. I'm sure you know what it's like to lose sleep  
over your job."  
"Truly," Olivia said.

They grill him a little more: at what time did he find the body, did he see anyone else around, did he touch anything, did he notice anything else out of the ordinary? They talk to Drover for a few more minutes, before beginning their canvass of the area. "I want to bring him in," Elliot says once they're a distance away from Drover. "What?" Liv says in disbelief. "Elliot, we haven't even talked to anyone else yet." "There's something...off about him. You didn't see it?" Olivia quickly played the entire questioning back in her head. "I didn't notice overly "off" about him, except for the running at four in the morning part. But he's not the only New Yorker who gets his jollies risking an early-morning run." Elliot shakes his head. "I don't like it. My gut tells me we should keep looking at him." They have a mini argument over Drover  
They make up over coffee  
They all discuss the case and its similarities to Jacob Lewendale  
El and Liv see the parents  
They ask questions  
Elliot brings up Drover  
They see some of his friends at school  
Again, Elliot brings up Drover  
They argue again about Drover on the way back to the squad  
They all go over what they learned about Connor Wickfield:  
- the last time he was seen  
- where he said he was going  
- where he ended up going  
- possibility enemies of the family  
- his friends and how was school  
Olivia gets Kathleen's call around 8  
"Benson," Olivia says into her phone.  
"Uh, hi, Olivia? This is Kathleen. Is my dad around?"  
Olivia's confused at first why Kathleen would be calling her instead of calling her father straight away.  
"Well, he's not around me at this second, but I can get him. Hold on."  
"Wait." Kathleen said.  
"Yeah?"  
"I, uh, actually wanted to talk to you...if that's okay?"  
Olivia was silent for a moment before answering. "Um, yeah. That's fine. What's up? Is there something wrong?"  
"Well...no. I just..." she trailed off.  
Liv starts getting apprehensive. "Kathleen? Are you okay? Do you need help?"  
"No, no, no," she says. "I just, uh, wanted to talk to someone about...something."  
"Okay...is it something important?"  
"Well, no...not really, I guess."  
Olivia was starting to get annoyed. "Are you sure it's not important?"  
"Well-no. It's not. Well...I- I guess I just don't want to talk about it over the phone."  
"Do you need me to meet you somewhere?"  
"Um...yeah, actually could we meet at Schreider's Cafe. It's in Queens. Do you know where it is?"

"I do," said Olivia. "What time 'cause I'm still at the station house?"

"Uh, yeah, I know...How 'bout tomorrow? I have indoor practice early, so maybe like eight in the morning?"

"Okay...that sounds fine."

"Great." Kathleen sounded relieved.

"Are you sure you don't want me to get your dad because he's just around the corner?"

"No," she said a little too quickly for Olivia's taste. "He doesn't need to know. In fact, I was kinda hoping you wouldn't have to tell him at all?"

Olivia paused. She didn't like secrets and whatever Kathleen need to meet with her about was going to be something secretive. Something, Kathleen did not want her father to know. She felt a chill as she thought about actively helping one of Elliot's kids keep a secret from him.

"Well, if it's important, I'm sure he'd want to know."

"He will," Kathleen said. "Just...not right now. I want to talk to someone else first."

"Okay," Olivia said nodding into her phone. "So, tomorrow morning, eight am at Schreider's."

"Yes," Kathleen confirmed. "Thanks so much, Olivia."

"No problem."

She closed her cell, but held it in her hand, unsure of the next step to take. She tried running down a list of all the things Kathleen could feel comfortable talking about with Olivia and not Elliot: School, hair, makeup, boys, sex, alcohol, drugs, pregnancy, college... The list seemed to go on forever, and Olivia did not feel comfortable talking to Kathleen about any of them outside of Elliot and Kathy's permission.

Elliot came walking quickly from around the corner, breaking her reverie.

"Hey, we gotta go," he said putting on his coat. "Just got a call. Warner wants us."

As they left, Olivia felt a weight on her shoulder she just couldn't shrug off.

they are driving up to see some more of the kids

they're in silence as Liv leafs through things

Elliot's thinking about the fact that Liv was right when it came to Drover

none of the kids had anything significant to say about him

they all acted like he was just a guy

he didn't train all of them

the ones he did, they all liked

one said that Drover acted a little too much like he wanted to be their role model and that it made him sick, but this kid was also the type who was only playing because his parents were forcing him.

Elliot still could not shake the feeling that there was something wrong with Drover

Maybe it was the way he first looked at Olivia, there was definitely 'something' to that small interlude.

He shakes that thought and turns to his conversation with Kathy

His son probably hated him at the moment and God only knew what was going on with Kathleen.

Ever since he it began to look like he and Kathy were not getting back together, Kathleen had been more than hostile to both of them.

His thoughts go back to Liv and who she called.  
Maybe it was Evelyn Rivers and she was just checking up on her.  
Liv's thoughts:  
same as with El  
but she's annoyed because she feels like they wasted all this energy fighting about Drover  
she felt drained and even though they'd shared a more upbeat dinner than they had in the  
past, she still did not like where they were. Even throughout their somber day,  
they were able to joke with one another.  
She knew half of it was due to her impending conversation with Kathleen.  
She ponders on whether or not she should tell Elliot.  
If was serious, she would have to tell Elliot about and she knew he'd be angry that she  
hadn't told him as soon as she knew something was up.  
They talk to Everett Dyseki who says that Drover was cool and that he trained him on his  
own sometimes. That he took him a baseball game and helped with his homework  
sometimes when his mother was out.  
They ask to speak to Everett alone because it seems like there's something he's not telling  
them about Drover.  
Once the mother leaves, Everett tells them that nothing's up, it was just that he was  
uncomfortable because Drover used to date his mother.  
It looked for a while like Drover was going to be his new stepfather, but Drover never  
acted any different and he always treated him like he treated everyone else.  
The next four homes give no other information.  
They'd gone back to the precinct and searched for hours looking for the same MO in the  
Lewendale and Whickfield cases, but found nothing.  
Elliot still does not like the fact that Drover's been dating his kids' mothers, but Liv jokes  
that they can't bring him in for bad taste.  
Elliot drives her home and they sit outside her building for a second.  
American Pie is playing softly on the radio.  
He says that he might have been a bit off about Drover.  
He admits that he really didn't like him the second he saw him.  
He says some of it might because he can see Dickie in all those faces and he can't help  
seeing Drover in every person who comes into contact with his son. He knows  
that Dickie would probably like a guy like Drover.  
Liv says she understands.  
She asks how Kathy and the rest of his kids are doing.  
Elliot waves off the question and turns it back to her.  
He asks how Jonathan's doing. She says good, but she's still out of it wondering if she  
should tell Elliot that Kathleen talked to her.  
He says bye before she can say it, after they stare at one another in silence for a moment.  
  
She rides up on the elevator with Adam Jackson.  
They flirt extensively.  
He asks to borrow a book because he couldn't sleep.  
It's a book that she'd told him about.  
They flirt a bit more before his girl calls his cell. He says openly that he's at Olivia's and  
she can hear the severity of her voice.

He leaves then Mark comes over and asks Olivia if that guy from the 10<sup>th</sup> floor was bothering her.  
He saw him talk to her and he says that if he's bothering he can get the super to say something and that he also knew people.  
Olivia says it's fine and that she since she was cop, she didn't want to hear about any "people."  
Mark should refer to him as "that black guy" and Olivia has to remind him that his name is Adam Jackson.  
Go into the methods of murdering someone.

### **Saturday Jan 13**

Olivia meets with Kathleen  
They discuss birth control over breakfast  
When they meet, Kathleen says she and her boyfriend have been talking and she wanted to know if Liv could offer her any advice on birth control.  
Liv tells her that she should talk to her parents about it.  
After the initial shock wears off and she is able to swallow the coffee she'd been holding in her mouth, she says:  
"You know, Kathleen...This is really something that you should talk about to with your parents."  
She and Kathleen stare at one another for a moment, both knowing that conversation about birth control with Elliot would be nothing short of a disaster.  
"I mean, your mother at least," she adds quickly.  
"I know," Kathleen says pushing her eggs around her plate. "I tried, but Mom just keeps trying to talk me out of it. She won't even listen to me."  
"Well, it's 'cause she wants what's best for you."  
"Yeah, but when I say that we've talked about it, Mike and me, she says we're too young and that we just shouldn't. She doesn't even want to talk about the what if."  
Olivia stares at the table. She remembers the feeling of wanting to go to her mother about something like this, but knowing it wasn't even a possibility.  
"And, I can't talk to Maureen about it," she continued, " 'cause she'll just goes into big-sister-protection-mode, and I know she'll go straight to Mom and Dad." She pauses.  
"Olivia, I wouldn't have bothered you, but I need to talk to someone about this and I...I just didn't want to go any of my friends because sooner or later it would be all over school and I just don't need that right now."  
"Kathleen, you're not a bother to me. You can come to me at anytime, with anything. I just...." She trails off.  
If Elliot knew what she was about to discuss with his daughter, he would just throw a fit, if she were lucky. Most likely, he would just throw her.  
"Well," Liv says with a resignation in her voice. "Have the two of you talked about it? I mean, 'really' talked about it."  
"Yes," Kathleen says with a little too much enthusiasm. "We're in love."  
"Okay, but you know, you can be in love with someone without having sex."

Kathleen sighs sets down her fork. Olivia was losing her and she knew if she didn't say something, Elliot would most likely become a young grandfather.

"Well, if you two really think you're ready..." She trails off again, unsure how to proceed with the conversation.

Olivia had gone to her far more experienced friends when she decided she was ready to have sex. She and her mother never talked about it. Not once.

"What were you thinking of in terms of protection?"

"I figured just condoms, but I heard that guys don't really like them, so I was wondering if there was anything else."

"Well, in the end, it's not a matter of whether or not they like condoms, it's a matter of protecting yourself."

"I know," Kathleen says, now pushing her eggs again.

"Are you sure? 'Cause it's not just pregnancy you have to worry about. There's Herpes, AIDS, Hepatitis. The list goes on. Condoms are your only protection against STDs. Well, besides not having sex."

Kathleen nods. "Okay, so we should just use condoms then? You know until I know he doesn't have anything."

Liv shakes her head. "Birth control is not an either or option. It's more like...uh, your fall back, in case the condom breaks."

"They break?" Kathleen said eyes now wide.

"Yeah, they do. Often."

"Whoa, I didn't know that. Why don't they tell you these things in school?"

Liv shrugs. "I guess that's why I'm here."

Kathleen gives her a little smile and they continue.

"Okay, so first thing's first: the both of you have to get tested for any STDs."

"But this'll be the first time for the both us."

Liv pauses trying her best to put this into perspective for a teenager.

"I'm not saying anything against Mike, but there's no real way to tell if a boy's had sex or not."

"But-" Kathleen began.

"Okay. If he says he's a virgin, fine, but this way, you'll both know for sure. If you both do it at the same time, it'll be like...I don't know...a bonding experience for the two you. Just imagine the relief of knowing for an absolute certainty that you're both free of anything."

Kathleen stares at her plate, but nods her head.

"Kathleen, if he loves you, he'll agree." She immediately felt bad for saying it. There was a real possibility that Kathleen and her boyfriend could be in as much love as kids their age could be, but that he could be completely aggravated at Kathleen even suggesting that he could pass on an STD to her.

Kathleen smiles at her and nods again and Liv continues.

"So, like I said, condoms are an absolute must. I suggest latex Trojans."

"And they protect against everything right?"

"Yes, as long as they don't break. But you've got to get the latex ones. They're sheepskin ones out there and they just barely keep you from getting pregnant."

"Latex. Got it." Liv could tell Kathleen was making a list in her head.

"Right. So, there's lots of different birth control types. There's the pill, of course." Olivia felt herself launching into readied mantra for this sort of thing. "But there's also the patch, hormonal injections and the ring. Plus, there's also-"

"Well, which one do you use?" Kathleen asked cutting her off.

Liv felt her face grow slightly warm. "I use a combination of things. I use the pill, condoms and I have a diaphragm."

"Diaphragm. That's like a condom for girls, right?"

"Not exactly. It fits inside of you and you have to use a spermicide to make sure it's effective. And it's not something you can just pick up at the drug store. You have to be fitted for one with your gynecologist."

"That means I'd have to go through my parents?"

"Yes, yes it would."

"But, I wouldn't with the pill."

"You would still need a prescription from your doctor, but..." She wanted to say that Kathleen could get them without her parents knowing, but she couldn't. She could just imagine the argument with Elliot and probably with Kathy too, if, no when they found out that she'd given their daughter advice on birth control. Olivia was about to change the subject onto how the pill should be taken, but Kathleen made the connection regardless.

"I can get it without them knowing?"

Liv just nodded. Somehow nodding felt like she wasn't exactly telling her yes.

"And you use the pill and condoms 'and' a diaphragm...at the same time?"

Olivia let out a sigh. The conversation was becoming far more complicated than she had hoped and for more than she had been expecting for a Saturday morning. She didn't want to lie to Kathleen, but she wasn't sure she was prepared to tell Kathleen about her own experiences just yet.

"If I'm dating someone," She began, "and we've both been tested, and we've been together for a 'very' long time...we might...might not use a condom. But, I always took my pill, and only ditched the condom when I knew that he did not have anything and if..."

"If?" Kathleen pressed.

"...if the moment warranted it," she said in quick succession. "But, again, I always use my diaphragm and the pill is absolutely necessary."

"Okay. So, which one do you use?"

"Well, there's lots of them out there-"

"But, which one do 'you' use?"

"Nordette. There are several generic brands of it, but it works for me."

"Why do you use the pill? 'Cause one of the girls on the team was showing off her patch and she said most people use it."

Olivia rolled her eyes at the ignorance of teenaged girls, running around and parading how sexually active they were. "I use the pill because I know it works. It's been around since before I was born and I know it's effective and it's safe."

Kathleen nods, now giving Olivia her full attention.

"What about like weight gain and stuff? I heard the pill makes you fat."

"Old wives' tale. It happens in some cases, but as active as you are, I doubt you'll have much to worry about."

"Did you? I mean, when you first started taking it?"

Liv shook her head. "No, but your hips are going to get a little wider, because the pill basically makes your body think it's pregnant until you take the placebo pills and you get your period."

Kathleen's eyebrows shot up at the mention of placebo pills and Liv continued. "You'll get them in a 28-day pack. The first 21 will be pills with the hormone. The last 7 will be placebo pills and once you're done with those, you get your period."

"Okay. So, I'm gonna have wide hips?"

Liv smiled. "Well, not so much that it'll be ridiculously noticable, but yes. But, on the plus side, your cramps will be very light and you won't have any pimples."

Kathleen nodded more to herself than to Olivia. "So, what else? Do I just take them in the morning or what?"

"You start taking them on the Sunday before your period or the first day of it."

"Why Sunday?"

"Tried and true practice, I suppose."

"Is that what you did?"

"Yep. And you have to make sure you take it every, single day, at the exact same time."

"Oh. Well, what happens if you don't?"

"Well, then you're gonna get pregnant." She hated having to be so blunt about it, but she still had half a hope that she could talk Kathleen out of considering sex with her "love." Olivia figured she would have a much easier time trying to relay this conversation to Elliot, if she could be certain that Kathleen got the full message.

"Missing a pill here or there is how most of the kids in this world are born."

Kathleen's eyes were now wide. "Okay, so every day. Don't miss it."

"Right."

"What time do you take yours?"

"Seven am every day. But, I suggest you take it at a time you'll know you won't miss it. Maybe it'll be better for you to take it a night or before you go to bed. Just as long as you take it at the same time everyday."

"Like, to the minute or-"

"Within an hour, or else you're just asking for trouble."

"Okay. So, how long does it take before...you know."

"It takes at least...fourteen days before it's effective," Liv lied. She knew it was seven and she knew Kathleen probably knew it was seven, but Kathleen seemed to be taking her every word at heart. Perhaps if she had to wait a little longer, maybe there would be time to talk her out of it or at least get her to talk to her parents.

"But, to be on the safe side, you should wait until you're on it for about a month. That way you know how your body will react to it."

"A month?"

"'fraid so. But, at least after a month, you'll know that you're absolutely ready."

Kathleen nodded again mostly to herself.

"You said the pill was like something to fall back on. Does it sometimes stop working?"

"Well, no method of birth control is 100% effective. Only abstinence."

"But, I mean, it's safer than other things right?"

"If you take diligently, every day at the same time, then it's about 98 to 99 percent effective."

"And what happens the other two percent of the time?"

Olivia shrugs. "Anything can happen. The pill is supposed to keep your body from releasing an egg. Sometimes, it doesn't."

Kathleen sighed. "That just doesn't seem fair. I'm mean if you're taking it every day like you're supposed to..."

"Well, like I said, nothing is 100 percent. Even in cases where women have had their tubes tied, they still end up getting pregnant. It's one of those mysteries of life, I suppose."

"Yeah," Kathleen said lost in thought.

A silence fell between them and Kathleen started nibbling on her toast.

"Any other questions?" Liv asked. "Anything else you want to know?"

"No, not really," Kathleen said.

"Okay, if you have any other questions, just let me know."

"Yeah."

Kathleen looked at her watch and started to get up. "I'm about to be late for practice," she said, getting out her wallet.

"No, no," Liv said holding up her hand. "It's on me. Do you need a ride?"

"No, I'm okay," she said. "Thanks Olivia."

"No problem at all."

She started to walk away, but then stopped and came back to the table.

"You're not gonna tell my dad about this are you? 'Cause if he finds out-"

"I won't," Liv said unsure of how true the statement was. "I promise."

"Thanks. Thanks a lot."

"Oh, and Kathleen," Liv said before Kathleen got up. "Please. 'Please' come talk to me before you do anything okay?"

Kathleen nodded and started to leave, but sat back down. "Wo...would you come with me? To go to the doctor's office. You know to get the prescription?"

"Well, if you decide you don't want your mom to go with you...yes. Just tell me when and where."

Kathleen smiled and hugged Olivia. "Okay, now I really have to go. Thank you so much, Olivia."

"Anytime."

After Kathleen left, she thought immediately about Elliot. She'd seen him literally enraged due to happenings at work. Perps who walked, leads that went nowhere, lives lost, their latest case. But she knew that everything else would take a backseat when it came to his children.

She drives toward Queens to see if Elliot had a moments of inspiration...as she's going in his direction.

As she's leaving, she sees some guy come running out from the alleyway screaming for someone to call the cops.

Set amongst the garbage is a little boy with a broken neck. This is the third of Krieder's victims.

Liv gets CSU down there and calls Elliot.

He asks what she's doing over there this early on a Saturday and she says she was just having breakfast with a friend.

Olivia finds victim #3, Ricky Schrader

They spend the entire day at the crime scene  
She lies to Elliot about why she was there  
She cancels her lunch "date" with Jonathan  
He notes that Drover lives not too far from the crime scene and works close to the others  
They argue about Drover

At the house, they find out the boy's history:

- he's in the system
- bounced around from several foster homes throughout childhood
- The Vonnexes, his latest foster family are stunned.
- he's had drug problems in the past
- he's also been prone run away
- they thought he was in bed and when they looked the next day he was gone.
- they filed on the 10th for him.

Munch and Fin visit the rents while they go through files to see any correlation to others.

Olivia's coming home and she knocks on Mrs. Fitzgivens' door with some of her mail.

She invites her inside even though Liv says that she's busy.

Phil is there and she introduces Olivia.

Mrs. Fitzgivens says that this is her youngest son she'd been telling her that she'd like to marry off to a nice woman with a good head on her shoulders.

Elliot receives a call from Lizzie.

He tells her he has tickets to be ballet, but she's not as enthusiastic about it as he had hoped.

He asks why and she says that she'll get excited about it when they're actually going.

She fully expects that he'll have to cancel on her.

He promises to clear his schedule for it and he know he can because he's planning really far in advance.

She's still not convinced and she changes the subject. She asked if Olivia had anymore violin sheet music, because she wanted to play something "cooler" and at her next recital.

Elliot says that he'll ask her.

Lizzie then brings up Kathleen this morning.

"You know," she said softly in the voice she often used when she was tattling on her sister. "Kathleen took Dickie to his indoor practice this morning."

"Yeah," Elliot said.

"Did she tell you that this morning?"

His eyebrows furrowed in slight confusion. "No, Kathleen hasn't talked to me?"

"She didn't?" Lizzie said. "Well, she said she was going to breakfast this morning with someone. I figured it was with you."

"No, she didn't meet with me. Where'd she go?"

"Somewhere near NYU, I think. I'm not sure."

"She didn't hint at who it was?"

"Nope. Oh well. Anyways, Dad. I gotta' go. Meaghan's having a sleepover."

"Okay," Elliot said. "Well, have a good time."

"I will. Bye Dad."

He hung up the phone, but he continued staring at it. He knew Kathleen had been dating a new guy for a while now, it was likely it was him who she met for breakfast this morning, but he still did not like the idea.

### **Sunday, Jan 14**

He goes to church with his son and his family and sort of wonders how this all fell apart so quickly.

He goes back to work.

Olivia's there and she looks nervous, but she won't tell him what's wrong

When Olivia leaves that evening, Jillian calls to catch up.

Jillian tells her about how the kids are almost out of control, but that they'd love to see their Aunt Olivia.

They make plans in February, and Liv knows there'll always be something to keep her from keeping that appointment.

She asks about Jonathan and rubs it in that it was she and their friend Sarah who had to work ridiculously hard just to get them together.

She does some laundry and each time she comes back upstairs, Mark is there and keeps asking her if she needs any help.

Each time she tells him no, but he does not look discouraged.

She flirts with Adam Jackson from the 10<sup>th</sup> floor for no other reason because she can.

Jonathan comes over

She tells him about Kathleen, but he's less than understanding

He says something about Elliot not being a very capable guy since he allowed his marriage to fall apart.

They bicker a bit; Jonathan is more than smug and she gets up

"Hey," he says from the couch. "Where you going?"

"To take *out* my diaphragm. I just realized, I won't be needing it."

He looks annoyed and just keeps flipping through the channels.

Elliot catches a "homecooked" meal since his house is empty when the kids go back to Kathy

He sees Maya

Maya's been stood up by her fling

He and Maya talk, mostly about Olivia

Elliot sat in the dimly lit booth and dug into his steak. He always hated it when the kids had to go home, and trying to make dinner for himself always proved futile when the weight of his broken family lied so heavily on him. The diner was small with a bar, but on a Sunday night, it was smoke-free and a fairly nice place to have dinner.

He took a swig of his Rolling Rock and casually scanned the room in no particular fashion.

He was about to return to his steak, when his eyes caught a somewhat familiar face.

Liv's friend, Maya Shah, sat alone at the bar, a Corona with a lime stuck in its neck in her hand.

She glanced around and she quickly found Elliot sitting in his corner.

She smiled, he nodded toward her and she swaggered over to his table.

"Mind if I sit?" She asked.

"Have a seat," Elliot said, a piece of perfect steak in his cheek.

She sat down and looked around a little more. They just barely knew one another and they sat in silence for another moment.

"So," she said after a minute. "What're you doing here eating alone?"

Elliot shrugged. "They grill a good steak and I didn't really feel like trying to cook tonight."

"I completely understand," Maya said. "I never cook if I can help it."

"Never? Doesn't that get a little tedious?"

"In the greatest city in the world? Never!"

Elliot laughed, but silence fell upon them again.

"I talked to Livia yesterday...She's seeming kind of...I don't know...happier than before."

Maya had lied, but she never liked silence and she could not think of anything she and Elliot could talk about.

"Mm...", he said his mouth full of steak. "I think it's that guy she's been dating."

"Yeah, Jonathan. He's great. Wish I'd of caught him."

"He doesn't like me," Elliot said matter-of-factly.

"Really? I didn't think Jonathan *disliked* anybody."

" 'Bout a month ago, I drove by Olivia's to drop off something...She wasn't there, but he was."

Elliot fell silent, pausing briefly to recollect the encounter.

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"Oh, so *you're* Liv's partner," the dark-haired man had said crossing his arms, but smirking slightly.

"Yeah," Elliot had said. "Just...uh...give her this and have her call me if she has any questions about what I wrote."

"I think I can manage that," Jonathan said smugly.

"Yes...well," Elliot had said, not sure what else to make of the guy. "Take care, then."

"Hey, hang on sec," Jonathan said. "So, um...tell me. What's it like to work with Olivia?"

"What's it like?" Elliot shrugged. "It's fine...perfect. We get along great."

Jonathan shook his head. "I see."

"You see what?"

Jonathan raised his eyebrows as his mouth stretches into that same smug smirk. "Nothing. Nothing at all."

Elliot got irritated. "D-Do you have some kind of problem with me or something?"

"No, no problem," Jonathan had said. "Well...actually I uh...have about three questions for you."

"Okay..." Elliot said suspiciously.

"First of all, are you sleeping with Olivia?"

He was silent a moment, wondering whether to deck the guy or just turn and walk back toward the elevator.

"No. I'm pretty sure you're handling that."

" 'Kay. Just checking...Have you ever slept with my girlfriend?"

"Again. No."

"Well, all right," he said, the smirk turning into a wide grin. "Let me ask, have you ever hurt her in any way?"

Elliot felt his expression soften. He was certain in their eight years together, he had said or done something that hurt Olivia. While he did not like to so much as raise his voice in her direction, he knew Olivia carried emotional scars from their partnership.

"Don't be ridiculous," he had said.

"Well, then you know what? I think we'll be all right. I'll make sure Liv gets this and I hope you have yourself a good day."

With those words, Jonathan closed the door in Elliot's face.

Elliot shook his head. "Jackass," he said under his breath as he headed for the elevator.

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"He got a little uppity with me," Elliot continued.

"Really? Jonathan?"

"Took one look at me and we just gave each other a bad vibe, I guess."

"Wow. He seems like such a sociable guy."

"That's what Liv tells me."

"Hmmm," Maya said taking a drink. "Although... You know he *is* a Halloway. And sometimes he can lay that smugness down pretty thick on people he doesn't like."

Elliot nodded. "That's for damn sure," he thought to himself.

Silence hovered over them once more.

"So, what're you doing here?" He asked finally. "A happenin' gal like you. Shouldn't you be out at some fabulous restaurant, dining with the rich and famous?"

"Yeah, I should," she said, eyes gleaming with a flippant toss of her hair. "But, instead I'd thought I'd meet a friend for a few drinks, and of course, he blew me off."

"Why'd he blow you off?"

"So," she sighed, "he could spend a nice Sunday evening with his kids."

"Can you blame him?"

"Of course, I can. If he was gonna' spend the night with his family he shoulda told me. *Before* I took the cab ride over here."

Elliot shrugged. "Father's are like that."

Maya rolled her eyes at the thought. "Whatever. He knew the second he woke up this morning. He can't just confess eternal love and the possibility of marriage one night and blow me off the next."

"*You* want to get married?"

"Hell no!" she said, taking a sip of her beer. "But that doesn't mean he can jerk me around. I'm a person too, you know."

"That's what Liv tells me."

She smiles. "Livia thinks I should break up with him."

"Are you?"

"Probably not, but I know I should. She's always been the smart one. Always giving me good advice that I always regret not taking."

"How long have you known one another?"

"More years than I can really remember," she said slowly.

"Ten? Twelve?"

"A little more..."

"Fifteen? Twenty?"

She raised her eyebrows and shifted her gaze to the side table.

"Can't be more than twenty. You're both not that old."

"We're the same age, actually. Same sign too. Born four days apart."

"How 'bout that." Elliot said smiling.

Maya smiled back. "Yep. Practically soul sisters."

Elliot nodded and kept the conversation going.

"So, what is it that you do? Do you work or are you living off your folks' money like I first assumed?"

Maya gave a sly smile. "Technically speaking, I'm an attorney."

"Really? You're a lawyer?"

"Look," she said rolling her eyes. "My parents hate me and they always will. I might as well give them a *valid* reason for hating me by being a leech on their bank account."

"I suppose that sounds fair enough."

Silence seemed to creep back between them again when Justin Timberlake's "SexyBack" rang from her purse.

He started laughing. "You know my youngest daughter has that ringtone on her phone."

"The teenie boppers always have the best stuff," Maya said, winking and looking at her caller ID.

Her eyes grew wide as she looked at phone. "Know what? I gotta go."

"Emergency at home?"

"Guess you could say that."

"Your shoe collection on fire or something?"

Maya threw her head back and laughed. "No, *that* would be an absolute disaster. Have a good night."

"See you later," Elliot said.

His steak finished and his only beer nearly emptied, he simply sat alone staring at the seat that Maya had just occupied. The loneliness had settled in quickly and Elliot wondered if he should just drive around the city for a little while or just go home and go to sleep.

He took some bills out of his wallet, lied them on the table, gave the bar owner a quick wave for him to add the meal to his tab, and headed out the door. He decided to go for Option Three and headed back to the precinct to see if he could not dig up something to pin Drover.

## **Monday, Jan 15**

Olivia gets the call about another boy at 4am

She dresses wondering why it always has to be at 4am.

Why can't criminals be courteous enough to do this in the middle of the day and let her have just one chance a week to sleep through the night.

They find a boy matching Owen Kreider's MO perfectly, only he's black.

They all wonder if it's the same guy because the MO is so perfect.

Elliot comes over.

Liv sees that he's tired and he got there quicker than she thought he would have

She thinks he might've slept in the crib  
He looks at the body and he seems to grow pale  
Melinda tells them she'll call them if she finds anything further.  
She and El are talking and she knows something's wrong with him.  
Finally, when they're back at the precinct going over Missing Persons' reports, he cracks  
that he saw the kid at the complex.  
She pushes and pushes and finally he tells her that he saw Daniel at the complex that day.  
Elliot thinks that guy must have been there.  
The kid ran right passed him.  
He knows the murderer had to have been there.  
Munch tracks down a new report filed that night before the body was found.  
The Richardsons go to the morgue and the mother is beside herself.  
Elliot talks to the father while Liv just holds onto the mother while she cries and screams.  
\*\*\*stars\*\*\*  
Back at the precinct, they have all the boy's pictures on the Plexiglas board and they're  
discussing them.  
Munch thinks it's a copycat.  
It's so rare that the murderer would switch gears this distractedly.  
We meet Huang for the first time.  
He's the one who says that it's rare for them to switch up like this.  
Those who like little girls, like specific ones, same with the boys.  
Fin thinks it's a sick joke being that it's Martin Luther King Day.  
"What kind of sick bastard gets his kicks by changing his MO on Martin Luther King  
Day?"  
"The same one who gets his jollies by raping and murdering adolescent boys."  
Elliot tells them how Daniel was such a good kid.  
El also says that Daniel had just turned twelve on the 9<sup>th</sup>.  
The rent's reactions should be like that episode from the first season with the black  
parents and their good daughter.  
El tells them that Daniel left to go to a friend's house, but never made it  
Some kid on the street saw him talking to someone in a black SUV.  
Warner calls and confirms that everything points to the same guy.  
They make note of Daniel's age again:  
All the victim's have played in U-13 leagues as did Daniel, but Daniel played "up."  
His parents wanted him to be competitive and they greased some wheels to get him in the  
U-13 instead of the U-12.  
U-13 is for kids who won't be fourteen by the end of the season; U-12 is for kid who  
won't be 13 by the end of the season.  
It was legal for Daniel to play up and he played with a bunch of kids older than him, but  
he held his own.  
George thinks that the murderer probably saw him with the other boys and just assumed  
he was the same age.  
He also says that there's such a time discrepancy between Daniel and the other boys.  
George says that this was a rash decision by the killer.  
They all confirm that the killer is finding his victims from that site.  
El and Liv argue with Cragen for a bit over whether or not they should close the site.

If they do, they may never find the guy; if they don't, more kids could die.  
They decide to keep it open and place a number of cops, both plain clothes and uniformed around the area.  
Elliot and Olivia have the first shift of patrolling the site in plain clothes.  
Elliot tells Liv about Maya the previous night.  
Olivia tells him to just be careful because she cheats.  
Elliot says he's not really interested, but he just finds her interesting in that she reminds of how Liv probably was before the weight of the world began to rest on her shoulders.  
She ponders on this wondering what Maya might have said to Elliot.  
She knows that Elliot has his eye out Drover, but she does too.  
They part ways not noticing anyone in particular.  
That night, Kathleen calls and asks Liv about her doctor  
They make an appointment for that Friday the 19<sup>th</sup> at the free clinic.  
When Olivia leaves that evening, Jillian calls to catch up.  
Jillian tells her about how the kids are almost out of control, but that they'd love to see their Aunt Olivia.  
They make plans in February, and Liv knows there'll always be something to keep her from keeping that appointment.  
She asks about Jonathan and rubs it in that it was she and their friend Sarah who had to work ridiculously hard just to get them together.  
She calls Maya, who teases her about Elliot being all kinds of cute.  
Jonathan comes over  
She tells him about Kathleen, but he's less than understanding  
He says something about Elliot not being a very capable guy since he allowed his marriage to fall apart.  
They bicker a bit; Jonathan is more than smug.  
He looks annoyed and she says that she's got a lot of work to do and that maybe he should go so she doesn't wake him up in the morning.  
He's pissed, but he leaves.

## **Tuesday, Jan 16**

Elliot comes in that morning and Liv's there  
She tells him they're going back out because she tracked down Ricky Schrader's birth mum.  
Veronica Schrader is still using heroin and just keeps asking when they're going to let her have her son back.  
They tell her that Ricky was murdered, but she doesn't have any reaction.  
She says that he'd just come by to see her.  
That he really didn't like his foster parents too much because they wanted him to be superboy and he just wanted to be.  
He didn't even like soccer all that much, but they sort of made him play.  
This was what he was telling her when she last saw him.  
It turns out that the night she last saw him was the night he was murdered.  
Ricky had snuck out of the house to go see her.

They ask if she could think of anyone who might have wanted to hurt her son or paid any special attention to him.

She tells them that the last time he was in her custody, her old boyfriend liked to take him out to ball games and “fatherly junk like that.”

“What happened?”

“Well, he wasn’t Ricky’s father, was he? He shouldn’ta been doing all that. ‘Sides, he kept making Ricky think that I was the bad guy, when he knew I was trying to get clean. Guess, it don’t even matter now.”

“This boyfriend. What was his name?”

“Wha? It was like a hundred years ago!”

“Any name you can think of would be helpful. We just want to talk to him.”

“Yeah, okay...um...Uh. Jordan...Draver...uh...Driven...Driver...Drover? Drover! Yeah, that it was it. Jeffrey Drover.”

Elliot and Olivia glance at one another.

“Yeah, he told Ricky once to flush all my stuff, and when I hit him because he stole and I’d told him stealing was wrong, he called the police. That was three years ago. I never even gotta chance to say I was sorry.”

On the 16th they find out that Veronica Schrader, Ricky's birth mum, had dated Drover in the past

They go through the process of finding Drover.

While they do this, another boy is found, Manny Scheibley.

It looks like Manny and Daniel were taken at the same time.

A seven-year-old girl, Carly Sims, says she saw someone who looked like Drover dump the bag with the kid

They go through the car match thingy to get that it looked more like a black Explorer.

They bring Drover in and grill him

The girl can't pick Drover out of a line up

Elliot goes in; Drover falls to pieces

Drover:

"Look, I don't know what I'm doing here," Jeffrey Drover says his nerves showing.

"We're just having a little a chat," Elliot says smugly. "Now, we hear that you used to date a Veronica Schrader. Is that correct?"

Drover squinted confused for a moment. "Um, yeah. Veronica. That was years ago though, besides she was a crackhead who deserved to have her kid taken away. What does Veronica have to do with this? Did she say I did something to her, 'cause I haven't seen her in at least three years."

"What about her son?" Olivia says. "Ricky. When was the last time you saw him?"

His expression softened. "Three years ago, too. I hoped that maybe with a male influence around he could turn out okay afterall."

"A male influence?" Elliot says sardonically.

"Yeah, I mean it was just him and Veronica and she was a junkie. I took him places, you know. Baseball games, hockey games. I even landed some Knicks tickets once. He really loved it...I was just trying to do whatever I could to get him out that house."

"Out of that house, so you could hurt him." Elliot says.

"What? No, I couldn't Ricky!"

"But you wanted him away from his mother?"

Drover scoffed. "Have you met Veronica? I when I started dating her, she seemed fine, but then she starts shooting up in front of her kid. He was just ten years old. No kid needs to see that."

"And you were trying to do the honorable thing by getting him away from his mother?"

"Like I said, Ricky's a good kid. I just made sure that he knew getting high wasn't the purpose of life."

"And what is?" Olivia asks.

"I don't know," he says with a shrug. "When I'd take to games or to the park to pitch a few balls to him, I'd tell him that doing all the things his mother did wasn't good for him. That if he ever wanted to get anywhere in life, he'd have to stay away from them."

"And his mother?" Elliot said.

"Look, why do you keep putting words in my mouth?" Drover started yelling. "I was trying to help her get cleaned up, but she just wouldn't, so I could only tell Ricky what to do."

"Tell him what to do when you hurt him."

"No! I never hurt Ricky! What kind of sick freak do you take me for?"

"Oh, you don't want me to answer that," Elliot says with a deep voice. "We all know just what kind of sick freak you are. We know exactly what you did Ricky Schrader. How you raped and strangled him."

"What? Ricky's dead? No...no way."

"You didn't know?" Olivia asked through furrowed eyebrows.

Drover shook his head.

"You outta know, Drover. We found him right where you left him."

Drover's eyes grew wide. "Huh? What, are you kidding me? What the hell is all this about?"

Olivia tossed a stack of photos in front of Drover so that they slid and spread apart perfectly in front of him.

"Wha...what is this?" Drover said, his face displaying disgust.

"It's what you did, Jeff," Olivia said. "It's what you did to those boys."

"What? This...this is some kind of sick joke. I didn't kill anyone."

Elliot leans over the desk, pulls out the photo of Connor Whickfield and holds it up for Drover to see.

"You did this to a twelve-year old boy."

Drover shakes his head. "I could...I could never hurt Connor," he whispers. "I...he was one of my kids. I could never...I looked after him and all the other boys on the team...."

"And that's what we don't like, Drover," Elliot said leaning into him. "You have all those boys at your fingertips. You like them, don't you? You like coaching them first as ten year olds because you gain their trust early on and when they're at that perfect age...it's like shooting fish in a barrel."

Drover made a gagging sound and covered his mouth. "You...You're sick man!" He said, eyes shining with tears. "This is crazy! I didn't kill anybody! I didn't hurt anybody! I coach kids so...so maybe they have someone else to look up to besides football players and rap stars."

"You like that they look up to you," Elliot said. "All of them."  
Drover nodded, while a tear fell over the brim of his eyes and made the quick path down the side of his face.  
"You like to include everyone, too."  
Drover nodded again. "It's not just the rich, white kids who should get the opportunities. Everybody should have the chance to succeed."  
"You're a real equal opportunity kind of guy."  
"Yeah, I guess so."  
"So," Elliot said pulling another photo out of the stack. "Is that why you strangled Daniel Richardson on Martin Luther King Day? Every boy has the equal opportunity to be raped by you?"  
"No!" Drover screamed and now he was crying. "I didn't...I didn't...I couldn't rape a little boy. Anyone! I...I didn't do it..."  
"We have someone who can place you at our latest crime scene," Olivia said.  
"No," he said his body starting to shake. "This is crazy. I didn't do anything. This has got to be some kind of mix up. I mean...you must have the wrong guy."  
"That's the best excuse you can come up with?" Elliot said smugly. "That we have the wrong guy?"  
"But you do! You have the wrong guy!"  
"A guy who just happened to find one of the victims *and* has a prior relationship with a different victim? I bet if we did a little digging, all sorts of prior relationships with these boys would come up, wouldn't they?"  
"No," Drover said through a gasp of tears.  
"Sure they would. I bet you had your eye on each and every one of them. And then you waited. Waited until they were the perfect age for you and *then* you took them."  
"No," Drover whispered his hand over his head.  
"You took them, and when they fought back, you strangled them. With your bare hands."  
"Look," he said, slamming his hands on the table. "Fingerprint me, drug test me, DNA me, put me in a line-up, whatever! I'll take a polygraph test even. I'm telling you, I didn't do anything!"  
Elliot and Olivia sat quietly while Drover breathed hard and looked panicked back and forth between them.

Elliot got up and Olivia followed to see George and Don waiting behind the glass.  
"I'm not sure he's the guy," George said.  
"Why not?" Elliot said crossing his arms. "He's already said he knew the kid and liked him."  
"He's giving up the information a little too readily. A pedophile would need this dragged out of him. He doesn't say that he loved Ricky or that he wanted to be with Ricky. Drover just states it firmly that he wanted to be a positive influence on the boy's life. His willingness to give up the standard tests cries out for his innocence."  
"Or," Elliot said. "He's just well-rehearsed."  
"I'm sorry," George continued, "but he is not setting off any pedophilia alarms."  
"He knows we're onto him and he's saying anything he think of to make us turn down the heat."

"Let's get him in a line-up first," Cragen said, leaving the room. "If Carly Sims can ID him, we can process him and then run his prints and his DNA against the past victims."

\*\*\*\*\*

"Okay, Carly," Olivia said, taking the little girl's hand. "See this big mirror right here in front of us?"

"Yup."

"You can't see anything but your reflection in it, can you?"

"Uh-huh."

"So, if *you* can't see anything through it, then no one who stands in this room can see anything through it either. Okay?"

Carly squeezed Olivia's hand, but nodded.

Olivia walked her back onto the other side of the glass, where Casey, Cragen, Elliot and Carly's mother stood against the back wall. She lifted Carly and stood her on a box so she could see outside the window.

"So, this is the same mirror we just saw. So, we can see out, but anyone in there can't see us."

Carly nodded again and put her hand against the glass.

"So," Olivia said, while she stared out of the window. "What's going to happen is five men are going to walk out of that door over there, and all I need you to do is tell me if you've seen any of them before and where you've seen them."

"That's it?"

"Yep," she said smiling. "That's all. It's really easy, and I know you'll do fine."

"Okay," Carly said, returning her smile.

Olivia turned to the uniformed officer in the room, "Send them in."

One by one, dark-haired men filed into the room and stood stony-faced, each holding a number.

"Carly," Olivia said. "Have you seen any of these men before?"

Carly stared at each of the faces. "Um...I don't know."

"Look at each one carefully, Carly. Is there anyone you've seen before?"

"They all look alike. I can't tell them apart."

"It's okay, just try and see if there's anyone who looks familiar to you. Anyone who looks like the guy person you saw dropping the bag out of the truck?"

"It was dark outside."

"Just try really hard, okay?"

Carly nodded.

"Do you see anyone you've seen before?" Olivia asked again.

"Um...I think so."

"Okay, sweetie. Can you tell me what number he's holding?"

Carly squinted at each of the men behind the glass again. "Number....3? Is that right?"

"Are you sure it was Number 3?"

Carly glanced nervously back at her mother and then back at the men behind the mirror.

"Um...I think so. Yes...Yeah, I'm pretty sure he is Number 3. Well...maybe number....no-No...it was Number 3."

She stared back at Olivia. "Did I do it right?"

Olivia glanced at her captain, but smiled at Carly. "You did great, Carly."

Carly smiled brightly, stepping off the box and into the open arms of her mother in the back of the room.

Cragen sighed the moment they left. "Well, Drover already consented for us to run his DNA."

"Aside from that," Olivia said, "Carly said it was dark out when she saw him and kid's IDs aren't always the best."

"But, this doesn't help any," Casey said. "And the second his attorney learns that the ID was wrong-"

"He's not asking for a lawyer," Elliot said. "He hasn't even been processed. I say, we push him a little longer. We tell him that the witness picked him out and see what he has to say."

"He hasn't given up anything yet, though," Olivia said. "You reduced him to tears and he still hasn't said anything."

"He still thinks he's got us beat."

"And I'm beginning to think he's not the guy."

Elliot scoffed. "You're kidding. Because the little girl couldn't make the ID? You heard her. She said it was dark. It doesn't mean Drover's not the guy."

"But combined with what George says about him, Elliot..." Cragen said trailing off in the end.

Elliot glared back and forth between Olivia and Cragen for a moment. "He's the guy."

Elliot strode into the interrogation room, where Drover now sat and held a confident smug smile in place while just staring at Drover with his hands in trouser pockets.

"You sure you don't want a lawyer, 'cause you've got some real problems now?"

"What?" Drover said eyes wide.

"Our witness just picked you out of a line-up."

"From what? I didn't do anything!"

"She says she saw you dumping the body of Manny Scheibley. Manny Scheibley. Does that name ring a bell at all?"

Drover was breathing hard. "This is not happening. This is not happening!"

"Well, the name should ring a bell since he was just another kid who happened to play in the same league that you coached for."

"I can't believe this. I can't believe this...I didn't do anything. There aren't that many soccer leagues in the city. Maybe your guy just choose the one I coach, or something. But I swear to God, I didn't do anything. I wouldn't."

"Right, 'cause you loved them all, didn't you?"

"What? I...I don't know. They were kids, and I cared about the ones I coached like anybody cares for their kids. I was the one they came to when they couldn't go to their parents."

"And you used this trust so that you could molest them later?"

"No! I never did that! I never touched anyone! I never killed anyone!"

He backed into the corner and crouched to the floor. "This has got to be a dream. I can't believe this is happening. This is...this is...this is not happening. This is not happening."

Elliot leaves the room disgusted at what he sees and disgusted that Drover still did not confess.

"Now what?" Olivia said staring at Elliot.

"Now," Cragen said. "we let him sit there until we get the results back on his DNA.

Unless...Doc, you wanna take a crack at him?"

George sighed. "I could, but I'm not sure how far I could get with him. Especially while he's in this state."

"Well, maybe we've been going at him the wrong way. Maybe a shrink could get him to open up a little more." Cragen glared at Elliot and Elliot quickly headed toward his desk.

George nodded and headed into the interrogation room.

Drover still sat balled up in the corner of the room. He had stopped crying, but his breathing was still deep and haggard.

"Jeffrey, my name is Dr. George Huang. I'd like to talk to you if that's all right."

Drover scoffed, but picked himself off the floor and returned to the chair at the desk.

"Are you here to tell me *how* I did something I know I didn't do, 'Doctor?' "

"I just want to talk," George said.

"Sure, you and that other cop. You say you just want to have a little conversation with me, but what you really mean is that you want to accuse me of doing something I didn't do."

"I'm actually not a detective, I'm a-"

"A doctor," Drover interrupted. "Yeah, I got it. A psychiatrist right?"

George nodded.

"So, you're here to get in my head and figure out the why. Well, you might as well leave too, because like I told that cop who was just in here, I didn't do anything."

"You keep saying that, but are you sure you understand what you're saying you didn't do?"

"You people think I raped and killed kids I know!"

"I thought you didn't know all of them?"

Drover sighed. "I don't. I didn't. But I still didn't do anything to ones I did know. I was just trying to be a role model to kids like Ricky. It's like anytime a guy tries to do the right thing, you all jump to some stupid conclusions. I know you all deal with the scum of society everyday and that's why you've all come to expect the worst from people. But, I'm *telling* you, I never hurt anyone. I'm not capable of hurting someone, especially some kids I used coach."

"Are you aware that you deny *hurting* anyone?"

"That's because I haven't."

"Have you done anything that maybe didn't specifically hurt anyone, but might be construed differently by someone outside the situation?"

Drover shook his head. "Look. I'm going to tell you all again. I'll tell you all night if I have to. I did not hurt those kids. I never touched them and I never even looked at them funny! Those...those detectives showed me pictures of boys...dead little kids and they said that I did it. There's just no way. And, I don't know where you found this eye witness who picked me out of the line-up, but they could've seen me anywhere. I didn't do anything. I swear on my father's life. I didn't do anything to anybody."

George sat silent and Drover continued. "I'm telling you, I didn't do anything. This....this is just some kind of mix up. Some kind of bad dream. And, I think I want to leave now."

Drover stood and George with him.

"Well, you're not under arrest, but I'd like to advise you against leaving just now."

"What, are you a lawyer now, too?"

"No, but there is substantial evidence stacking up against you, and your leaving just now won't look very good."

"Well, you know what? I don't care. I've been here for hours now while these detectives come in here, showing me pictures and saying that I did something I know I didn't do. I've been more than cooperative and now, I'm tired. I've got work in the morning and I have to at least try to get some sleep before I face the day."

Drover stepped passed George and out the door. Olivia headed him off as he exited the interrogation room.

"You said you were willing to take a DNA test to rule you out as a suspect? Are you really leaving now?"

Drover laughed. "Your guy just said that somebody ID'd me. Why should I believe that you'll stop coming after me if I give you DNA?"

"Well," Olivia said softly. "DNA evidence is far more reliable than an eye witness. If you're not a match to the DNA we already have on file, then you don't have anything to worry about."

Drover rolled his eyes at her and shook his head. "I didn't do anything and that other detective said somebody saw me. What's to stop one of your people from doctoring up my DNA so it looks like I'm your guy?"

Olivia was silent for a moment, beginning to honestly pity the man. She stared up at him, weighing pros and cons of what she was about to say and just how big a fallout the consequence would have. "Look...Jeffrey," she said taking a step toward him.

"I *want* to believe you. I *want* to believe that you're telling the truth when you say you didn't do anything. And the thing is....you might have misunderstood what Detective Stabler said about the eye witness."

"Meaning what?" Drover said, his eyes growing wide. "You mean he lied? No one picked me out?"

"Either way," Olivia continued, "the best thing you can do for yourself is letting us take your DNA. If you're telling the truth, you won't match anything and you won't have anything to worry about."

Drover stared at her for a full minute before finally sighing and nodding his head.

"Okay," he whispered. "Okay. Where do I have to go? What do I have to do?"

Liv gets him to submit to a DNA test.

Melinda takes it.

Three hours later she tells Liv and Elliot that Drover isn't a match.

Elliot is furious; he was so sure.

Elliot leaves without Liv and Olivia takes a cab to the store because she needed to buy something quick to eat for dinner.

She's not paying attention as she leaves the place and runs into a guy who's a little shorter than her.

He's hold a camera and it falls out of his hand and onto the ground.  
"Oh, God," she says. "I'm sorry. I hope you didn't break it."  
"It's okay," he says picking it up quickly. "It'll be fine." ←this is Morse!  
That night, Liv's neighbor asks if she would please go on one date with her son

### **Wednesday Jan 17**

Olivia is over at Elliot's while they rack their brains over this serial killer case as well as a few others.

They have them spread out all over the place.

Liv thinks that Elliot just especially hates being alone now that he'd signed the papers.

He gets a call from Kathy as she thinks this.

Elliot and Kathy argue about Dickie for a bit before hanging up.

Liv asks what's wrong.

Elliot explains and she's not understanding

Liv and Elliot argue slightly about what Elliot was probably like at Dickie's age

She also says she thinks this case is affecting him the wrong way.

He says that it isn't anymore than any other.

As a "break" from the Drover case, they make plans as to who they should be questioning next in the Kelly Thomlinson and Marianas Garcia rape cases.

While they are "breaking," Olivia remembers a statement given at the original crime scene, that the neighbor, a guy named Kreider, didn't want to talk to the cops because of his civil rights.

She makes a note to question him again.

It gets late and Elliot wants to make an excuse to make Liv stay.

He realizes it after she does leave

→ he'd broken out a couple of beers while they were going over the files and then he asked if she'd be okay, with the couple of beers under her belt. It was also snowing.

He feels immediately guilty and wishes more than anything that he could be holding his beautiful wife as he tried to fall asleep.

Olivia allows Jonathan to come over and he apologizes for being an ass.

They have slow sex, but even afterward, Olivia scolds herself for wondering what would have happened if she just stayed at Elliot's instead.

### **Thursday Jan 18**

The detectives are all together attempting to find another link between the murders.

Drover's DNA did not match, but...

He has some type of relationship with each of the kids

He lives and/or works near of the dump sites

A guy who works at the indoor facility where Drover's teams played and who also heard about the story from the news stops by to say that he remembered a slightly larger than average build, dark-haired guy always hanging out the indoor fields. He has other info that seems to point to Drover again.

But, as Olivia keeps mentioning, his actions during his interrogation, the incorrect ID and the lack of DNA evidence, puts him out of the loop

Liv and Munch do some digging on Kreider and it turns out that he and Drover work for the same company. → the majority of the bodies had been dumped near the office building, only the first one was a ways away and it was nearly right outside of Kreider's house.

Fin pulls up his file; he had a record, but it looked like a disorderly conduct rap from back when he was just a kid that is technically "sealed," but even from his photo as a teen, he and Drover look eerily similar.

Munch, Fin and Liv think that they may finally have something else to go on, but Elliot is adamant about Drover.

She and Elliot argue slightly over Drover again

Kathleen shows up at squad room and tells Elliot that he's, again, being unreasonable and unfair about Dickie.

Elliot says that they all know better than to sneak out at night and lie to their father's face.

Olivia comes around the corner to find where Elliot disappeared off to and sees Kathleen. Kathleen looks a bit panicked at the sight of Liv and she leaves quickly.

Liv asks what she wanted.

She hopes that Kathleen wanted to talk about the fact that she's about to take the pill, but Elliot goes on about how she thinks he's being unfair about Dickie.

Liv says that he is being unfair about Dickie.

Elliot and Liv fight, loudly.

Cragen asks Elliot off the case

He says no, but Cragen asks Liv to keep an eye on him

That night, Liv has "dinner" with her neighbor, Mrs. Agatha Fitzgivers' son, who's far younger than her, he's 29, but ridiculously nerdy and talking about coding all the time.

At first she tries, because of the time she spent in Computer Crimes, but after an hour she's tired of being pleasant and tells him about Jonathan

Liv meets Maya for drinks that night after her "date" and tells how she doesn't feel like she's got control of anything.

She tells Maya about Kathleen and she shrugs it off.

Liv stresses to Maya about telling Elliot and Maya says that from what she knows about Elliot; he should be understanding...eventually.

Liv goes home and she knows she'll be in court to testify at the Dana Barrington rape case the next day.

She plans her day and once she's out of court, she wants to question Kreider again. Elliot will probably be against it, but she knew she had to remain objective.

He just seemed so out of control recently.

Why was he so angry?

Was it solely this case? Was it because he'd just signed his papers? Were they still just that out of sync?

Maybe it had something to do with Kathleen? Had she even talked to him about it? And God, why her? Why her! She has a mother and a sister. Why couldn't she go to a high school counselor or something. She dragged her into this and there was

practically no way out. What else was she supposed to do, tell the girl she's on her own and hold Elliot's hand when he tells her that Kathleen's pregnant? She was doing what was right. Right?

She realizes that she hadn't really eaten anything at dinner and now she's totally hungry. She looks in her fridge and she's out of eggs, her bread is molding, the milk is expired, the packaged salad she had was turning to slime still in its bag. She puts these items on her shopping list on her fridge and speed dials Mr. Huo's Chinese food.

After a little while, she's expecting a guy from Mr. Huo's, but it's Mark at the door who tells her that he can't sleep and was going to get some groceries; the necessities like eggs, milk and bread.

She declines, but smiles at the little man who always seems to know.

Elliot is a late-night gym and punching the hell out of a punching bag.

Who the hell was Cragen to want to pull him off the case?

Who the hell was Olivia kidding? Drover was the guy.

He wasn't buying into Drover's act. DNA or not, he was most definitely involved. There was that lunatic doctor who implanted someone else's blood into his body and he wasn't putting Drover past doing something heinous like that.

There was also that other rapist who'd had a bone marrow transplant and ended up with different DNA in his blood. Drover was involved. He knew it.

He didn't like that exchange between Olivia and Kathleen; she'd never really been all that open to her before, but today she looked like her stomach fell three floors when she saw Liv. What was that about?

When did his kids start thinking it was okay to lie to Dad?

Was this something that Kathy was pressing on all of them?

Kathy. He wondered when she was going to file the paperwork. He wondered if he would actually feel it the moment his life fell apart officially.

What was he going to do if, no *when* Kathy started dating?

This whole thing wasn't really all his fault was it?

Liv seemed to act like it was.

Everyone seemed completely against him these days, especially her.

What was up with her?

Had to be that jackass she was dating. What did she see in that guy?

He was just some snot nose rich guy who liked to pretend he made his millions on his own.

She was too good for him. It wasn't going to last. They never lasted.

What if it did last? What if she actually got married to that bastard?

He was so rich...what if she quit her job? What if she really left him for good? God, how could he cope?

At that last thought, he just hung on the punching bag. His muscles were aching, but he had so much more to get out.

He leaves the gym and jumps into his work. He had eight reports that needed to be filed within the next four days. He needed Liv to sign off on a few things and he wondered if she was still up. He reached to give her a call, but he doesn't. She wasn't catching tonight and her rich boyfriend was probably screwing her brains out. God, what he would do to just have one night with Liv to...No, that was a

dangerous road. Very dangerous road. Back to work; he still had time to get Liv's signatures on Friday.

### **Friday Jan 19**

They re-interview all of the victim's parents and friends after Olivia gets out of court. One of Manny Scheibley's friends picks out both Drover and Kreider out of an image line up. The friend, Pete, says that he (both of them) was always at their games, but that he didn't seem to be anybody's father or relative.

Olivia goes to question Kreider.

He's a creepy guy, but he is the same build and coloring of Drover.

He blushes every time Olivia starts speaking to him.

Elliot is annoyed when they leave because he says that Drover seems more the kind of guy that the kids would associate with. Kreider seemed like the kind of who was a Munch-like conspiracy theory nut and judging by the look of him, he probably spent more time indoors to avoid having any of his rights broken.

Olivia argues that he could be putting on a show or he seems just crazy enough to become a pedophile.

They go back to the office and discuss Kreider with Huang.

Elliot mentions, mockingly that Kreider seemed to have a crush on Olivia.

Huang says that perhaps there is something to that. Her presence may remind him of what he does not have; what he cannot attain.

Elliot says he was being facetious, but everyone else seems on board about it.

Munch and Fin go see if he'll come in voluntarily, but he won't budge.

Casey cannot get a search warrant on what they have.

They all argue about it, but the judge said it was a violation on just a hunch.

Cragen tells them to make sure they can rule out Drover without a doubt.

Around 6pm, Liv leaves *early* for a doctor's appointment

Elliot is a little worried, but she just waves it off.

Liv picks up Kathleen at the diner where they talked and Liv drives them to the free clinic. She tells her that it would be best if they go there, since there'll be less chance of her father finding out about it.

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"Thanks for being so cool about this, Olivia," Kathleen said clutching her coat around her.

Olivia nodded in reply to the comment. "Have you thought anymore about telling your father about-"

"No," she said quickly. "I mean, yes, I have thought about it, but I'm not. There's just no reason to. I just know how he'll react and it won't be good. It'll be hard enough to just keep all this from him."

"Tell me about," Olivia thought.

"Well, what about your mom? I'm sure she'd like to know."

"Yeah, and I'm sure she'll wanna take them from me."

"Well, I doubt-"

"Can we just not talk about them for a bit?"

"Yeah, that's fine," Olivia said. After an uncomfortable silence settled between them, she brought up the subject again, this time from a different angle. "Well, if you're not going to tell your mom, just make sure you're careful if you have to take any other medications. I doubt you'll run into any complications, but it's always good to mention it to your doctor."

"But, I don't want our doctor to know."

"Well, at your age, you don't have to say anything in your mother's presence."

"Oh, okay."

Olivia nodded and they rode the rest of the way to the free clinic to the sounds of the city. They have another heart-to-heart in the waiting room.

Kathleen looks like maybe she's losing her nerve.

Liv starts saying that they don't have to get them. That she can wait until she's ready to come with her mother or her sister.

Kathleen just says what will really help is if Liv just gives her some words of encouragement. Liv decides it's past time trying to change her mind and treats Kathleen as if she were taking her own daughter to get birth control. She tells her that there's nothing to it and just reassures her.

Liv and Kathleen get the pills

Liv takes her out for a bite to eat and they talk about sex over dinner.

Liv muses over the idea that she will probably never have this same discussion with a daughter of her own.

When she goes home to change and head back to the office, Jillian calls.

She tells her about the Dickie situation and Jillian just says that her husband is even worse with their kids.

Liv then calls Maya, tells her more about Kathleen, and asks how she knew so much when they were younger

She gets a call from her neighbor's son, Philip, who wants to see her again. She tells him to stop calling.

She goes back to the office and Elliot's still there. He says that he didn't expect to see her until the next day and he asks if she's okay from her doctor's appointment.

She brushes it off and they fill out paperwork more or less in silence.

She notes that they have to rearrange things now that this murderer has become one of their priorities.

They make plans to let their other victims know that they are still on their respective cases.

She goes home and Jonathan is sitting in on her stoop. She lets him in because she just needs some release from her day.

They are making out pretty heavily against her door, when Mark knocks on the door and interrupts them because he won't go away.

When she opens the door to tell him to leave, he says he heard some noise and just wanted to make sure that she was okay, because there was "some guy" just waiting on the stoop for her.

Jonathan comes smugly into view and tells him that he's not just some guy and that they were in the middle of something and shuts the door on him.

Liv is annoyed, but lets him take her into the bedroom anyway, because even though he's a smug bastard, she loves him.

Elliot stays at the office and is looking up information about Drover. He finds out that the guy does seem to be a model citizen, but it bugs him. The BTK killer was a boy-scout troupe leader and he wasn't willing to give up on Drover just yet.

Instead of going straight home, he goes back to the gym and works out more to get out his frustrations about how everyone in his life seems to turn on him.

### **Saturday Jan 20**

Olivia gets the call; another boy has been found, Dominic Hedges.

She calls Elliot and jumps in and out of the shower.

She hands Jonathan her extra set of keys and tells him he can stay for as long as he wants.

Dominic is the same age as the other boys and since everything had been happening, some of the nearby businesses had been setting up security cameras.

The cameras show someone driving by in a black SVU and dumping the body. They cannot make out the license plate, but as it happens Drover drives a black Expedition.

They bring in Drover again who this time, is screaming police harassment.

"We'd like to stop looking at you Jeff," Elliot said, "but there's is just too much evidence trickling all the way back to you."

"This is crazy," Drover said. "No, *this* is harassment! I didn't do a damn thing and here I am again!"

"Where's your car, Jeff?" Olivia said, still standing against the wall of the small room.

He glanced between the two of them. "I-I...I don't know. I don't know what happened to it."

"You don't know?" Olivia said with a mock surprise in her voice. "You drive an oh-six Expedition. You're telling me that you have no idea what happened it?" She scoffs. "If it was *my* car, I'd have cameras set up on it or something."

Drover shook his head.

"And speaking of cameras," Elliot said, waving some photos in front of Drover. "There were cameras in the area of your latest dump job and one of them caught someone who....well, who looks quite a bit like you actually...dropping a body out of a black Expedition that looks strikingly similar to yours."

"No," Drover said. "My car was stolen."

"Stolen?" Olivia said. "Well, isn't that shame."

"I'm serious! Someone stole my car! You guys are cops! Check the damn police reports! I filed on Thursday! You have to see this from my side! I swear on my life I didn't do anything."

"So," Elliot said. "Someone who looks like you, driving a car that you own, dumps the body of a boy, who as it turns out played soccer in the same league where you coach, and dumps him right up the street from where you work. Can you see why we're having a little trouble seeing this from your side?"

"You know what?" Drover said. "I'm not believing a damn' thing *you* say." He pointed at Elliot. "After that stunt you pulled the last time I was in here! Telling me that

someone pointed me out of a line-up. That's bullshit and I'm not taking this anymore! I think it's time I get a with a lawyer."

"Oh, you don't wanna do that," Elliot said. "You talk to a lawyer, then we really think you've got something to hide."

"Screw that! I know my rights. I stood in a line-up, I gave my DNA, let you take my fingerprints. I gave you everything you needed to stop looking at me for this....this horrible thing, and you all are still riding my ass. I'm done! I want my lawyer and I want him now!"

Elliot looked at Olivia and they both walked out of the room.

"Well," Casey said. "A first year law student could probably poke holes in the case that we have against him. We don't have enough to arrest."

"What about the video?" Elliot said. "That's got to be a least enough to hold him for a little while."

"It's blurry," Munch said, "and we can't make out a license plate. Not even enough to tell if it's a New York plate."

Elliot shook his head. "If we let him go, he'll kill another boy."

"We have his DNA," Munch said. "If he matches, we'll have something to go on."

"But, if he doesn't, we have to let him go," Casey said. "Or else his legal aide will have grounds for an harassment claim."

Elliot walked out of the room in a huff and sat down at his desk.

"Hey!" Drover yelled from inside the interrogation room. "Hey! Where's that lady cop? I wanna talk to her!"

Olivia glances back at Don and Casey with raised eyebrows, but quickly strides back into the room.

"I can't talk to you, Jeff," She said. "You've asked for a lawyer."

Drover lowers his voice. "C'mon, now. You *know* I didn't do anything."

"Seriously, there's absolutely nothing we can say until your legal aide gets here."

"Screw it then!" Drover shouted. "Let's just...you and me talk for a second, okay?"

Olivia shook her head. "Not without your lawyer present."

"Aw c'mon! You don't believe I did this. I can see it in your eyes."

"Regardless of what you think my eyes are saying, we don't really have anything to talk about since you asked for a lawyer."

"And, I bet you all got right on the phones to call one for me, didn't you?" Drover said sardonically.

Olivia sighed.

Drover chuckled to himself. "Yeah, that's what I thought." He ran his hands over his face and hair. "Look, that other guy has it in for me or something. You seem to be a little more reasonable to me than him, so tell me. What've I got to do to fix this?"

Olivia stared at him for a long while before answering. "You've got to give me something, Jeff."

"What! I've given you everything you need to get off my back!"

Olivia snatches the yellow legal pad and pen from the edge of the desk and slides them toward Drover. "Write out everything you did yesterday. From the time you woke up Friday morning right up until this conversation."

"What'll that do?" Drover said, raising his voice again. "You've got my damn DNA!"

"Yes, and there could be a million reasons why you're not a match-"

"Including the fact that I didn't do it!"

"..which is why," Olivia continued as if he had not said anything. "You need to tell me every step you took yesterday and today, so we can rule you out indefinitely."

Drover stared at the legal pad and shook his head.

"Look," Olivia said softly while sitting in the rickety chair across from him. "I *want* to help you, but you have got to give me something. You screaming that you didn't do it isn't going to change any minds here. Just tell me what you did yesterday and I can retrace your steps."

"And that other detective? What's he gonna' do?"

Olivia sighed. "Just tell me where you went, and I'll see what I can do."

Drover stared silently at her for a moment before reluctantly grabbing the pen and beginning to scribble the past day's events on the blue-lined, yellow sheets.

He asks for a lawyer and they have to back off.

Liv says they should go see Kreider, but Elliot says that they should verify everything that Drover said first.

Liv says it's important to talk to him now instead of later.

They start to argue, but Fin says he'll go with Liv to talk to Kreider while Elliot and John, work on Drover.

Liv and Fin go see Kreider who is about to slam the door in their face, when Liv tells him that he should just clear his name.

They go back to the house and report on Kreider.

Munch and Fin get sent out to a rape homicide on the west side.

Olivia takes the sheets Drover wrote out explaining his steps on Friday and Saturday morning. She takes his picture with her and visits each place asking if the people there remember seeing him. She asks if he seemed agitated or troubled, but they all say that he seemed as pleasant as usual.

She goes back to the house and pulls his phone records and everything matches what he says, including the police report about his car being stolen Thursday night.

Olivia stares at the picture of Dominic Hedges and worries. He looks very similar to Dickie and she wonders how Elliot is taking this.

She sits down and brings up any info she can on Kreider, liking him more and more for the murders. She is also worried about the way he looked at her. She'd met hundreds of pedophiles and none of them had ever looked at her the way he did. She wondered if she just reminded him of an abusive mother or if there was something more to it.

Meanwhile, Elliot had gone to the parents and neighbors of Dominic Hedges.

They are not very willing at first since they just want to mourn him, but Elliot tells them that there have been five other boys murdered just like this.

The neighbor says that she had seen a man, matching Drover's description more than Kreider's giving Dominic a ride home from soccer practice a while ago.

The neighbor is also able to pick Drover out of a photo line-up as the guy.

He tells Olivia this, but she notes that he didn't have Kreider's picture in the array.

She also tells him what he was like when she and Fin questioned him.

Elliot says he wants to bring in Drover again, but Olivia says now that he's lawyered-up, they won't be able to get near him with just one ID.

Elliot says they have far more on Drover than they ever will with Kreider.

“That’s because Kreider is behaving like a criminal. He refuses to come in and talk to us, give us DNA, anything! Drover has been more than willing at every step of this case.”

“You really don’t think that it’s Drover?” Elliot said glaring at her.

She sighed. “Elliot, I’m just not willing to believe that he’s responsible when Kreider is just as likely. Especially, when I just drug this up about him.”

She turns her monitor to face him.

“I found out more about Kreider and his record. Or records as I should say. At age nine, strangled his mother’s three cats and the six others of the neighbors on his street. At fourteen, he was involved in an altercation where he was beaten to within an inch of his life. (the boys who did it were all on the soccer team) After he got out of the hospital, he went on another spree, this time taking out every cat, dog, rabbit and any other animal that couldn’t get out of his way, all within a one week period. The only reason he was caught was because one of the neighborhood kids went out looking for his lost pet and found Kreider

“I found out more about Kreider and his past record. It wasn’t disorderly conduct. Owen Kreider, at age 9, strangled his mother’s three cats before trying to hang himself. At age 13, he was caught doing something...that God did not intend with the family dog. When his mother caught him, he strangled the dog and tried to do the same to her. He was in a psychiatric facility until he was eighteen to help...rewire him.”

“That’s not exactly a prototype for a child molester,” Elliot said.

“But, it’s not the prototype for a well-rounded individual either.”

“Liv, the guy’s a freak. We know that, but there’s nothing that says that he’s doing this.”

Olivia shakes her head and gets up with her coat and bag.

“Where are you going?” Elliot asked.

“Home,” she said. “I’m calling it a night, since I can’t seem to get through to you.”

“Oh, come, Olivia! You want to give up on Drover altogether. I’m just saying-”

“*You’re* not even willing to look at anyone else besides Drover and I can’t take anymore of this tonight!”

“I have a positive ID on Drover!”

“And you also have a false ID to counter that, as well as DNA and fingerprints that don’t match and suspect who’s been more than cooperative this entire time! Kreider won’t even talk to us for more than ten minutes and he looks just like Drover, **and** he’s got a violent history! But, you don’t want to talk about that! You wanna beat Drover into the ground instead of finding the real killer!”

“Oh, you’re full of crap!”

“Elliot, since the day we saw Drover, you liked him for this!”

“Because he’s the guy!”

“You don’t know that! I’m sick of arguing about it!”

She grabbed her bag and just stormed out of the office.

**Sunday Jan 21**

Olivia comes in early and tries to do some more digging on Kreider, but she's hit a wall because all his records are sealed. She calls Casey, but she tells them that she still doesn't have enough on him to get those records opened.

She decides to go work out and sees Elliot on her way out.

They are awkward for a moment, but then Elliot says he wants to focus on Kreider as well as Drover. They both have items for and against them. Liv agrees to not stop looking at Drover.

That night Olivia gets a call from Kathleen right when she starts taking her pills.

After that, Philip calls again and she tries to let him off easy.

She calls Maya and asks about blowing off people since Maya was so much better than her about it.

She and Maya end up talking about Kathleen and Liv reveals that she's just worried about Elliot that she completely forgot all about Jonathan.

Maya teases her about Elliot being so attractive and muscular.

Liv hangs up on her and does some wondering on what she had to say.

Maybe that's why she and Elliot had been fighting so much, maybe there was something to this. No that was stupid. Besides, she loved Jonathan and not mention that Elliot was probably going to strangle her once he learned that she'd taken Kathleen to get birth control. Kathleen. This entire situation seemed like it was spiraling out of control and she wished more than anything that she would just tell Elliot so she wouldn't have to be on pins and needles with him.

She made up her mind; she would tell Elliot about Kathleen, but she would just approach it with caution and hopefully he wouldn't get too angry about it.

At home, Elliot gets a call from Kathy about Kathleen.

She's been acting a little strange and she went out with someone on Friday evening, but she won't talk about it.

"Kath, I don't know what to tell you," Elliot sighed. "You know she wouldn't tell me about anything like that."

"It's that she's been....off lately," Kathy said.

"She's seventeen. When has she not been 'off'?"

"Elliot, I'm serious. I'm worried about her and I just wanted to let you know about it, so that when she's over there Friday, you'll know to look for it."

"Thanks. I will."

That night, Adam comes over to return the book.

He says it sucks and he doesn't want it in his house.

She notices he looks kind of off and she asks.

Adam and Tischa broke up and she pours him a drink.

"Why don't you set me up with one of your friends?" he asked.

She laughed. "Which ones? The married ones?"

"What about your girl Maya?"

"No way," she said shaking her head.

"How come?"

"First, she's too old for you..."

"I like older women," he said slyly.

She rolled her eyes smiling. "And, she cheats. A lot. I wouldn't throw Maya at anyone I cared about."

As their having a drink, Jonathan comes through her door.

At first she's happy to see him.

"You can still call, you know?"

But, Jonathan's not happy about she and Adam just "hanging out" in her apartment.

Adam says he'll go.

Jonathan asks if she always has other men in and out of her apartment.

"Don't be ridiculous."

"Why was he here?"

"He just broke up with his girlfriend. He needed a drink."

"There's a million bars in the city, but he needed to a drink from you?"

"Why are making a big deal out of this?"

"He just broke up with his girlfriend and *you're* the first person he comes to see?"

"He lives just two floors up. I'm sure it was just out of convenience more than anything."

Jonathan shook his head and a familiar smug smile spread across his face.

"You know, it's absolutely fascinating."

"What?"

"Jillian told me about this when she first told me about you."

"About what?"

"How you can be so intelligent one minute and a complete dolt the next."

"What the hell is that supposed to mean?"

"Olivia! When a man comes to see you after he breaks up with his girlfriend, he's coming for pity sex."

"No, not Adam."

"And what? Is he immune to his own hormones? He came here, got you to get the drinks out and figured, maybe one thing might lead to another."

"You've lost you're goddamn mind! Adam is not like that. He's a friend!"

Jonathan laughed. "Yeah, a friend. I'm sure that's all he thinks he is too...just a friend."

"Why are so jealous? Do you really think I'm itching cheat on you?"

"Are you?"

She rolled her eyes. "You know what. I can't listen to this shit tonight. Maybe you should leave."

"No. Why don't you just tell me what's going on?"

"Jonathan! There's nothing going on!"

He stares at her a moment. "Who's Philip?"

Her eyes grew wide and her mouth dropped. "Please...please don't tell me you've been going through my voice mail."

"Who's Philip?"

"What the hell does it matter? I can't even believe you!"

"It matters because that crazy old bat next door asks me yesterday if when you were going on another date with 'her Philip.' Why would she even bother asking that?"

"Because she's lonely and she doesn't have anything better to do!"

"Then, why would you assume that I'd gone through your voicemail when I brought him up?"

She shook her head. "Fine. Fine! You wanna who Philip is? Philip is a twenty-nine year old kid who thinks the world of me, whose crazy mother hounded me into having dinner with him last week. Okay? I admit it! I confess! I went to a *chain*

restaurant, wearing jeans and an old sweater with someone on Thursday just to shut his mother up, and now he's leaving me messages everyday, even though I let him down as easy as I could, *because* I'm with you!"

Jonathan looked down at the floor, but a stern expression remained on his face.

"Well," Jonathan said after a moment. "Since you're in a confessing mood, tell me this... You've got twenty-somethings chasing after you, guys upstairs and across the hall itching to get their piece and I've seen the way your partner looks at you. God only knows how many others look at you any given day. Tell me...look me in the eyes and tell me: Is there something going on?"

"Where is this coming from?"

He sighed. "Olivia...I don't get to see you that often and it's like every time I do, I have to face all these other guys."

"What other guys?"

"Well, if it's not Adam coming down to chat about his girlfriend, it's Mark across the hall checking in on you, and if it's not him then, I gotta hear about Elliot *this* and Elliot *that*. You know? Almost every night it's 'Elliot and I had to eat *here* today' or 'Elliot said *this* to a perp.' And if it's not all about him, it's about his daughter who's coming to you about birth control or the one asking questions about what it's like to be a female cop or it's another one asking for cello or piano or violin lessons. And when we're all done talking about your partner's family, it's onto his marriage and how it's falling apart, then it's together and then it's divorce papers and so on and so forth. All I want is you and all I seem to be getting is other men, *especially* your partner."

She crossed her arms in front of her unsure of what to say. "There's no one else, Jonathan. It's just you. Adam is a friend; nothing more, nothing less. He is just a friend. Philip is...I don't know...going through some kind of crush right now, but I *assure* you there is absolutely nothing going on there. And Mark...God, Jonathan. How could you be jealous of Mark? I mean honestly. Mark? He's the guy across the hall. I don't know if he works for a living or if he's living off his parent's money...I don't even think I know his last name! He's *nobody* to me."

"And your partner? He's somebody to you."

"Jonathan," she sighed. "I've known Elliot a long time."

"Right. And that whole, long time, he's always been the married partner with the kids and the house and the American dream, and I know you well enough to know that you'd never do anything to break up a happy home. But now...now his wife has left him, he's all alone and he's hurting. *Any* guy would give up something to be with you, but a man who has no one left who cares about him, but you? Olivia... he worries me."

"You really don't trust me at all?"

"I don't...I don't trust him, Liv. I don't like him around you. And...I know he's your partner and I trust *you*, but...I feel like...all he has to do is reach out for you and...and eight years of friendship just trumps me any day of the week."

She rubbed a hand over her face. "I can't even believe I'm having this conversation." She took a step toward him. "You want a confession. Fine. Here goes: yes...I care about Elliot. He's my partner and in the past eight years, we've been through hell and back more times than I can count. But, he's my partner. My *friend*. There's

nothing going on between us. If anything, his marriage breaking up is moving us farther apart, not *closer*. I'm not sleeping with him or doing anything behind your back...And, how dare you even suggest it."

Silence fell over the pair of them and Olivia looked up at the ceiling to keep the tear that had welled in her eye from moving down her face.

"I'm sorry," Jonathan said. "I don't...I don't know what to do."

"About what?" she whispered. "What do you have to do?"

He sighed. "I'm so used to women who when they look at me, I think I'm seeing love in their eyes and all I'm really seeing is dollar signs. Other...other girlfriends have been so pretty, but when I think everything is fine, I come home and I find them *my* bed with some random guy. I look at you and I know money doesn't matter, so all that's left for me to worry about is the other thing, which is really easy when I see men coming at you from every direction. Lately...it seems like we're almost drifting apart and in the past distance has always led to me spending every waking second at my office because I can bear the fact that I'm alone again. "

She wrapped her arms around him. "Jonathan. You have absolutely nothing to worry about. I'm not cheating on you and I'm not going to. If I seem distant, it's because I've a million things on my mind right and half of those are work. But, I assure you, I'm not planning anything and I'm definitely not sleeping with my partner. I love *you* and you're the only one I want to say that to."

He is unable to stop his own tears and they hug and make love, not just have sex.

## **Monday Jan 22**

She's stressed over Jonathan and over the case in total.

Most of all she's worried about how she's going to tell Elliot about it.

Elliot had stayed on Sunday and learned more about Drover.

His father is serving fifty years for molesting him and three of his friends when they were thirteen.

This, based on Huang's analyses, is enough to get a warrant.

He doesn't call Olivia who gets called out on a rape case that occurred that night, because he's worried about nothing coming from this and a fight ensuing when she learns that nothing came of it.

Cragen calls Olivia and tells her that they are executing the warrant on Drover.

By the time she gets there Elliot and the other officers are tearing his place apart.

When Drover sees her, he pleads with her to make them stop; that he didn't do anything.

She tells him that they have the warrant and the best thing for him to do is to stand back and just let them do their job.

All they find is a collection of pictures of the kids from his past teams.

His lawyer says that there's nothing they have on him because the pictures are of younger kids and the murderer is strictly getting 13 year olds.

They find some hairs in the bathroom and when the DNA comes back on it, they see that it was Connor Whickfield's.

They bring Drover back in and he says that he'd forgotten that Connor had been by recently before he was killed.

Elliot is itching for an arrest, but Drover's lawyer says they don't have anything since he gave a valid explanation that can be substantiated once they talk to Connor's parents and since their ID was originally wrong, and neither his fingerprints nor his DNA are a match to those taken from the victims. He also brings up Olivia's retracing Drover's steps on the Hedges boy and how everything added up perfectly.

Elliot and Liv go to see the Whickfields, and they snipe at each other on the way over for Elliot not calling Olivia about Drover. Elliot snipes back about her retracing Drover's steps: what if he was just setting something up and she'd've walked right into. She asked if he thinks she's that naïve or something...She's especially angry because she's frustrated about the entire Kathleen situation. Elliot notices that there is something 'off' about her and asks about it.

She starts to tell him that she needs to say something but she can't say if he's going to get mad; if he's going to crazy over it.

Elliot says that he won't, but she decides against it. He figures the moon must be getting close or the tides are turning or something because all the women in his life are seemingly going crazy.

At the Whickfield's, the father confirms that Connor was driven home by Drover, on occasion and that he would see his old coach every once in a while. Olivia asks if they recognize anyone in a line-up she had prepared from Kreider's old driver's license. They say that he was sometimes at Connor's games, but they thought he was a relative of someone on the team.

They get a list of the other kids on the team and they visit each family.

No one is related until they get all the way back to the Lewendales.

At first they tell them to just go away. They just want to mourn their son in peace.

Olivia tells them that if they don't help, more families will suffer just like theirs.

Mrs. Lewendale asks why they need to talk to them again. She says they've told the police all that they know.

Olivia says it's important because Jacob appears to be the first victim which means there was something about Jacob that attracted the killer to him and it is only going to be through Jacob that they find their killer.

She shows them the line-up asking if they recognize anyone.

"My...my goodness," Mrs. Lewendale said.

"What is it?" Olivia asked.

"That's...that's Owen. My sister's son. Why on earth would he be in here?"

"Did he attend Jacob's games?" Elliot said.

"He hasn't for sometime," Mr. Lewendale. "He used to when Jacob was younger, but we probably haven't seen him in close to a year."

"Why's that?"

"He's an odd man. A little too quiet and reserved. Every once in a while, he'd mumble something about the government watching our every movement or something. I always thought he was a little off."

No one is related to Kreider.

They argue again because Elliot says that Drover having a relationship with Connor was grounds to get him, but Olivia says the positive ID on Kreider, especially since

every family said they'd noticed Kreider, but that he seemed to be a relative of one of the other kids, and because they had each pointed out Kreider and not Drover when their pictures were side by side.

This argument leads into a second one about whatever she's keeping from Elliot.

## **Tuesday Jan 23**

They find out that Kreider had some unpaid parking tickets and figure if they can just hold him for on that for long enough, they can manage to get DNA or fingerprints from him.

They go to grab Kreider, but he's gone.

It looks like he has no family in the area and he looks like he's gone for good.

They put out a warrant for his arrest on the tickets and the judge looks at Casey like she's lost it, but signs it.

Liv blames Elliot for stalling so long on Kreider, saying that they could have made the case for him sooner if Elliot hadn't been dragging his feet every step of the way.

Elliot says that he still thinks there was more on Drover than there was on Kreider.

They both leave early.

That night Liv is focused on Elliot.

She cannot figure out what is going with them. She's sitting on her couch in silence with a glass of wine, with only her thoughts to keep her busy.

Jonathan comes over and says that he'd missed her, but he understood that she was busy.

He sits down with her and pours himself a glass of wine. He tries kissing her neck, but she waves him off saying that she not in the mood.

He asks what's wrong; if it's just the job or if there's more to it.

She goes on about Kathleen.

Jonathan says that she shouldn't worry about it since Kathleen's not her kid.

She says that's spurious and she can't believe that he'd even say it.

He says he's sorry and that he can make it up to her.

He starts kissing her neck again, but she says she doesn't want to.

He keeps going and she says she's serious about not wanting to.

He keeps going saying that it would be even better if she said no while in that cop uniform.

She pushes him away and he acts like it's just a game.

Finally, she throws him off of her and tells him to get the hell out.

He says he was just messing around.

She says he's full of shit since she'd said she wasn't in the mood.

"It's not like I was going to hurt you, Liv!"

"You know what I do for a living and you're trying to pull that same bullshit on me?"

"Liv, I don't see what the problem is. I-I was just trying to get you to loosen up a bit. I could tell you were tense."

"I'm tense because my job is kicking my ass and everything in my life is just running out of control!"

"And I'm just trying to make it better!"

"Get out, Jonathan! I don't want to deal with you right now!"

"Olivia!"

"Jonathan! Get out! Now!"

"You've got to be kidding me!"

"Do I look like I'm kidding? Do I *sound* like I'm kidding?"

"Olivia," Jonathan said a little calmer. "I know what it's like to have a rough day. It's the story of my life. I just wanted to make you feel a little better."

"Well, what will make me feel better is you just getting out of my apartment."

"I don't want you to be alone right now."

"And luckily for me, it's not up to you. Get out!"

Jonathan shakes his head and puts his hand on the doorknob.

"Don't forget your jacket," Olivia said as he was about to walk out of the door.

"You're being absolutely ridiculous."

"Just leave," she said slowly. "And lock the door on your way out."

Jonathan glared at her and slammed the door shut.

After another five minutes, she hears knocking on her door.

"Go away, Jonathan!" she shouts, but the knocking continues.

"I said, go away!"

The knocking continues. "Goddamnit, Jonathan!" she yelled and crossed the room in three angry steps.

She throws open the door, but instead of Jonathan, it's just Mark.

"I...I'm sorry," he said cowering slightly from the anger resonating off of her.

"Mark," she said, utterly surprised. "No, it's fine. I was just expecting..."

"Jonathan. Yeah, I...uh, gathered that."

Olivia blushed, mostly because she realized she was barely wearing anything and she felt very exposed to someone who really quite the stranger.

"Did you want something?" she said crossing her across over her chest.

Mark shifted his weight on his feet. "Well...I just sort of overheard you two arguing and..."

Olivia rolled her eyes. "I'm sorry, Mark. I hope we didn't disturb you or anything."

"No, I just wanted to make sure that *you* were okay. I mean wasn't trying to listen or anything, but I...I just wanted to see you that were okay. I mean it's never easy breaking up with someone."

"Well," Olivia said, looking at floor. "We're not...I don't know, but I'm fine regardless. Thanks for checking."

"I just want you to know that if you ever needed someone to talk to...I'm here."

At that Olivia smiled. "Thanks Mark. Really, I'm fine. I've just had a hard week and it's only Tuesday."

"It's just that I noticed that you hadn't been dating anyone else. Just this guy."

"You noticed that?" Olivia asked surprised that her walls were so thin.

"I don't mean that in a creepy way," Mark said with a smile. "I just mean, we both've been living here for ages and normally you date once a week or every other week or so, and with this guy-"

"Jonathan," Olivia corrected.

"Jonathan, you haven't been seeing anyone else."

"Yeah," Olivia said leaning against her open door. "We got set up by some friends of ours and we just kept seeing one another."

"Okay fine," Mark said. "I just want you to know, that if you ever needed someone to talk to...a shoulder to cry on....I'm here."

Olivia smiled at the little man and patted him on the shoulder. "I'll keep that in mind. G'night."

### **Wednesday Jan 24**

Olivia sees Jillian at the gym that morning and she says she feels that if she just keeps running, maybe she can just run away from all the trivial problems in her life.

Tensions are high throughout the day because there are no leads

Kreider's parents are dead and he was an only child.

Elliot and Olivia get called out to another rape case that has a link to Bronx SVU.

They barely speak outside of what is necessary.

Veronica Schrader comes in that day asking if they'd made anymore headway on her son's case. Olivia informs her that they are still on the case, but that one of the suspects has fled.

Veronica asks about Drover and whether he's involved. Olivia says that they were still unsure of his involvement, but Veronica screams that he should be arrested and runs out of there.

Olivia and Elliot snipe at each other over Veronica and Drover.

Cragen asks them both in his office.

He says whatever is going on between them, he wants it over, Now!

If they can't get it together, he'll have to reassign the both of them.

They insist that everything's fine, but Cragen says he expects to see them shape up and he's sending them both home to clear their heads and do whatever's necessary to get their respective acts together.

Maya calls and she and Jillian take Liv out for a bit.

She talks about what she and Jillian had said earlier. How this thing with Elliot has got to be something more than their case load.

She says how he's angry all the time and it's like everything she says or does just makes it worse and now she's starting to get angry right along with him.

"But, you've got your Jonathan," Jillian says brightly. "You've got him to ease off some of this, right?"

Olivia scoffed and shook her head. "God....Jonathan. We had a fight last night."

Maya and Jillian glanced at one another, but sat silently.

Olivia started laughing. "It's already worse than I'd thought. Jonathan and I....I just wasn't in the mood and I guess I was sending off signals or something because he came at me anyway. I ended up throwing him out."

"You threw out Jonathan?" Jillian said with eyes wide.

"Yes," Olivia continued. "I was worried about one of our....no. No, I was angry at Elliot and that just spilled over onto Jonathan, who didn't even do anything."

"It's not your fault, Livia," Maya said.

"It's not? How is it not my fault?"

"It's just stress," Jillian said. "We've all been through it before."

"You've been through it?" Olivia spat. "Tell me, Jill, when was the last time someone woke *you* up at 4am to tell you a thirteen year old kid had been raped and murdered and left in an alley?"

Jillian just stared at the table, looking very hurt.

"I'm sorry," Olivia sighed. "I didn't mean that."

"We know," Maya said. "It's like she just said: you're under a lot of stress."

Olivia ran her hands across her face.

"Livia," Maya began. "Why don't you just take some time off?"

"I can't there's no time," Olivia said, taking a sip of her drink. "Besides, I'm already being sent home by my captain because of what's going on between Elliot and I."

"You could make time if you wanted to," Maya said. "You should just get out of the city for a little while. Some time away from here....away from Jonathan, away from your partner....it might do you a lot of good."

Olivia sighed again. "I don't even know how it got to this point. Two weeks ago, we were right back on track and now...."

"Maybe you just need a...a real change," Jillian said.

"What do you mean?"

"Well," Jillian continued cautiously. "You seemed almost...refreshed when you came back from working with the FBI. Maybe this is just....God's way of telling you that you need to get out of there. I mean, no one expects you to spend the rest of your career in that unit."

Olivia just stared at the ice floating innocently at the top of her rum and coke, pondering Jillian's words.

"She can do what she wants," Maya said defensively. "And you don't want to do anything rash. Anything you might regret later. Especially now."

"If not now, when?" Olivia said very removed from the conversation.

"Hello? Olivia?" Maya said in a sing-song voice. "Have you heard anything we've talked about tonight? You're under stress. More than usual. This whole thing with Elliot and the thing with his daughter's birth control *and* Jonathan has just got you outside of yourself. Now, especially, is not the time to make life-altering decisions like leaving your unit."

"Why not?" Olivia said, still distant. "My captain as much as said I'm out if Elliot and I can't get it together. What if this is something telling me it's time to move on?"

"Because everyone at this table knows that's bullshit!" Maya said.

Olivia shook her head. "Elliot's just so....angry. All the time and even more so than normal. He seemed to be calming down and everything seemed to be falling back into place and when we get this difficult case....we're at each other's throats."

Olivia sighed. "I don't know. But I really wish just one thing in my life was going right."

"Just think of the positive," Maya said brightly. "I mean, you *are* employed. You've got a good head on your shoulders and you've got Jonathan. And if things with Jonathan don't work out, then screw him. We all know you can get anyone you want."

Jillian giggled. "Plus, there's always that young Philip fellow to fall back on."

Olivia laughed into her drink and gave her friends a smile. They all shared a laugh and Olivia changed the subject the happier topic of Jillian's eldest son, Joshua.

After another hour, they part ways and Olivia is in her apartment catching up on paperwork and making notes on past victims she needs to check up on and thinking about the conversation that had taken place that evening, especially on Elliot, when Maya calls.

“So, what’s really the issue here?” Maya says as if they were already in mid conversation.

“Mayanjula, I have no idea what you mean.”

“Olivia, you can kid yourself and Jillian if you want, but you can’t fool me. So, I’ll ask again, what’s really going on here?”

“With what?”

“Everything, or should I say everyone?”

“You mean with Elliot?”

“Well, really I meant Jonathan, but now that you bring him up....yeah, what about you and Elliot?”

“There’s nothing.”

“Nothing?”

Olivia rolled her eyes. “Maya, you’re making it sound as if there’s something...off going on between me and Elliot. There’s not.”

“You’re gonna tell me half your fight with Jonathan didn’t have anything to do with Elliot?”

“Of course it didn’t. I wasn’t in the mood and Jonathan acted like a jackass.”

“Or you were preoccupied with one guy and when another one tried something on you, you reacted badly.”

“Oh, you are so off it’s unbelievable!” Olivia yelled into the phone.

“Okay, okay,” Maya said. “Fine, fine, fine. If you say so.”

“Maya, I have far too much to do to listen to you all night. I’m hanging up now.”

“Will you at least prove to me that nothing’s wrong by calling Jonathan?”

“What makes you think I haven’t already called him?”

Olivia was met only by silence.

“Maya?” she said. “What makes you think I haven’t called him?”

“Because he called *me* last night, Liv, in a panic over you.”

“When were you planning on telling me this?”

“Well, I didn’t want to say anything in front of Jill because you know how she likes to feel like we leave her out of things.”

“And did you tell him your little Elliot theory?” she asked angrily.

“Okay, now you’re starting to get angry over nothing, which sounds eerily similar to someone else we know.”

“All right. Now I *am* done. G’bye, Maya.”

Olivia hung up the phone and threw herself back into her paperwork. Thankfully, Maya always knew when she had pushed the limit and she did not call again that night.

Elliot gets a call from Kathy wanting to meet.

They meet at a late-night coffee shop in Queens.

She says she wants to talk about the kids. How Dickie’s been acting out a bit and Kathleen’s been bouncing off the walls.

She lets it slip that she just wants to make sure he’s doing all right.

“Well, how do you think I’m doing, Kathy?” he said anger rising in his voice.

When she looks hurt, he says he didn’t mean it.

“You never mean it. I know. I remember the drill.”

Elliot scoffed. “I see. So, what did you really want to talk about?”

She sighed. “Just you, Elliot. Just you.”

So, they talk and laugh about old times.  
Elliot asks if there is something to this, while he's driving her home and Kathy's silent.  
He says to forget it and she gets out.  
Elliot goes back to the gym and thinks about Kathy and how he misses her so much.  
His thoughts float onto Olivia and how much he can't stand that guy, Jonathan.  
What can she possibly see in him?  
She's so much better than him. She should be with someone warmer, stronger. Not some  
punk who had Daddy's money to give him a leg up in life.  
How could she possibly relate to that guy?  
He wondered if this Jonathan had anything to do with her refusing to back him on  
Drover.  
Drover! How he wanted to just....if he could only get away with it, he'd tear him a new  
one and strangle him just like he did those boys.  
Kreider was just some freak, regardless of what Liv thought. Kreider would have run far  
sooner if he was really gay. They had been on his track for days and he still  
stayed around. Drover was the guy. If he could just get him to confess.  
Why couldn't she just see it his way? What was going on with them? Weren't they fine a  
few weeks ago? It was like the whole world was falling apart. Hadn't he told her  
all he had left was his job and her? And now both were slipping away from him.  
He felt his anger rising. What could he do to make this right? How could he get her to  
just trust him again? What could he do to make her back him? What could he do  
to make her.....love him? End chapter.

#### **Thursday Jan 25**

They both come in and they are both slightly awkward, but not sniping at each other.  
They work the next case together and manage to even laugh a little.  
That night, Philip comes over saying that he just came to visit his mother and wanted to  
see how she was doing.  
She tells him that she doesn't know what's going on with her current relationship, but  
she's not ready to take on anyone else.  
He says that if she could just give him a chance, they might really hit it off.  
She tells him to leave.  
Kathy calls again about Kathleen.  
She wants him to keep an eye on her this weekend while she's over, just to make sure  
that nothing's up.

#### **Friday Jan 26**

Fin finds out that Drover also had previous contact with Daniel Richardson, which he had  
neglected to mention.  
Olivia backs Elliot as they go see Drover.  
"What? Your taking *his* side now?" Drover screamed.  
"I never *left* his side, Drover. *He's* my partner and *you've* neglected to tell us just a few  
too many things for us to let this go."  
Drover's screaming about them trying to frame him.

While there they find latex gloves in plain view.  
Drover said that he had them because sometimes the kids would get hurt on the field and he didn't want to have contact with their blood.  
They have to back off when his lawyer arrives.  
They go over every nook and cranny of Drover's statements, but everyone can corroborate everything that he says.  
They make plans to deal with court on Monday.  
They get a lead on Olivia's rape case from the past Monday and they run down, literally, their rapist.  
Olivia gets a message from an Evelyn Rivers, who was raped and beaten by her boyfriend, Micah Diorel, but refused to press charges a month ago.  
She should have a type of mini-flashback about trying to urge Evelyn to press charges, but she won't budge.  
She calls her back, but she gets the machine.  
They go home on good terms for the first time that week.  
Elliot heads out first since he has Kathleen for the weekend.  
Olivia stays for a little bit longer trying to put her week together a bit.  
Olivia speaks to Maya about how things are looking up with Elliot.  
Maya says that she should tell Jillian that because Jillian is rounding up some of their other friends for an intervention to make her leave the SVU.  
Liv does mention that as good as things are looking for her and Elliot, they may get "interesting" once she tells Elliot about Kathleen.  
"So, you're telling him?" Maya asked.  
"Yeah, tomorrow. I'm going to just show up at his place and just say it."  
"You sure you don't want to do it in a restaurant or something. It might be best for that to go down in a public place."  
"Probably," Olivia said with a smile, "but, I think I'll be less embarrassed when he starts screaming at me if we're alone. Well, not alone since Kathleen'll be there, but at least not out where *everyone* can hear."  
"I see," Maya said. "Well, just give me a call when you get there. That way I'll be able to give your squad a timeline to start from when you turn up missing."  
"Har...har," Olivia said.  
"What about Jonathan?" Maya asked quickly.  
"What? Take Jonathan with me?"  
"No, although that might not be such a bad idea. But, I meant just talking to him. Have you talked to him since Tuesday?"  
"No, but I suppose I'll have to eventually."  
"You sound like you don't want to."  
"It's not that I don't want to....it's just...sometimes he's so damn smug. He's so certain that *he* knows what's best for me. When I say I'm not in the mood, I mean it."  
"So, I trust that means you two aren't hooking up tonight."  
"Probably not. Do you want to see a movie? I've been wanting to see Dreamgirls, but I've never found the time."  
"Can't. I'm meeting Mason a little later."  
Olivia scoffed. "You know you've got a lot of nerve talking about my love life, when you're stringing along multiple men at the same time."

"Yes, but at least I know where I stand with each and every one of them."

"Of course you do. Let's see: you're letting one of them dote on you, thinking you're going to settle down one day, you're helping one of them cheat on his wife of thirteen years and you're just sleeping with the other...is it two or three? Maya, you know sometimes I just lose count."

"It's two and at least none of *those* are co-workers of mine."

"Well, that would require you doing some work, wouldn't it?"

"Okay!" Maya said with finality in her voice. "Time to go."

She hung up the phone and Olivia turned her phone off, chuckling to herself.

She makes herself some dinner and revels in the idea of spending some time with just her thoughts.

She takes a bubble bath, and wants to just relax, but all she can think about is Elliot and Jonathan.

She brushed off the situation with Elliot, but she really was worried about him. He was going to hit the roof when he found out. Not to mention how he would probably react toward Kathleen. Or what Kathy was going to do. She hadn't thought about that earlier. She and Kathy had never really been on the best of terms and learning that Olivia had given her daughter birth control pills would probably tilt their relationship from cordial to hateful.

And then there was Jonathan. 6yhb As much as did seem to annoy her from time to time, he was usually a good guy. Usually, he understood when she needed to be held and what it was like to deal with the worst of society. She really did love him, but he needed to know that when she said no, she meant it. There was no way she could even let him touch her again if he could act the way he did without any remorse. That was really what the problem was; he did not show the least amount of remorse about what he did.

She watches a sappy movie to stop thinking about work altogether and goes to bed early. Elliot finds out about Kathleen's pills.

Elliot checks in on Kathleen.

He goes into her room and pulls the covers around her. He smiles as she sucks her thumb just like she did when she was a little girl.

He starts to leave and notices something glinting in the hallway light.

He squints looking at carefully and picks up it.

It's a round package of pills, some in white packaging, some in red, all with numbers-

"Je-sus," Elliot whispers.

His heart starts to race and his breathing becomes ragged.

He snaps his fingers in Kathleen's direction.

"Kathleen. *Kathleen*. Wake up."

She's groggy at first, but her eyes fly wide when she sees her father holding her Nordette package.

"What the hell is this?" Elliot says shaking the pills at her.

Kathleen jumps out of bed and looks around the room wildly.

"Kathleen! What are these?" He asks the question knowing full well what the answer will be.

She shakes her head quickly. "I-I-I don't know."

"You don't know! That's the best you can come up with! You don't know?"

"They're not mine," Kathleen says slightly cowering against the opposite wall of her bedroom.

"You don't know what they are, but you're sure they're not yours!"

Tears well up in Kathleen's eyes. "I-I don't know." She sinks down the wall to the floor wishing she'd thrown the pills in her dresser drawer.

"Are these birth control pills, Kathleen?!"

She nods as her face scrunches into a sea of tears.

"Why are you taking them? Are you sleeping with someone?"

"No, Dad," she manages to get out. "Their not m-"

"Their not yours? Is that really the story you're sticking with? That these aren't yours?"

Kathleen just sobs unsure what to do next.

Elliot glances at the package in his hand. "Six pills are missing. How long have you been on the pill?"

Kathleen just sits there crying.

"How long have you been taking these?"

"Just now!" She finally yells. "I just started taking them on Sunday."

"Does your mother know?"

"No. No one knows."

She sat crying, with her knees drawn up and her head and arms resting on them.

"Where did you get them?" He demanded.

"From the doctor."

"Come on, Kathleen," he said, trying to calm down. "Which doctor? When? Why?"

She looked up at him, but she was silent.

"Which doctor?" he said a little more forceful. "Did you just go the hospital and get these behind my back?"

She shook her head.

"Look, Kathleen. You can talk to me, okay. I just want to know what's going on. Where did you go to get these?"

She slowly stood up, but she refused to look at him. "You have to swear you're not going to go crazy when I tell you. You have to promise you won't get mad."

'Promise you won't get mad.' He felt his eye twitch involuntarily as his brain ran through past memories trying to place where he had just heard that exact phrase from a female voice.

"Okay," Elliot said. "I promise. Just tell me what happened."

Kathleen ran her fingers through her hair and then over her face. "Okay...Well, Mike and me had been talking about it."

"It?" Elliot said.

His daughter threw him a dirty look so he just nodded and let her continue.

"We started talking and I decided that I should get some birth control."

"And you did this on your own? You went to our family doctor to get these."

"No. I didn't want you to know about it because I knew you'd react just like this."

"Then where did you get them."

She hesitated, bouncing her toes a bit and looking at everyone point in the room except her father's eyes. "We just went to the doctor's office and got them."

"We?" He racked his brain for the name of her best friend. "You and Melissa?"

"No...I...I asked...."

"Yes?"

"Look, Dad," she said as if she were changing the subject. "I asked *her* to take me and I don't want you to be mad."

"Maureen took you?"

She shook her head.

"Kathleen," he said beginning to lose his patience again. "I already told you I'm not going to be angry. I just want to know what's going on. Now, you got these and from what you're telling me or *not* telling me, you don't know anything about them; how they're going to affect you and what to do if anything goes wrong. And the fact that neither your mother or Maureen knows about this has me *more* than afraid for you."

"But she told me to stay on them for a while before I did anything." She blurted it out, but by this point it was already flowing so she continued. "She told me everything I needed to know."

"Who?" Elliot said firmly.

Kathleen sighed and stared at the ground.

They were not making any headway so Elliot crossed his arms and stared at his daughter, thinking very carefully. He felt his eye twitch again when the answer came to him.

"Olivia...took you to get birth control?"

Kathleen's met his and grew wide. "Dad, I asked her to."

Elliot stood silently, nodding his head as he put some of the events in the past few days together.

"She didn't *do* anything," Kathleen continued. "I came to her and I asked her for help."

"You couldn't come to me or your mother?" he whispered.

"Not when I knew you were going to act just like this. I mean, Dad, she had a lot to tell me and I'm glad I went to her."

Elliot just glared at his daughter unsure where his anger truly lied.

"I had no idea what I was doing and she told me everything."

"Everything?" Elliot again whispered.

"Yes, everything. So, I really don't know why you're standing there like you're going to snap, because I got my facts straight before I even did anything. I mean, I *actually* don't see what the problem is. I did the *right* thing going to her."

"You don't know what the problem is!" Elliot yelled, causing Kathleen to take a step backward.

"Dad," she said tears forming in her eyes again. "Look, I know you're mad that I started taking them, but-"

"I'm angry," Elliot said through clenched teeth, "that you would go behind my back and do this. You couldn't even go to your mother. You *had* to go to Olivia."

"I went to Olivia because I knew she would give me straight answers and she wouldn't treat me like I was a child!"

"You went to Olivia because you knew you could pull something with her you knew you'd never get away with me or your mother!"

"That's *not* true, and you know it!"

"Isn't it! Kathleen, if you wanted to..." He could not bring himself to think of his daughter being sexually active. "Why couldn't you go to your mother? Or your sister?"

"Because you all act like I'm still some little kid who shouldn't even be thinking about it! Whether or not you want to believe it, I'm mature enough to handle this."

"You're mature enough to handle this!" He repeated angrily. "When I first asked you about these pills, you said you didn't know what they were. That you didn't know *whose* they were! You're telling me that's something a *mature* person does?"

"See," she said crossing her arms. "That's *why* I had to go to Olivia. I knew she wouldn't be patronizing."

"That's because she's never seen you dissolve into a mess of tears when confronted with a serious situation! I'm not being patronizing, I'm being honest! You went to my partner because you wanted to get away with something, and it was the only way you knew how."

"No, I didn't!"

"*Don't* lie to me, Kathleen!"

"I'm not lying! I went to Olivia because Mom wouldn't even talk about it and I knew if I even brought it up, *you* were gonna act just like this!"

He slammed the package of pills on the nightstand.

"You beg her to take you to her doctor?" he said through clenched teeth.

"No," Kathleen said softly. "We went to the free clinic."

"Why there?"

"Olivia said that way, you wouldn't find out about it."

A chord snapped deep within Elliot and he felt his temperature rise several degrees in one second.

Kathleen, noticing her father's skin tone change from white to red, took a step backward.

"I mean I *asked* her to take me somewhere like that, because I knew you'd flip if you found out. It's not like she suggested it," Kathleen lied.

"You," he said pointing to her. "Don't move from that spot. Do you hear me?"

She nods her head furiously.

Elliot threw on his jacket and ran out the door, slamming it shut as he left.

Jonathan comes over to make amends.

Olivia doesn't want to because he will not apologize for being an ass.

He screams at her and calls her incapable of allowing herself to be happy.

She throws him out and she feels like crying.

Maya calls in a panic saying that Mason just left his wife.

Liv tells her to call Jillian or Sarah because she just can't take this right now.

She reflects on how things are quickly spiraling out of control.

She wonders if Jonathan will ever come back to her since she was just having a bad week.

She gets another call from Philip, but hangs up on him in mid-sentence.

Then, Elliot goes to Liv's and nearly attacks her.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

"OLIVIA!!"

Olivia shot up in her bed at the sound of someone banging at her door. "He's knows."

She looked at her alarm clock. Just after 1am. She'd been asleep for barely thirty minutes.

"You took...my daughter...to get...birth control pills," he said, rage rippling through him like waves crashing against a stone wall.

Olivia took a deep breath. *Here we go*, she thought.

"She said she didn't have anyone else to turn to."

"YOU TOOK...my-MY DAUGHTER...TO GET BIRTH CONTROL PILLS!"

He was yelling so loud her ears began to ring.

"Elliot, she came to me asking for birth control and-"

"And you gave it to her!"

"I didn't give her anything! She came to me with questions and I gave her information."

"You went with her to get the pill!"

She took a step back from him. "Yes, I volunteered to take her to a doctor so that she could get them."

"You-had-no...NO right to do that! She's MY daughter! I can't even believe you!"

Olivia took another step backward. "Look, I tried to talk her into going to you and Kathy, but-"

"*You* should have tried to talk her out of it! Not take her to the damn clinic!"

"Elliot, she already had her mind made up about it! If I didn't talk to her about it-"

"You should have come to me first! *You* should have told me what was going on!"

"I wanted to," Olivia said practically pleading with him, "but I couldn't figure out a way to tell you without you turning in to this." She motioned to his figure now standing over her instead of in front of her. "I didn't want you to be angry, least of all with Kathleen."

"You're damn' right I was going to be angry! You! You sit down and have some long heart-felt discussion about birth control with my daughter!"

"She had nowhere else to go!" Olivia said her back now firmly pressed against the wall of her bedroom.

"SHE SHOULD'VE COME TO ME!"

"Why! So you could blow up at her just like this?"

Elliot was silent for the first time he'd set foot in her apartment that night. "She could have gone Kathy or Maureen or..."

"Or who?" she said, now attempting to stand her ground. "Who, Elliot? She didn't want you to know. Kathleen looked me in the eye and said she could not go to her mother or her sister about this and that she had no one else to turn to. It was either me or just winging it!"

"Nothing...nothing gave you the right to talk to my daughter without telling me," Elliot said his words scathing.

"Elliot, it's not like I picked her up from school one day and said, 'Hey, let's have talk.'

She called me. She asked me to talk to her about this. And, I'm glad I did."

Elliot glared at Olivia feeling as if he could hit her. She swallowed and continued. "You wouldn't have believed all the stuff she didn't know. And-"

"She shouldn't have to know about it!"

"Why the hell not?!"

"She's seventeen years old!"

"And, and you know what?" Olivia said now taking the offensive. "In a few months, she'll be eighteen and a few months after that she'll be out there on her own. Do you really want *your* daughter away at college not knowing the least amount about birth control?"

Elliot just shook his head at her and scowled.

"Elliot, I hate to break it to you, but by the time she came to me, she'd already made up her mind about it. She was going to have sex, whether she got any information on birth control or not. All I did was-"

"All you did was give her the green light and the means to do it! Why do you think she came to you?! Because she knew that you weren't going to try to talk her out of it!"

"She came to me because she'd already made up her mind and she was just trying to not get pregnant in the process!"

"You...you should've done...*something*!"

"I did! I told her they should both get tested before anything. I told her-"

"*You* should not be having conversations about sex with *my* daughter."

"Well, which is it Elliot? Should I have done something or should I just have let her go off on her own to figure it out by trial and error?"

"You should've told her to come to me!"

"Come to you? So you could act just like this? Tell me, Elliot. Exactly what would you have said to Kathleen if she came to you asking about birth control? Or more appropriately, what would you have done?"

He stormed away from her taking a few steps across the room.

"You would've tracked him down and threatened him too and the next time she needed to come to you, she would know for certain that she couldn't."

"Still didn't give you the right to talk to her without telling me first," Elliot said with calmly words, but rage still flowing in his veins.

"What would you have wanted me to do, Elliot? She asks me to meet her for breakfast. She already has a list of questions in her head...Was I supposed to tell her I'd think about whether or not I could talk to her about birth control? She had her mind already made up. She knew exactly what she was going to do and I knew that if I didn't tell her *something* right then and there, I knew that you would become a grandfather at a young age."

The rage began to subside with her last rationalization. He sighed and closed his eyes. Sensing that some of the initial danger had passed, Olivia reached to touch his arm.

"Elliot-"

"Don't!" he said recoiling and facing her. "Don't touch me. I...I don't even want to look at you."

He shook his head at her in disgust and walked out of her apartment, slamming her door shut in the process.

Olivia heard the door to the stairs close, a few moments later, and she felt her eyes burning with tears. He'd never been that angry with her before and she had no idea how she could even begin to fix it.

When Elliot leaves, Mark is there again.

This time she cries on him because she's so frustrated about Jonathan and Elliot and the case in total.

## **Saturday Jan 27**

Elliot calls in "sick" and when John asks about it, Olivia says don't worry about it.

She calls Evelyn Rivers again, who answers and says that everything's fine, but she doesn't sound fine.

Liv is on her way to just check up on Evelyn when a woman walks into the precinct. She speaks to a woman who says that she thinks that her neighbor was attacked. She heard a lot of yelling and screaming. She goes out to investigate with Fin.

The neighbor seems okay. She just had a fight with a boyfriend, but she's thankful that her neighbors care enough to worry about her.

Olivia thinks about her own neighbors. She'd had very vocal arguments with both Jonathan and Elliot and no one had even acted like anything was wrong. Even Mrs. Fitzgivens. You would think given how much she wanted Olivia to date her idiot son, that she'd at least check and see if Olivia was alright after last night.

On the way back to the house, Fin asks Olivia about Elliot, and spills that she Kathleen came to her for help and when Elliot found out about it, he flipped like she knew he would.

Fin says that he'll realize how good it was that Kathleen could come to Olivia and he'll be fine.

When she's trying to get home, Philip Fitzgivens is waiting for her outside her building. She asks why he didn't just wait in his mother's house, but he insists that she just remove his mother from their situation.

He says that she told him to stop calling, but he needed to see her and that he knew if they just saw each other again, she would just talk to him.

He follows her inside, because he says he's going to see his mother.

Just before she tries to get in her apartment, Philip grabs her by the arm and asks what she wants because he can be that guy if she just gave him a chance.

Olivia says that she's dating someone else and even that's not going well. She's not interested in him and they've nothing to sustain a relationship. She leads him out the door.

She calls Evelyn again and she again says everything's fine.

That night Elliot calls Olivia and asks to meet him for breakfast.

### **Sunday Jan 28**

The two of them have breakfast and make up as much as they can.

"I thought you'd stood me up," Liv said as Elliot finally sat down.

"Yeah. I thought about it, but then figured I wouldn't."

Liv just stared at him unsure what to say or do.

"Kathy and I talked," he said without emotion.

Liv nodded. "So, is she coming to cut my throat now, or do I have time to pick up my dry cleaning first?"

"Olivia," he said exasperated. "I'm sorry about Friday. I shouldn't've picked a fight with you like that, but you have to understand, I-"

"Elliot, I do understand. Kathleen is your babygirl and I know that no parent wants to think of their kids growing up, but-"

"No, you don't know," he said, his voice drawing attention from the couple sitting at the table next to them. "To learn that your kid can't come to you when they need something...Liv, it hurts."

She just nodded, knowing that he might just explode again if she said that she understood how he felt.

"I always thought we had a relationship where she could come me or Kathy with any problem....I feel like I've screwed up with her."

"You didn't do anything wrong. Most girls think it's hard to talk to their parents about sex and birth control, because they can already envision what the conversation is going to be like. Half the time, we go to our friends who know probably know less about it than we do. And if there's no one to talk to, girls just wing it and hope for the best."

"I know," Elliot said. "And, in a way, I think I'm relieved that she had you to talk to."

"But you still wish she'd gone to you or Kathy first?"

"Maybe Maureen. I don't know."

"Listen, Elliot. I'm sorry. I should have told you. I was 'going' to tell you, but I couldn't figure out the best way to say it without you..."

He smirked at her. "Without me flying into a rage like Friday?" He picked up a menu.

"Yeah," she says sighing.

Silence settles between them.

"Olivia," he says from behind his menu. "Will you just promise me one thing?"

"Anything."

"If any of my kids confides in you again, will you...at least drop me or Kathy a hint that something's going on? Please?"

"Consider it done."

Liv picks up her menu, though she isn't hungry in the least.

"There's nothing I need to be talking to Dickie or Lizzie about right now, is there?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"Well, all right then."

Elliot heads off to church with his family and Olivia goes back to the office.

She catches up on paperwork and calls Evelyn once more. This time she doesn't answer.

She goes out to Evelyn's and the door is open. Evelyn is in the corner of the room, beaten, bloody, cowering and crying.

"I he ch-changed. He said he was going to change."

"What happened Evelyn? Who did this to you?"

Evelyn rubbed a bloody hand over her face, smearing red across her cheeks and forehead.

"He said he was s-sorry. He didn't mean it before."

"Was Micah here? Did he do this?"

"He said he was gonna change."

"Okay," Olivia said softly taking her by the arm. "I've got to get you to a hospital."

"No!" Evelyn said. "He'll kill me!"

"Not if we're with you in the hospital."

"Please! I can't leave! He said to stay here."

"Evelyn, you're hurt. I need to call an ambulance. You need medical attention."

"What about Micah? He'll come for me."

"And this time, we'll get him and you can press charges on him."

Evelyn shook her head. "He said to stay here."

Olivia glanced around the dark room. "Did he leave? Evelyn, is Micah still here?"

She just shook her head and squeezed her knees to her chest.

Olivia took out her phone and pressed 3 on her speed dial.  
“This is Detective Olivia Benson. I need a bus. I’m at 108<sup>th</sup> and Central Park West.”  
She continues giving instructions and then she hears a noise in the room behind her.  
She goes to investigate and Micah Diorel comes at her with pipe. She dodges him and points her weapon. He drops it and she cuffs him.  
The bus comes and Olivia brings Diorel in from rape and assault.  
She does the interrogation.  
She convinces Evelyn to press charges this time.  
Casey’s there and he’ll be arraigned in the morning.  
When they’re moving Diorel, he starts screaming: “I’ll get you, you bitch! You make *my* girl lie on me! When I get outta here, I’m gonna rip you half!”  
She and Cragen just shake their heads at one another.  
Cragen congratulates her as does Elliot.  
They are still slightly awkward, but they seem to be doing much better than they were even in the morning.  
Elliot asks if she wants to go out for drinks, but she declines. She doesn’t tell him, but she’s really hoping that Jonathan calls or just shows up. It’s his MO to normally come by after a few days when they’ve been fighting. Sunday would be the best day from him to stop by her place.  
She hears knocking at her door and she comes to the door expecting it to be Jonathan.  
She doesn’t even look through the peep-hole.  
It’s Mrs. Fitzgivens. She had come by that night to tell Olivia just the kind of impression she made on Philip and that she should give him just one more try.  
Liv is nice at first, then she’s just mean and kind of bitchy about it.  
“Just talk to him once more,” Mrs. Fitzgivens said. “He’s a nice boy and he likes you a lot.”  
“Mrs. Fitzgivens,” Olivia said wondering how best to put her words. “I’m actually in a relationship right now.”  
“That’s not what I heard.”  
Olivia rolled her eyes. “So, what the entire building knows everything about my personal life now?”  
“We all hear things.”  
Olivia sighed. “Look, I’m sorry, but Philip and I...we don’t have anything in common. He’s too young and too weird for me. I went on a date with him because you asked me to, I’ve let him down as easy as I could, and now I think I’m done with this situation.”  
“Would you please just-”  
“No,” Olivia said cutting her off in mid-sentence. “I’m done. Goodbye.”  
She closed the door on Mrs. Fitzgivens and just shook her head. She started on paperwork, annoyed that Jonathan still hadn’t called. He’d called after she threw him out after her return to the SVU. He’d called after she threw him out after working on the Sennet case. He’d called even after she had been spirited out to Oregon. Surely by now, he knew when she was just having a tough week.

**Monday Jan 29**

Monday is a paperwork catch-up day for the most part.  
Elliot and Olivia are okay and are even able to joke around with one another.  
Casey comes in that morning and lets them know that Diorel got off on five grand bail.  
Turns out his brother is an attorney and gave the judge just what he wanted to hear. He'll probably be out by the end of the day.  
Elliot looks slightly worried, but Liv reminds him that Diorel wasn't the first perp to shout idle threats at either of them.  
Liv sees Evelyn off into her women's shelter and promises that she will be by on Wednesday to make sure that she's doing okay.  
That night Liv tells him about Jonathan and cries on his shoulder.  
Jillian calls and asks how things are in general.  
Things with Elliot are better, but she still feels like they are not in sync. She feels like the slightest little thing might tip the balances with them.  
Liv gets a call that night.  
Elliot gets there too.  
Another boy has been found in the same area as the others.  
The police detail that had been following Drover, did not see him do anything.  
It all points to Kreider.  
They find out that Kreider was adopted. He met his real mother, Emme Donough, several years earlier and she had an apartment on the West side that she was not using.  
They find her and they get to the apartment and find that Kreider had been there recently, but he was gone.  
Spirits are down because they know it's Kreider, they just can't find him and they are out of leads.

## **Tuesday Jan 30 ([skip to Jan 31](#))**

That morning, very early, Kathy calls Elliot because Dickie, punishment officially over, had come home the previous night and had just locked himself in his room.  
Elliot comes over before heading off to the office and Dickie says this guy asked if he wanted to come home with him and play video games. When he said no, the guy got in his way and actually grabbed him by the arm. He was kind of scared, and he didn't want to worry Mom. Dickie describes a man who looks more like Drover than Kreider.  
Elliot gets back to the office livid.  
The police detail had been pulled from Drover since they were all so certain that it was Kreider, so no one knew where Drover was the previous night.  
Elliot screams about wanting all of Drover's info because of Dickie.  
Cragen is out because he is receiving flack over the Kreider problem.  
Liv refuses because of Kreider  
He screams at her in the middle of the squadroom  
Munch and Fin try to calm him down, but he's livid.  
When Cragen gets back, he sends him home and he's officially off the Kreider case.  
Liv calls Maya that night and tells her how Elliot completely flipped out at her today.  
She talks about how angry he was and how angry he was going to be when he found out that she took a file she knew he would come back for later that night.

Maya tells her she doubts Elliot would do anything rash.

Liv says that Maya did not know Elliot like she did, especially after what happened on Friday.

Maya notes that Liv sounds different and she's worried because Olivia had yet to tell her exactly what went down on Friday, "But, you're not actually *scared* of him?"

"No," she sighed. "But I am afraid of what this might do to us. We've been a rocky road since I came back to the SVU. This just isn't going to make it any better."

"What about Jonathan?" Maya asks after a moment. "Have you talked to him?"

"Why? Do you wanna know if he's available?" Olivia spat.

Maya sighed into the phone. "Olivia, you know me far better than that. I just want to know if he's called."

Liv felt tears growing in her eyes and she sniffed them back. "No. He hasn't called and I really don't think he's going to."

"He's just mad right now. He's always come back to you, singing songs, bearing gifts –"

"No, it was never like this before. He was really angry with me on Friday and it's almost Wednesday and I still haven't heard from him."

"Olivia," she said softly. "What happened on Friday...with Elliot?"

Olivia was silent for a very long time and all the while, Maya allowed the silence to continue.

"He...he came over and he was....angry."

"Just angry?"

"Livid," Olivia continued. "He was so mad at me. I thought he was going to really lose it."

"Did something happen?"

"No....no, I just....He just yelled."

Maya knew immediately that her friend was lying, but she knew not to press the issue too much.

"Maya, he was *so* angry and that was just over Kathleen. Something he more or less got over after a day. This thing with Dickie. His only son *and* it has to do with Drover. We've been battling with this Drover thing for weeks now and after what's just happened with his son....this is just not going to be good."

Olivia wiped an errant tear that had escaped from her lashes. "God, Maya. It's like everything in my life is just spinning out of control."

"Well, if it's any consolation," Maya said. "I'll always be here to catch if you fall."

Olivia smiled and she felt tears spilling over and running down her face. "I know, sweetie. Thank you."

At a little after 11, Elliot comes back into the precinct.

Munch is there, but Elliot tells him to stay out of it.

He goes through Liv's desk looking for the Drover file.

"Elliot," Munch says. "Whatever you're looking for, it's not worth it. Take some time and get out of your head for a few days."

Elliot just slams his hands on the desk. "She took it. She took it, didn't she? She fucking took it!"

"Took what?"

"The goddamn Drover file!" he screamed. "I want his address! I want his information!"

"So, what, you can beat a confession out of him?"

"He came after *my* son. And Olivia took his damn file with her."

"Because she knows you, buddy. She knew you'd be back here trying to track him down."

"*He's* the guy."

"You don't know that!"

"The hell I don't!"

"This Kreider guy looks just like Drover and has an even deeper connection to the rest of the victims! Elliot, I'm telling you. You've got to lay off Drover."

"The second the police detail is off his tail, he pulls this move. On my son!"

Elliot shakes his head and heads for the elevators.

Liv had gone to bed, worried.

She had just drifted off to sleep when she heard a banging on her door very reminiscent of Friday.

Her eyes flew open. *He knows*, she thought.

She quietly answers the door and Elliot barges into her apartment looking around the place.

"Give it to me, Olivia," he said.

"What Elliot?" she lied in an innocent voice. "I don't know what you're talking about?"

"Give me the damn file!"

"Which file?"

"Don't play games with me, Olivia," he said with an intensity that Olivia had seen only on rare occasion and always reserved for a suspect. "I want that file and I want it now!"

Liv moved over to her desk.

"Which file?" she said again calmly. "I've got a half a dozen of them here."

Elliot grabbed her arm, hard.

"Give me the Drover file! I know you took it from the office and I want it."

She snatched her arm out of his grasp. "You *know* I can't give it to you."

"That's bullshit. Give me the damn file!"

"No, Elliot," she said getting some of her nerve back. "It isn't going to do anyone any good if you find Drover and beat him senseless...or worse."

"Worse?"

"Elliot," she said softly. "Cragen's already taken you off this case, and everyone saw how you reacted this morning over Drover. I don't know whether this is just over Kathleen or this case in general, but you are not thinking clearly. How's this going to look when Drover lands a suit against you, the department and the city, especially if he didn't do anything?"

"He's the guy," Elliot said through clenched teeth.

"You keep *saying* that, but we both know that Kreider's got just as much evidence pointing to him as Drover, *and* Drover's never lied to us. Kreider has!"

"He's the guy, Olivia. I know it."

"Well, then prove it," she said crossing her arms.

"I will once you hand his file over."

"What, do you think I'm stupid! No!"

"Give me the file, Olivia!"

"No!"

“GIVE ME THE GODDAMN FILE!”

He slammed his hand on her desk and the faux-Tiffany’s lamp she had found on sale years ago leapt off the desk and shattered on the floor.

Elliot’s gaze did not even register that anything had happened.

“I think you should leave,” she said softly.

“I’m not leaving without that file.”

“I don’t have it here,” she lied.

“Like hell you don’t. It’s not at the precinct. It’s gotta be here!”

“You went *looking* through my desk for it!”

Elliot said nothing, but glared at her.

She took a step toward him. “Do you realize how you sound? You are losing it, Elliot.

For the love of God, take some time. Get some clarity. You are letting this case affect you too much. Please, Elliot. *Please*. Just back away from Drover. We have dozens of cases still open. Pick one and focus on it, but please just...just let this thing you have against Drover alone.”

Elliot sighed. “Liv, I just want the file.”

“You just want the file,” she repeated shaking her head.

“Give me the file for tonight.”

Olivia scoffed and shook her head again.

“Just for tonight. Let me look at it and see if I can pull anything else from it. If I can’t, I’ll let the whole thing go.”

“You must think I’m a real idiot Elliot, if you think I’m handing Drover’s file over to you. Besides the fact that I’d be more than responsible for anything that you’d end up doing to him, I can’t. I don’t have it here.”

“You’re lying.”

“No, *you’re* losing it!”

“I want his file.”

“I don’t have it!”

“I can’t take you looking me straight in the eye and lying to me. First, you give my daughter the okay to go sleeping around with whoever she wants, and now you’re keeping me from investigating the guy who propositioned my son. I want his file! You owe me that!”

“I owe you that?” Olivia took an angry calculated step toward him. “I *owe* you that! Who the hell do you think you are, coming to *my* apartment, breaking *my* things and demanding *I* give you something you don’t have a right to? You’ve got some balls telling me that I owe you a damn thing because of Kathleen!”

“You gave *my* little girl-”

“You know what, Elliot? You’re little girl. She’s not so little anymore and it’s about time you faced that. But, I’m not going to apologize anymore for what I did. I did it to help *your* family. To keep your kids from falling apart anymore!”

“Don’t,” Elliot said pushing a finger into Olivia’s shoulder. “Don’t think for a second that you’re some kind of great confidant, helping my kids out! They don’t need you for that! That’s why they have a mother and a father. Neither of whom are you!”

“Then, why the hell did she feel she had to come to me?” Olivia said and she gave Elliot a shove backward. “And don’t fucking *push* me in my own goddamn house! I

don't care how angry you are about Kathleen or Drover! I was right about Kathleen, just like I'm right about Drover!"

A fire lit behind Elliot's eyes and he pushed her backward with each intensified word. "Oh, I'll *push* you when I need to. I'll *push* you when you're screwing with my kids. And I'll *push* when you're lying to my face. Give me the damn' *file*!"

Olivia felt ready to slap him in the face, but she settled for giving him a hard push backward. "I don't *have* it! I already told you!"

He had barely moved backward under her pressure and by this point, Elliot had pushed her across the apartment and against a wall. He grabbed both of her arms above the elbow and pressed her against the wall.

"Stop lying," he said in a low voice. "I need that file and I know you have it."

Olivia rolled her forearms backward and broke his grasp. Several of her picture frames which had hung precariously on the wall behind her came crashing down, spraying glass in every direction. An image of she and her mother from ten years earlier tore in its right corner, the frame itself in disarray.

"Get out, Elliot," she said slowly. "I'm not giving you the Drover file, so you might as well just go home. Just go home, get some sleep, maybe take some time off."

"I can't do that. Not right now."

"Elliot," she said a little more at ease, "you're off the case. This isn't your problem anymore."

"Dickie-"

"I *know*, Elliot. I don't doubt that he's lying, but we can't say for sure that it's Drover. C'mon, you know better than this. We can't just railroad him on a hunch."

Elliot took a step back from her and ran a hand across his face and neck. He sighed, guilt washed over him as he heard glass crinkle under his shoes and he felt his rage begin to fade."

"Please," she continued. "Just go home. I swear to you, I will let you know the second anything leads to Drover."

"You won't give me that file," he said rather than asked.

"No, I don't have it for you."

He started to walk away, but paused. "Look me in the eye and give me the real reason you won't give it up."

Olivia stared at Elliot unsure of what to say. She wanted to tell him that she feared what he might do to Drover when he found him. She wanted to tell him he needed therapy. She wanted to tell him she was afraid for his job, his family, his life. She did not, however, want to lie to him.

"Elliot, I-I don't have it." She immediately looked at the floor after she said it.

Elliot narrowed his eyes at her and nodded his head. He walked across the hardwood floor, feeling glass from Olivia's shattered frames grinding into the floorboards as he left. He glanced back at her standing still against the far wall, before turning the doorknob and heading out into her hallway.

The second he was gone, Olivia jumped over the broken glass and headed for her desk. She quickly shifted through a sea of files, found a manila file folder with the name "Jeffrey Christopher Drover" printed clearly on the label, and shoved it into the top side drawer. She opened her top middle drawer, and sifted through errant Post-It pads, pens and binder clips, before finding a set of two small, silver keys,

bound together by a black string. It was not that Olivia distrusted Elliot in any way, but he had gone through her desk at the office, and he was clearly in a right state. They had exchanged keys for each other's respective homes years ago, completing the exchange again when Elliot had to leave his house. She knew if Elliot really wanted the Drover file, nothing would stop him from coming back when she was asleep to sift through the files on and in her desk. She set one of the keys in the lock above the drawer holding the newly-found manila folder and turned the key.

Elliot had made it all the way to the elevators on Olivia's floor and had even pushed the "Down" button, before his anger began to rise again. She *had* that file and she looked him in the eye and lied about it. At this point, it was not solely the issue of the Drover file, but the principle of the thing. If she was not going to trust him enough to just give him the file, she, at the very least, could have been an adult about it and given him a legitimate reason.

As the thoughts played in Elliot's mind again and again, he grew angrier. *Who was he to come to her apartment demanding things?* Who was *she* to lie to him? Him. Her partner.

Elliot shook his head and walked back to her apartment door he'd left slightly ajar on his exit. He pushed the door open and had taken a breath, prepared to demand that she apologize for not even having the nerve to give him a real reason for not giving up the file.

A moment passed when it seemed all the air had been sucked from the room and Elliot and Olivia simply stared at one another. Elliot, his hand still on her apartment door; Olivia, her hand still turning the desk key in its lock. Another moment went by and Olivia jerked away from the desk, taking the key with her. Elliot, realizing what she had just done, felt a nerve snap somewhere near the back of his neck and he lunged for her.

End chapter.

End Part One: Flight from Rage

Begin Part Two: Flight from Fear

**Wednesday Jan 31** ([up to Jan 30](#)) ([down to Feb 1](#))

Elliot walks into the office Wednesday morning.

He has a red blotch on one side of face and a black eye.

It is clear from just watching him walk that he was having severe pains on his side.

He sees Cragen and Huang talking and he wondered bitterly if they were talking about him. It was only a matter of time before they found out about Olivia. Then, he would really be in for it.

"Welcome back," Fin said from his desk.

Elliot nods in his direction and Fin stands and walks toward him.

"What's up with your face, Elliot?"

Elliot freezes and rubs his nose. "You know, I don't really want to talk about."

"You got a black eye! You get in a fight or something last night?"

"I *really* don't want to talk about it."

Fin just stared at him and went back to his paperwork.

Munch walks by his desk. "Elliot, you feeling better this morning?"

Elliot looks up at him to answer, but John cuts him off before he can speak. "Whoa! What the hell happened?"

"That's what I asked," Fin said. "He says he doesn't want to talk about it."

"I don't," Elliot said.

"Did you find Drover?" John yelled. "I can't believe Olivia gave you that file!"

"She didn't give me the file," Elliot said. "I didn't find Drover and I don't want to talk about it!"

"Fine," John said. "I'm due in court anyway."

Elliot sits down and opens up Diorel's file. He glances up toward Olivia's desk for the first time that morning. Her chair is missing her coat lying across its back, her light was not on and the coffee cup on her desk was clearly cold.

"Where's Liv?" he asks still facing her desk.

Fin shrugged. "Hasn't come in yet? Figured you mighta talked to her."

Elliot shook his head slightly. "No."

Cragen calls Elliot into his office. He braces himself. He now figures that Liv had called into Cragen and he was about to get his ass chewed.

He gets his ass chewed, but about his behaviour the previous day.

"Is that clear?" Cragen says, his hands in his pockets as he leans against his desk.

"I got it," Elliot says nodding.

"Good." Cragen stands and heads back to his chair. "I'm gonna need you to talk to some of Kreider's co-workers. Find out if they know of anywhere else he might be."

Elliot nods.

"Oh and I'm putting the police detail back on Drover...just in case."

"Thanks, Cap," Elliot got up to leave, but paused. "You haven't heard from Liv?" he asked.

Cragen takes a glance outside the window of his office in the direction of Olivia's desk.

"No, I haven't heard anything from her." He paused when he sees the concern on Elliot's face. "Give her a call and if she doesn't answer, drop by her place. She might just be sick. I know you both've been under a lot stress these past few days."

Elliot nodded again, but a knot in his stomach began to twist.

What if she *was* sick? What if she was hurt more than he thought? What if something happened to her after he left?

On his way to talk to the co-workers, he called Olivia.

He tries her home phone twice, but she does not answer. He tries her cellphone and still nothing.

Elliot gets back to the precinct. Still no Liv.

Cragen sends Fin and John to talk to the rest of Kreider's neighbors and his mother's neighbors.

Cragen also asks about his injuries. Elliot says it's nothing and they don't have to worry about it. Cragen says fine, but he wants him to go check on Olivia.

He gets to Liv's, but she doesn't answer.

He lets himself in:

"Liv?" he knocks as he opens the door. "Olivia? Liv, it's me."

He walks into her apartment, noticing some of the crashed picture frames now lying on the floor. Her table's still turned over and newspapers and files are still strewn

over the floor. There's a small red smudge on the rug by her over-turned coffee table. Elliot notes the scene, but he does not write down anything since the scene looks pretty similar to how he left it.

He sighs and keeps calling for her. He looks in her bedroom and the bathroom, but still no Liv.

He calls her cell again and it rings from on top of her desk, where her badge and gun are also sitting. He starts to get worried and notes her keys still on her hook before leaving.

He goes through her desk and finds numbers for Maya and Jillian, some of Liv's friends. Maya is upbeat and says that she talked to Liv last night around 9 or so, she sounded like everything was more or less okay.

But Jillian sounds wary talking to Elliot about Olivia.

He talks to Jonathan who says that both Elliot and Olivia can kiss his ass before hanging up.

He talks to Cragen again and tells him that he can't find Liv.

He says that the last time he saw her was in her apartment around 12:30am and then he left.

They talk about if there were anymore people to call.

Elliot goes back to Liv's place and goes through her planner for numbers; he calls Jonathan, who said that Liv hadn't been talking to him.

Elliot's scared now.

Elliot starts talking to the neighbors who all have the same story: they heard some yelling and commotion from her apartment and then some slammed doors.

But Elliot does not take down any of this information.

He goes back to the precinct and reports that Liv's not around, her badge, phone and gun are all in her apartment, as are her keys, but the place had been locked from the outside.

Cragen looks concerned. And asks if there's anywhere else she could be. No one knows.

He says he does not want to fly into a panic too quickly about this, he asks Elliot to find out if she had any court appearances and call anyone else he can think of. Maybe she had some kind of distant family emergency.

Cragen also asks John and Fin to track down Diorel and Drover, just to make sure they are in the respective places.

Elliot calls one of Liv's friends, Sarah Hyman, who says she hadn't talked to Olivia in a while, but that she spoke to Liv's cousins quite frequently and one of them just had a baby in New Jersey. Maybe Liv went out to see the baby.

Elliot is about to call Maya again and ask about Liv's relatives when Veronica Schrader walks back in the office, completely stoned. She screaming about no one doing anything about her son and how if he was some little rich kid, they'd have an entire fleet of officers on his case.

Elliot and Cragen manage to calm her down.

Fin and Munch go see Drover.

He's completely drunk since he'd been fired from both his coaching job and his real job.

The whole time they're there, he keeps asking about the "lady cop" who turned on him.

“Said she wan’ ta believe meh!” he screamed. “Buh, she lied. Like all da otha bitches in da worl’....she lied ta meh.”

Fin tries to get him to talk some more, but Drover passes out. They look around and it doesn’t look like he’s left at all that night or morning.

They check his computer, which they couldn’t take during the last warrant, but they don’t find anything relating to kiddie porn and such.

They do see, though, that he’d done a Google search on Olivia Benson, and while only some articles that pertained to her came up, they make note of it.

When he comes to again, they ask him about Liv. He just keeps saying that she told him that she wanted to believe him, that she wanted to help him, but she lied. That she didn’t care and wanted him in prison anyway.

They call to get pull the phone records on Drover while they go to see about Diorel.

Once Cragen and Elliot get Veronica Schrader the “drunk” tank to sleep it off. Liv’s phone rings. It’s Evelyn Rivers asking about Olivia, that she said she’d be by to check on her and the day’s almost over and she still hasn’t been by.

Elliot asks if Evelyn had seen Liv at all. She says that she hadn’t, but that Diorel had been by the women’s shelter that Liv had put her in on Monday. When the cops were taking him away, he said he was going to strangle her and Olivia together with his belt.

That is when Munch and Fin walk in to say that Diorel got himself arrested again for assaulting an officer while trying to break into the women’s shelter where Evelyn Rivers was being kept. No one knows how even figured out where she was staying.

Elliot confirms this once he gets off Liv’s phone from Evelyn.

John and Fin tell Don and Elliot that Drover looks like he’s been drinking since late last night. But, he’s been doing some searches on Olivia.

They all look at one another silently, but each is thinking the same thing: Drover did something to Olivia.

Cragen asks about Liv’s friends and other family. Elliot says that Olivia wouldn’t just leave town because of a cousin she barely talks to and this was confirmed by Maya, who by now was getting really worried.

Cragen asks again about Liv’s place.

Elliot tells them that it looked exactly the way it did when he left. In fact, it looked a little too much like the way it did when he left. He said, things got a little shuffled in her apartment and he would have expected it to look a little neater, but it looked exactly the way it did when he’d left the previous night.

Cragen tells Elliot and Fin to grill Kreider’s mother to see if they can find more information on his whereabouts.

Once they leave, he pulls Munch aside and asks if he knew anything about Elliot’s injuries. Munch says no, but that he was slightly alarmed about hearing that things got heated between Elliot and Olivia since he was in such a right state last night.

Cragen tells him to go interview the neighbors again. It’s not that he doesn’t believe what Elliot said, but he just wants another perspective on it.

Cragen calls Casey to see if she’d asked Liv to run anything for her; she says no. He calls Huang asking if he’d seen Liv; he says no. Cragen also asks that Huang see if

maybe she got spirited off to the Feds again. Huang says he'll get right back to him if he knows anything.

John goes by to re-interview the neighbors on Liv's floor.

They all say they heard some commotion around midnight or a little later.

Mrs. Fitzgivens calls Olivia a whore who had probably just gone out whoring and forgotten to come back. John reprimands her, but she just shuts the door in his face.

Mark across the hall is more than helpful. He doesn't let Munch in, saying that the place is a mess, but that he heard Elliot's voice screaming at Olivia that night. And also, that Elliot had been by earlier and that he looked kind of frazzled.

The guy who lived on the other side of her, tells him more or less the same story as the others on the floor, but also that the other detective hadn't taken any notes. Munch feels compelled to tell Cragen.

Elliot and Fin go see Kreider's real mother, who says that Kreider had found her a little more than a year ago. They're around the house and they notice some of her photos from her youth. She looked exactly like Olivia did at the same age.

Elliot presses her to give them any information on where he might be or what he was doing. She says she's not going to give them any information that would pin the murders of those boys on him, but Elliot tells her that it's about a cop. They really need to find him, before this escalates any further. She refuses to say anything, saying that she'd sold him out once and look how his childhood was. She was not going to do that again.

Munch calls Cragen and tells him about what the neighbors said about Elliot's lack of note-taking.

Fin and Elliot get back and Elliot sees that Evelyn Rivers has called another seven times asking about Olivia. He returns her call and tries to calm her down, but Cragen calls him in his office and tells him what Munch had to say about Liv's neighbors.

Elliot says he knows what the commotion was about so there was no need to even take notes on it, and aside from that he still thought that Liv had run some errands or something. Now, he was getting concerned.

He then confesses that he and Liv had had an argument over the Drover file and that the neighbors didn't have anything new to give him.

Cragen reprimands him.

"What do you mean you had an argument? Weren't you asked to stand down on the Drover case?"

Elliot is silent for a moment. "I know, Captain. I know. I spent most of yesterday thinking about Drover and what Dickie said and I just...wanted his file."

"For what, Elliot? What could you gain by going to see Drover on your own except a reprimand from even higher up the chain?"

"I don't know," Elliot whispered. "I just kept thinking about Dickie....I just don't know."

They were silent for a moment.

"What about Olivia? Why were you at her place last night?"

"She had his file...and I wanted it."

"And you argued?"

"Yeah."

"And these injuries?"

Elliot just stared at him, not wanting to continue.

"Did she say she was going anywhere last night?"

"No," Elliot said. "I just left. She didn't say anything."

Cragen stares at him for a long time. The sun had long since set and they hadn't made any real progress on any of their other cases. God only knew how many others they'd accrue over the night. And it was looking like one of his lead detectives was actually missing. He really wanted a drink more than anything.

"Alright," Cragen said. "I want you and Munch to go through her phone book and get her phone records. I want to hear from anyone who's had any contact with her in the past month. She couldn't've just disappeared."

Munch starts viewing the stats from her luds and Elliot starts calling anyone he remembers her mentioning at any point in time. After being hung up on another date, who she'd probably "forgotten" to call back, he takes a break to stretch and to worry. He has an epiphany of sorts and calls Kathleen's cell phone asking when was the last time she'd spoken to Olivia. At first, Kathleen's very whiny, saying that she didn't mean to keep anything from him and that he should stop being mad at Olivia now, because it was not her fault.

Munch starts reading out loud all the people who called Olivia in the past few days.

"Shah, Maya," Munch read from Olivia's phone records. "Shah, Maya...Shah, Maya...Halloway, Jonathan." He stopped and glanced toward Elliot who sat staring blankly at the name Michael Zurquist, in her phone book.

"He's not related to *the* Halloways is he?" Munch continued.

Elliot nodded absent-mindedly.

"Humph," John said. "Shah, Maya...Shah, Maya...Halloway, Jonathan...Shah, Maya...Shah, Maya...Shah, Maya...Halloway, Jonathan...It's the same two people over and over again...Oh, here we go: Harfort, Joshua and Jillian."

"Already spoke to her," Elliot said his head in his hands. "And if I call again, she'll file the missing persons report herself."

Munch nodded and continued through his list. "Shah, Shah, Shah, Shah, Shah, Halloway, Shah, Shah, Halloway, Shah, Shah, Shah, Shah, Shah, Harfort, Shah, Shah, Shah, Halloway...You know I think Liv mentioned this Maya woman maybe once before, but some of these other names..."

"Anybody call recently who shouldn't be there?" Fin asked.

Munch shook his head. "Halloway and Shah, right down the list." He threw down his stapled sheet of seven pages onto his desk. "This is a waste of time! We've already talked to anyone who's had any contact with her in the last month. Probably the last six months for that matter!"

"Well," Fin said, "Somebody's gotta know where she went."

"None of us knew where she was when she went underground with the feds," Munch said.

"Exactly. That's why I don't think it's time to start panicking yet."

"No, now's the perfect time to start!" John yelled. He turned in his seat. "Elliot! When was the last time you saw her?"

Elliot shook his head. "I was back in my car at 12:30 and I went home. Haven't talked to her since."

"And you didn't stop anywhere along the way?"

Elliot glared at him. "What the hell's that supposed to mean?"

“Elliot, as of right now, you’re the last person who talked to her.” He picked up his sheet again. “Liv’s last call yesterday was with Maya Shah and it ended a little after ten o’clock. That leaves you as the last person to see her.”

“You’re making it sound as if I did something to her!” Elliot yelled standing.

“Whatever it sounds like, I saw how angry you were when you left here last night looking for Drover’s file. Between the way you looked last night and the way you looked this morning, I know something went on last night!”

“Hey,” Fin said standing between the two of them. “John calm down. We still don’t know what’s up. Maybe she’s back with the Feds, maybe she caught a lead on Kreider and just hasn’t called, maybe she needed to leave town-”

“She’s not with the Feds,” Cragen interrupted. “Huang just got back to me. No one from the Bureau’s been in contact with Olivia.”

“And she didn’t just leave,” Elliot said. “I went to her place today. Her badge, gun and wallet are all sitting on her dresser. Even if she stepped out for just a second, she wouldn’t’ve gone that far without all three of those.”

Cragen ran a hand over his face. “We talked to everyone?”

“Don,” Munch said. “No one’s seen or heard from her all day.”

Cragen sighed. “What’s the worst case scenario here?”

“Drover,” Elliot said immediately. “You two said he was stalking her. What if last night—”

“What about Kreider,” John interrupted. “Or Diorel? Liv probably reminds Kreider of his real mother and Diorel even said he wanted to take her down for the Rivers case.”

“But, Elliot woulda seen something at Liv’s place, today,” Fin said. “You said her place looked exactly like it did when you left last night. You woulda noticed if there were any signs o’ break-in. Plus, her place was locked from the outside, but her keys were still in the same place.”

“But the neighbors all said they heard yelling and commotion,” Munch said.

“That was me,” Elliot admitted.

The others silently stared at him. “She wouldn’t give me Drover’s file and we argued about it. With all her neighbors, I asked when they heard the yelling stop and they all said, it was around 12:30, when I left.”

Elliot crossed his arms in front of his chest, not liking the way the conversation was going. The way the rest of them were talking...it sounded like he had done something to Olivia; like he was a perp. And she was fine when he left her.... wasn’t she?

“Alright,” Cragen said, “Elliot, Fin. Track down Drover and trace his steps from yesterday. I want to know everywhere he went and everyone he talked to. Munch, my office.”

“I don’t like us just waiting around,” Munch said. “If something happened to Olivia, we need to find out who and when and we need to find out now!”

Cragen leaned against his desk and sighed.

“Calm down, John. If anyone understands, it’s me. I wanna’ know what happened here last night.”

“You want me to be a rat.”

“No, I wanna’ know what’s going on! From what I know about yesterday, Elliot came back to the house for the Drover file, he went off to Liv’s to find it, then he comes

in this morning with a black eye and Liv's gone. We've busted perps with these same details."

"I know what you're thinking, but I don't want to go there."

"All right, let me ask you this: Do you think that Elliot did something to Olivia?"

Munch was silent for a moment staring at the captain's desk, rather than at his superior.

"Cap...I don't know. I just don't know. If you'd've seen him last night...

everything looks like what might have happened if he did go to Olivia's for the Drover file and got his assed kicked when she wouldn't give it to him."

"But, do you think he would've hurt her?"

"No," Munch said quickly. "Something went down last night, but I don't see Elliot actually hurting her."

Maybe end the chapter here.

Switch to Fin and Elliot.

"You going tell me what happened between you and Liv last night?" Fin asked as they walked up the street toward Drover's apartment.

"Look," Elliot said, stopping his quick stride. "I went to her place for Drover's file, she didn't give it to me. We argued and I left. That's all. Is this the address?"

Fin simply nodded in Elliot's direction.

They talk to Drover

He's passed out to the point that he will not come to.

They call a bus to him and rush him off to the hospital.

When he finally comes to, Elliot asks him if he hurt Olivia.

Drover just said that she had pretty brown eyes that lied to him.

They go to the nearest grocery store and from the tapes, Drover's there at 11 and it looks like he was at home the whole night.

They go back to the house, where Munch and Captain are discussing releasing Olivia's information to the news.

They tell the others the Drover didn't do anything or go anywhere except the liquor store and home

They gather a CSU team and check out Liv's apartment.

They are initially upset with Elliot because he didn't tell them that her place looked the way it did.

Cragen tells the CSU team to be careful if they could since she is one of their own.

They take fingerprints and pictures of the place.

They make note of the bloodstain on the rug, by some glass and the edge of her over-turned coffee table and send that off to the lab.

They note everything: her locked drawer, the empty glass of what was probably Scotch, her gun, badge and wallet on her dresser with her phone, as well as her birth control pills.

Elliot rolls his eyes when he sees that they're the same brand that Kathleen got.

Fin notes that it looked like a fight went down and asked Elliot just what kind of argument did they have?

Elliot ignores him.

Mark comes out to see what's going on

When he sees all the CSU guys at her place, he looks panicked.

Elliot speaks to him and he keeps looking over Elliot's shoulder at the team.

Elliot asks if there's something wrong or something that he needs to tell Elliot.  
Mark just says that he's worried since this is the third time people had been by asking about Olivia and this time they are going through her apartment.  
Elliot said he tried calling everyone in her phone book.  
Mark seems to get upset at the idea that he was not even in Olivia's phone book.  
The CSU team brings out the UV lights and they notice that the spot is indeed blood and there was also another spot closer to the door, but they were not sure immediately what it could be.  
Elliot should notice the files on her desk.  
He states that her desk is missing the file for Kreider's case, including all the info about how he killed, but just say the fact that the case file is just missing. This is because Mark took and studied it.

Evelyn keeps calling and saying how she's scared for her life and how she just can't live like this anymore and how could Olivia just abandon her like this. Eventually, she kills herself once she's out of the group home by slitting her wrists in the bathtub. This happens before they find Olivia. Once they do find her and she's well enough to start wondering about work, she asks about Evelyn and after she forces Elliot to tell her what happened. She starts getting depressed because she knew how Evelyn was and that's why she was going to visit her that Wednesday, because she was not very stable. This is the very beginning of Olivia's descent into depression.

Everyone is stumped. No one knows anything that could have happened to her.  
Elliot lets them all know about her place: her gun, badge and keys were all still there and her apartment was locked from the outside.  
They all take letters from her address book and start calling anyone who could have known what had happened to her. Munch and Fin start canvassing some of the people in buildings across the street.  
Cragen has Huang call the Feds to see if maybe she got put on another case, but they hadn't talk to her since her earlier stint.  
They all go back to Olivia's place with CSU and the others see what the place looks like. It looks like a fight took place and John's a little angry that Elliot failed to mention that her place looked like this when he came back earlier. They do notice things like her glass that most likely had a scotch in it.  
Fin takes Elliot out in the hall and asks if this was the something he didn't want to talk about. Elliot says that he still preferred not to talk about it.  
Mark opens his door and he's slightly panicked about the CSU guys being over there in Olivia's apartment.

**Thursday Feb 1 ([up to Jan 31](#))** (begins here, but there should not be a real chapter break)  
Elliot talks to Mark again and he and Fin ask if there's anything else he can remember or if he can name anybody who might have had an issue with Olivia.  
Mark points them to Philip Fitzgivens.  
They talk to Mrs. F while, CSU is going over Liv's place. She calls Olivia a whore who refused to even give her Philip a chance.  
Fin and Elliot actually go see Philip who says that Olivia had turned him down flat no matter how hard he tried.

They get a call when they're at Philip's.

They ran some info from one of Kreider's co-workers. A guy matching Kreider's description was seen using the co-worker's unit.

They bring the guy in the house. Turns out the co-worker rented a storage unit in Alphabet City for Kreider because Kreider said he had a bit of a credit problem.

They get a warrant and open up the place and it is clear that Kreider had been staying there, too. They are sick because they don't know why he would not just leave the city.

Elliot feels sick. What if the reason Kreider's been running is because he has Olivia. Maybe he's going to try to use her as some sort of ransom.

They spend the rest of the day interrogating the co-worker and canvassing the area for a trace of Kreider.

Security tapes show him spending the night in the storage unit, but they don't see Olivia.

Everyone is starting to believe that maybe he took her since he did seem to warm up to her a bit and the whole thing about Kreider's mother looking exactly Olivia when his mother was in her late thirties.

They grill the co-worker some more asking about if he knew anything about Kreider.

The co-worker says that he sometimes mumbles things about wanting a child's love, but never being able to "attain" it.

They check ACS and Kreider tried several times to adopt young boys, but thankfully ACS never gave them out, even foster children, because of Kreider's history. Kreider would tell the co-worker, Roy Masterson, that there were loads of other guys out there who walked, talked, acted and looked just like him who could "attain" a kid's love, but not him...never him.

They hold Roy on a bogus charge because he knew about the murders, but never came forward about Kreider.

They add to her chart: There's Kreider, Drover, Diorel and this Fitzgivens guy. Elliot also wants to add Jonathan Holloway to the mix since Liv told him that she and him had just broken up and Jonathan refuses to take anymore of his calls, but he now wants to focus on Kreider. If only he had not drug his feet along on the guy.... how many of those other boys could have been saved? What were the chances that Olivia would be standing there beside him trying her best not to give off a "I told you so" expression, instead of the unit staring up at her image on the chart they used for their victims and perps.

They had ruled out Fitzgivens and Mark since they had made various calls around the time she would have gone missing and all the other neighbors had alibis.

They get the lab analysis back quickly on the unknown chemical on her rug. It is chloroform cocktail of several doping and anesthetizing agents. They are starting to panic; why would there be chloroform on her rug, near the door?

While they are developing Liv's case and pondering over when they should go to the news, Warner comes in and asks to speak to Cragen alone. She tells him that they got the DNA back on the blood in Olivia's apartment. It turned out to be a mix of Olivia's and someone else's who came up immediately in the system...Elliot. End chapter.

## Friday Feb 2 ([down to Feb 3](#))

Begin with Cragen in his office and very early Friday morning. He's been there for going on 42 hours. No one has anymore information on Olivia's disappearance and she's still gone. It's beginning to look as if she just disappeared out of her bed.

Then there was Elliot. The arguing, the bruises, the blood on Olivia's floor. Elliot would have an explanation for the whole thing, but Cragen knew deep down what he did not wish to voice; what he did not want to even think. Olivia was missing and Elliot had something to do with it.

Olivia was a fighter, but could she fight off Elliot Stabler if he really came at her? If he was really angry enough? In all his years with the force, Don had seen some horrifying things, some done by cops to one another. To think that something like this could ever happen in his unit. Between Elliot and Olivia. He'd seen them work miracles together. This just didn't make sense. Through all the problems, through all the anger. He knew Elliot and even when he hung on the proverbial edge, he never slipped.

Don glanced at the glistening report Melinda had placed carefully on his desk. It sat innocently catching the slight flickers of the overhead light in his office. She had made just one copy and left it with him, a complete violation of her office's many procedures, but he could not be more thankful she had risked it for him.

They were running out of options on Olivia and it was only a matter of time before they would have to release her information to the press. Any mention of Elliot's blood in her apartment combined with what went on in the squad room on Tuesday afternoon would create the kind of media circus Don would just as soon avoid.

He sighed. It did not matter though. Even without Elliot's blood mixed with Olivia's in a smear on her apartment floor, Don knew this was going to be the shit storm of his career. Elliot's behaviour throughout the Drover case would have had him riding a desk in any other department, but Don had cut him some slack out of the loyalty of knowing that his lead detective was simply going through a rough time.

Perhaps if he had not...maybe if he had read the signs a little more carefully, he would be sending his detectives out to resolve another case instead of holding a pang in his stomach that was nearing despair.

Cragen stared out his office window at his remaining lead detective rummaging frantically through Olivia's desk for any information on her whereabouts. The bruise around his left eye had darkened, becoming more purple in color than red and spreading across the bridge of his nose. A hot flash of anger ran through Don's side as he wondered what had happened Tuesday night. The bruises, about which Elliot still refused to speak, going on 40 hours later, were undoubtedly caused by Olivia, and Don wondered what Elliot had done to make her strike back at him in such a way.

Don took a step toward his door, fully prepared to call Elliot into his office and have a "talk" about Olivia's disappearance when the black phone which sat on the right corner of desk lit up, ringing its tinny chime.

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Elliot sifted through file after file hoping for something, anything, to lead them to what might have happened to Olivia. Maybe she really did get a lead on one of their other cases. Or maybe she was hurt; far more hurt than he had thought.

“Elliot!” Cragen yelled from the across the squad room.

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Elliot had his coat on and was running toward the elevators the moment the words had left the captain’s mouth.

“They found Kreider.”

A police detail had been sitting on Kreider’s real mother’s house and had spotted him enter the place looking ragged and tired. He checked on something in his trunk and then went into the house. There was no sign of Olivia, however.

Elliot had a sinking feeling in his stomach at the mention of trunk and Olivia in conjoining sentences. *What if...?* he thought.

He is at Kreider’s place in less than twenty minutes and the uniforms there tell him that Kreider hasn’t left the place.

Elliot goes in with backup.

Kreider is holding a gun to his mother’s head a la Plummer in *Wrath* and saying that he didn’t do anything. The police are just after him for no reason.

Elliot tries to calm him down, but his voice is shaking because he feels like he knows that Kreider probably did something to Olivia.

Kreider takes a shot at Munch in the vest and Elliot takes Kreider down with a shot to the leg. He wanted him alive because he needed to know what happened. If he really did hurt Olivia, they would never find her if Kreider lay dead in his mother’s house. She, by the way, was screaming and screaming for her baby.

They open the trunk of his car and they find a bundle of all his trophies from all the victims in a green sheet.

Munch gets admitted temporarily to the hospital and once at the hospital, Elliot interrogates Kreider and he just starts crying.

Kreider says that they were all so beautiful. They were so strong and wonderful and he just wanted to be with them. That’s all he ever wanted was one of them to love him the way that he loved them. But they never did what he wanted. They always misbehaved and then he needed to get rid of them.

Fin asks about the Richardson boy.

He said that he didn’t mean to kill the Richardson boy on MLK day. It was just that he knew the day was coming and so he figured he’d try out one of the few black boys who were out there. Maybe he could treat Daniel like the “special little guy” he was. Maybe he would *behave* better than the others he had had, but in the Daniel was just like the others.

Elliot asks about his son.

Kreider just smiled and said that he was just trying to change things up a little more. He dressed like Drover when he approached him to make sure Drover got Elliot’s attention. He wanted to make sure that they all continued to believe it was Drover.

Elliot asks about Drover.

He had seen how they, the boys, looked at Drover, a guy who looked more or less like him and worked for the same company, but he had their love and Kreider could never get it.

Drover was a coach at the indoor field and the other fields where he liked to watch them. He had heard Drover talking about his “kids” at work one day and so he figured he would check out the fields.

He stole Drover's car because he figured that if someone saw him in it, the cops would follow him.

He knew from police scanners and guy he knew from a seedy newspaper that they were looking at Drover and he just needed something to keep the police looking in that direction.

Kreider asks where the other cop is, the pretty one. "She seemed nicer."

Elliot asks the guy asking if he did something to her. Kreider cries like a baby. He says that women never looked at him and he didn't expect them to. He always knew that if one woman could just stand to be with him for a little while, he could get a special little guy of his own, but they never even gave him a second glance. But she actually smiled at him. She didn't even talk to him instantly like he was freak. She was nice and seemed so trust-worthy. And, the fact that she looked just like his mother.... "well, you could say I loved her instantly like a boy loves his mother."

Elliot grabs him by the leg wound and asks again. "What did you do to her?"

Kreider screams that he did nothing. That he didn't do anything at all.

With Diorel in jail, Drover accounted for and Kreider off collecting his treasures at the time Olivia disappeared they are out of options by noon.

Casey says that the DA refuses to accept any plea in this case.

They can use his confession in his case.

They release her info to the news stations.

Elliot spends the rest of the day talking to Kreider's victims' families and ensure that he won't be getting out of prison any time soon and catches up on a lot of paperwork; all the while he just keeps looking at his desk wishes Olivia were there so he could apologize about Drover.

He keeps saying to himself, "She was fine when I left. She was fine when I left. What if she was really hurt? No, she would have turned up in a hospital somewhere. She was fine when I left. She was fine when I left..."

After the 5:00 news shows Liv, the phones start up; all seem bogus.

After the 10:00 news, a frazzled guy, comes into the house saying he needs to speak to some one about Olivia Benson's whereabouts.

Cragen and Elliot round on him immediately asking if he had any information on Olivia.

"I might," the man said in Elliot's direction. "Is there somewhere we can talk?"

"Look," Elliot said taking a step toward the short, blond-haired man. "We don't have time for any games here. A cop is missing. Do you have any information on her or her whereabouts?"

The man eyed Elliot through narrowed blue eyes wearing a smug expression. "Yeah, I'm thinking this will take a minute or two, so we should probably find a place to talk."

Elliot glanced at Cragen, but the lead the man to the nearest interrogation room.

"What's your name?" Elliot asks the moment the man sits in the uncomfortable wooden chair.

"Morse," he said. "Harry Morse."

Cragen's eyebrows shot up toward the top of his head. "You wouldn't be related to the New York Morses I've heard tell about?"

“Actually, I am,” Morse said with an air of arrogance that made both Elliot and Don want to deck him together. “I’m my grandfather, Peter’s, first grandchild, but all that’s really besides the point.”

“Good,” Elliot said. “Now, you said you had information on Olivia Benson. Do you or are you just wasting our time?”

Morse smirked at Elliot and turned slowly toward the captain. “It radiates off him, doesn’t it?”

“Excuse me?” Cragen said.

“The anger. The *rage*. It’s right there, just likes he’s emitting it or something.” Morse turned back toward Elliot. “Are you always so angry or is it just lately that this has been happening?”

“If I seem angry,” Elliot said through his teeth, “it may be because while my partner has been missing for nearly three days, you’re in here jerking us around. Now do you have any information on Detective Benson or not!”

Morse scoffed and then chuckled to himself. “It’s actually been about seventy hours since she went missing, hasn’t it?” Morse looked at his watch. “Yeah...well, it’s ten twenty-six so that’s actually sixty-nine hours and fifty-eight minutes since Olivia’s been missing. So, almost seventy hours....close to three days, but not quite.”

Elliot stood slowly glaring at the young man sitting across from him. “You’ve got about ten seconds to tell us what you know before I throw you across this room and-”

“And what?” Morse shouted. “You’ll tell all the other cops about me? Make ‘em believe I allegedly did something to your partner?” He let out a fake laugh. “Honestly, you really slay me, Elliot. You really do.”

“Alright, Morse,” Cragen said. “You’ve got our attention. What do you have for us?”

“Oh, I’ve got a lot. I’ve got a *whole* lot. A lot of information about Mr. Big-Bad Detective Stapler here and a whole lot more on Olivia Benson.”

“Care to share any of that information?” Cragen asked with strained breath. He wanted to throttle the guy as much as Elliot, but they had to keep him talking.

“Well, I’d love to,” Morse said. “But, I’ll be damned if I’ll be sharing any of it with either of you.”

“You walk into the special victims unit,” Elliot said, “asking for someone to talk to about Detective Benson’s disappearance and you got us. You talk to us or you don’t talk.”

Morse turned toward Don again. “You see, Cap. That’s what the problem is with this one. He’s a loaded canon, waiting to go off at even the slightest provocation.”

“Do you have information on Olivia!” Elliot screamed into Morse’s face.

Morse scraped his chair backward against the hard tile floor. “I do,” he said softly. “But, I’m not telling either you or your superior. I know how this works. The two of you get together and decide on what you’ll report. I want the other two detectives. Munch and Tuta....I can’t remember how to say it. The *blackish* one! I want to speak to them, because... from what I know about all of you and this unit, I can’t trust the anger ball or the one who keeps taking his back.”

Cragen and Elliot simply stared Morse for a long while, both men easily towering over the small-framed, young man. Close-cut blond hair highlighted his menacing blue eyes that held that extra glint of evil within them.

Don turned from Morse and patted Elliot on the shoulder. Elliot did not budge at first, but eventually he followed Don out of the room.

They ask Munch how he's feeling and they get both Munch and Fin in the room with Morse.

"We're gonna get Huang in here as soon as possible," Cragen said, "but keep him talking. I can't tell if he's just kook or if he really knows something about Olivia. The only thing that makes me think he's legit is he knows all our names and who's partnered with who. Just keep him talking as long as possible. If he knows where Olivia is, we'll drag it out of him."

Munch, "So, why you don't you tell us how you know Detective Benson and tell us where she is?"

"I don't know where she is, but I know that he most likely does." He points at Elliot through the mirror.

"What makes you think that?"

"Because I saw what went down that night."

Fin and Munch look at one another.

"What d'you mean, you saw what went down?" Fin asked with narrow eyes.

"You know what I'm talking about, Bruh man." Morse smiled with a mouth full of perfectly straightened white teeth. "I saw what happened. I saw what he did to her."

"Who?" Munch asked getting aggravated.

Morse glanced toward the mirror and then back at Munch. "You know who I'm talking about."

Munch sits back in his chair and stares at Morse. He did not want to even fathom about what Morse was speaking, but Elliot's face crept into his mind immediately.

"You were stalking Detective Benson," Fin said more as a statement than a question.

"No," Morse said quickly. "I don't stalk. I never *stalked* Olivia. I just...paid special attention to her."

"Stalking a police officer is felony," Munch said. "A felony which we'll gladly lay aside if you can give us some information about Olivia."

Morse shrugged his shoulders. "What is it you'd like to know? See, I know everything there is to know about her. I even know a fair bit about you too, John. And you..." He stared at Fin. "I've never really got your name right. She always calls you Fin."

Fin felt a sharp shiver racing down his spine, but he refused to let it show. "So, you stalked her long enough to know a little about where she works and the people she works with. Now, why don't you put Olivia's co-workers at ease by tellin' us where she?"

"But, I keep telling you, I never stalked her."

"That's right," Munch said. "You paid special attention."

Morse glared at him. "I *noticed* her. I first noticed Olivia about four...well, closing in on five years ago. I saw her through her window from my own place..."

"Got that, Elliot?" Cragen said from behind the two-way mirror. "He's been living in the building probably right across the street from her."

“She was just doing some dishes,” Morse continued. “And she was just sort of...lip-synching with some music as she did them. It was the strangest thing I’d ever seen.”

“Strange because you were stalking her or strange because you were just watching her.”

“Strange because you really don’t *see* a person until you can see them when they think no one is watching.” Morse had continued on as if Munch had said nothing. “She was standing at her sink, her hands slightly red from the warm water and covered in soap bubbles. I’d seen her around the block here and there, but I’d never really noticed her until I happened to just look up that night and see her, so very innocently doing her dishes while singing along with her music....as if lost in her own little world for a moment.”

Morse’s eyes seemed to lose focus as he sat clearly remembering the very night of which he spoke.

Fin wanted to shake him. Olivia had been missing for three days and this guy was playing games with them. “Get to the part where you started stalking her.”

“I tell you, I didn’t stalk anyone. I watched her from a far.”

“Watched her doin’ her dishes?”

“Well...that was how she first caught my eye. And I admit, even that moment was not enough to really bring me into her. Back then, I had no direction whatsoever. My father and grandfather were throwing cash at me to make me do something.... anything.” He laughed. “They still are actually, but now, at least, they can say that I’m the starving artist, black sheep of the family, instead of just a general waste of space and oxygen.”

“That what the problem is?” Fin said. “Daddy’s little boy needs some extra attention and he thought he could get it by stalking Olivia. Building her up in your head.”

“Oh, she didn’t need to be built up,” Morse said, his eyes become dreamlike and unfocused again. “She was....well, she was amazing.”

John felt his stomach flip. *Was*. Morse had used past tense and if he was involved, it could only mean one thing.

“But,” Morse continued. “I didn’t start to watch her, I mean *really* watch her, until a few months later. I saw her out of the corner of my eye while in my apartment. She was racing around her place like a madwoman. It was...really fascinating to watch actually. She was simultaneously doing laundry, cleaning her bathroom, doing her dishes, and cooking this spaghetti dish. Complete with its own fresh sauce! It was like she would stir the sauce, separate some more clothes, throw some cleaner in toilet, wash her hands, clean a few dishes and then go right back into the meal. I’d never seen someone move so fast in my life. It was as if she knew she only had, like, one night to do everything that she had to get done in a week. And, that’s how it started.”

“How what started?” John said. “You stalking Olivia?”

Morse smiled and shook his head. “At first I just watched her from my window. I liked seeing her do the little things like put on her makeup each morning. And then I started to actually follow her. I wanted to know more about her; what she did, the type of person she was.”

“And when you found out she was cop, you naturally backed off, right?” John said.

"I was intrigued," Morse said still smiling. "I looked up as much as I could about her and as it turned out, she was a rather *good* cop. She worked here, in this Special Victims Unit, with kids who'd been hurt and rape victims and their families. She was an incredible person."

Munch felt his skin begin to crawl with the use of "was" again and he knew Fin was thinking the same thing.

"And when I saw how amazing she was, I knew I needed to see more of her."

"See more how?" Fin asked.

"*More* of her," Morse said it like it was the most natural thing in the world. "It was like I needed more of an Olivia fix than I could get just by watching her through my window or following her every once in a while outside. I mean, she *was* cop and I knew eventually, she was bound to notice me."

"So, what did you do?" John asked calmly, hoping that Morse would just slip and tell them what happened to Olivia.

"It was actually a real dilemma," Morse said somewhat breaking his reverie. "Even if I was awake when she was, I had to sleep eventually and then I couldn't watch her. And that was the thing I liked most about watching her....watching her sleep. She always had the most peaceful look on her face....sometimes, I'd feel like I just wanted to curl up beside her while she slept."

Fin stood quickly not being able to take anymore. He held an expression reminiscent of Elliot who had sat in the same chair not too far in the past.

"Fin," Cragen said opening the door. "A word, please."

Fin stormed out of the room.

"We've got to keep him talking," Cragen said.

"How long we gotta hear him talk about Liv like this?" Fin hissed.

"Until he gives up where she is," Cragen hissed in return. "He's telling a story. Let him finish. If there's any truth to what he's saying, we might be able to find Liv all the more quickly."

"What if he's just jerking us around?"

"And what if he's got her held up somewhere and just wants to tell his story to congratulate himself on kidnapping a cop? We've got no leads. We have to listen."

"Let me go back in, Cap," Elliot said. "I want him to look me in the eye and tell me what he's been doing."

"No," Cragen said. "He asked for Munch and Fin and he's got them. Go!"

He motioned for Fin to go back into the interrogation room.

"So, what'd you end up doing," Munch said calmly to Morse.

"Well," Morse said very mild and seemingly small. "I bought a camcorder and just aimed at her place. And, it worked well for a little while, but it just wasn't what I wanted."

"What *did* you want?"

"Well, I liked the camcorder because I could watch her anytime of the day. Even when she was out and about, I could get video of her doing things...rolling her eyes at the smokers who dropped their butts on the ground, smiling at the happy, little kids who happened to glance her way. And giving that little smirk and extra shake to her stride when she walked by some guy she found attractive. Yeah, taping her

was great, but the camcorder was stationary and if I left my place while she was at hers for some reason, I'd only get shots of her while she was directly in the camera's line of fire."

"Sounds, like a real problem," Munch said sardonically.

"It was. So, finally, I went out bought some of these really high-tech, motion-detector camcorders and stuff to store videos on and I went to work."

"What do you mean you went to work?" Fin said.

"Just what I said. I went to work...in her building. Her building's super looked like he needed a hand, so I bummed a job from him. Gave me complete access to the whole building, including her place. And, oh man. I have to tell you. It is one thing to see the place from across the street, but it is a whole other ball game when you're actually there. I mean, I could smell her in the air, in the couch cushions, in her bedroom, everywhere. It was amazing."

"What did you do in her apartment?" John asked slowly.

"I set up my cameras. I bought about a dozen of them and just positioned them all so that every single nook and cranny of her apartment was covered. That way I'd be able to see her anywhere she went. I even set one up to roll all the time in her hallway."

"And how long have you been taping Olivia?"

"Since early January 2002. It's weird..."

"What?"

"Back then, it seemed like such a strain, watching her all day that is, but now...now it's difficult to imagine a day without seeing her. It feels like my whole world is about to fall apart when I have to go without seeing her."

"Why would you have to go without seeing her?" John said, crossing his arms over his chest. "It's not like you have a job or something that keeps you from *watching* her."

Elliot felt his heart skip a beat. If Morse was the real deal he would know about Olivia going to work for the feds. If he messed up, Elliot could not wait to have him against the wall spilling whatever it was he *did* know about Olivia's disappearance.

"No," Morse said. "I don't have any other obligations aside from her." His expression grew somber. "But, she keeps doing things to throw herself out of my reach."

"Like what?" John asked.

"Like...how she's always leaving at 4am and, you know, I'm sleeping and then I wake up and then she's gone. And then, I'm watching a tape of her and I see her in her mirror putting Vitamin E oil on this red...wound on her neck and I have no way of knowing just what happened to her that day."

Munch glanced out the dark window behind Morse. They all remembered that day and he felt a slight wave of pity for the man who would have never known what had happened if Olivia had been a step closer to her quarry.

"And there was this past summer..." Morse said, his voice now quavering. "She just disappeared. She was there one day and I saw her packing up a bunch of bags and then she was just gone..." Morse let out a low breath. "Do you know what it's like to watch someone everyday of your life for four years and then all of sudden they're just gone?"

Munch nodded as if he actually understood, but he was far more preoccupied by the severity of what Morse had said.

They talk more with Morse.

He lets on that he knew that Liv left for Oregon.

They see that he's the real deal.

Elliot does a search on him for any arrests.

Morse was originally arrested for assaulting an officer a month after Olivia left.

He was later transferred to Bellevue because he would just lie in a ball screaming, "She's gone! She's gone!" and screaming for Olivia.

They finally get Huang who says basically that he's obsessive compulsive and that he's fixated on Olivia.

Cragen asks whether he'd hurt her, Huang says not sure.

Huang goes in to talk to Morse alone and Morse makes him for a shrink and he knows his name.

Huang asks how, but Morse says that he just knows.

George asks how long he's been this fixated on her.

Morse goes into the fact that she's not just beautiful physically, but throughout everything that makes up her personality.

Morse calls Liv his muse and the greatest person he'd never met.

George inquires more on what he did with the videos.

He just watched her. If she was where he could not follow, he'd watch tapes of her. You can learn so much about a person, by just watching them. You get to know them more completely than they know themselves. "Like, I know when Olivia's going to be late for work, just by how she falls into the bed the previous night, instead of actually getting into the bed."

George asks why he came in tonight.

Morse says because "his angel" is gone and he knew what happened to her.

George asks him to say what happened to her, but Morse starts to cry, so he asks why he didn't want to talk to Eliot about it.

Morse says that he's seen a fair share of men in and out of Liv's place and that they didn't all treat her the best, but Elliot was the worst one yet. He saw, how Elliot could make her feel so bad with just the slightest thing. And he hated him for it.

Cragen gets Casey in there while Elliot's talking to Morse.

She says they've got more than enough to get a warrant, plus extenuating circumstances.

Munch and Fin go off to talk to Olivia's building super.

He says he remembers Morse from a few years ago.

He said that he seemed to be down on his luck and just needed a gig for a little while.

Munch screams that he should have gotten background checks and everything.

That because of his negligence a cop is missing and could be dead.

The super, Joe Rhames, says that he knew of Morse, but that maybe the kid was trying to make it on his own.

He figured Morse came from a good family and probably didn't know the first thing about burglary.

He also figured that if any of the tenants complained, he'd bust the guy.

Munch is more than angry saying what would he have done if Morse had raped and murdered someone.

Fin tries to calm Munch down.

Munch says if something's happened to Olivia because of Morse, he was holding Rhames personally responsible.

Back at the house, George suggests that Elliot talk to Morse because he'd be the best one to make him spill what he really knew about Olivia.

Elliot gets him talking some more.

Elliot accuses Morse of being a plain, old stalker, but Morse says he's not a stalker, he just watched her and he wasn't the only one. But Morse glosses over the last part acting like what he said had not really mattered.

Morse gets into how he knows Liv better than Elliot did.

"Did you know that Olivia is a real musician? She plays the violin and the cello. That's when I realized just how special she was...when I heard her play Ava Maria on her cello. It was so soulful and brilliant....I admit, I didn't think some hot, New York cop could be capable of such...grace, but she threw me for a definite loop."

"You forgot the guitar," Elliot said, breaking Morse's reverie.

"Huh?" Morse said, eyes back to the present.

"The guitar. Stringed, musical instrument usually made of wood and used for music of the rock or country persuasion. She was trying to teach herself back when I first met her, but she gave it up after a while." An arrogant smile spread across Elliot's face. "Guess that was before your time with her."

"No, it wasn't," Morse corrected. "And no, I didn't forget and she didn't give it up either. She first put it away in storage along with the really expensive cello her mother got her for her 31<sup>st</sup> birthday. The last one she was alive for. Yeah, Olivia can play the hell out of just about any Hendrix song. And, there's a piano at this quaint bar in the village. I've heard her play a few times and she's quite good there to, but obviously, she doesn't get a lot of practice on it. Yeah, like I said...she's quite the musician."

Elliot sat silently frowning over this new revelation. As much as he did not want to show it, he was truly shocked about hearing about Olivia's other abilities.

"Did *you* know," Elliot began, "that she bites her lip and tilts her head to the left simultaneously when something confuses her?"

"I did!" Morse said eyes bright. "And not just when she's working. When she's watching Jeopardy or comes across something strange on her computer or when she's talking on the phone with that Maya girl and she says something off balance."

Elliot just stared at Morse wanting more than ever to just throttle him.

"Did you know the only magazines Olivia reads are those that Maya Shah throws her direction?"

"I figured as much," Elliot lied.

Morse should go into Olivia and her friends.

Maya is her *best* friend, while Jillian just wants to be Olivia's best friend and acts accordingly.

Sarah is spacey like Maya, but with some of the grace that only comes with age.

Morse should say things like they all looked so cute when they were younger at their spring breaks and what not.

Morse nodded. "Did you know her favorite colour's green be-"

"Because her mother's eyes were very green."

Morse nodded again. "Did you know when she cleans her apartment she blasts-"  
"Oldies music."

Morse smiled. "How 'bout when she has time to veg?"

Elliot paused. "It varies. Could be Stevie Wonder, could be Rascal Flatts. That's Liv."

"Did you know during her time of the month, she craves-"

"Coney dogs and McDonald's apple pie," Elliot interrupted. "Not homemade. Not store bought. *McDonald's* apple pie."

Morse beamed at Elliot.

"Look, Morse," Elliot said annoyance heavy in his voice. "If you wanna do this, at least gimme a hard one."

Morse just stared at Elliot simply grinning.

"You can't," Elliot said. "Can you, you bastard?"

Again Morse only sat grinning.

"Because you *know* that I *know* my partner better than anyone else in the-"

"Did you know that Olivia had a miscarriage a little more than two years ago?"

The shock that registered on Elliot's face resonated through both men. Elliot felt his mouth gape and Morse's laugh flowed through the room.

"That one good enough for you?" Morse said smiling.

"You're lying," Elliot said after a moment.

"Am I?" Morse said his eyes dancing. "You really want to think that, do you?"

"I know my partner."

"Obviously, you don't."

"And obviously, you're full of shit! Now, why don't you quit playing games and tell me where Olivia is!"

Morse held up his hands in mock fear. "Hey now, Mr. Detective. Don't want to get *you* too angry. Especially since I've seen what you can do when you're angry."

Elliot felt his stomach drop as he considered what Morse had said. What if he had seen...? He changed the subject quickly.

"I would move known if she was pregnant."

"*Obviously*, you didn't!"

Elliot glared at him, but Morse continued. "Don't suppose she ever told you about a guy named Jeremy Cross?"

Elliot continued to glare across the table at Morse.

"Yes, Jeremy," Morse said leaning back in his chair. "I wish I actually spoke to her back then. Maybe I coulda warned her or something. I mean, I saw her this one week where she probably forgot to take her pill...like five times. It was inevitable."

Morse glanced at Elliot expecting a response from him. Elliot sat, arms crossed, glaring back at Morse, who had decided to stand and slowly pace the room.

"And Jeremy," he continued. "He was about as dumb as they come. Only served one real purpose."

"What would that be?" Elliot said monotone.

"Come on, Detective! You know what's what. A single woman, living in New York in the prime of life. They all have a fuck buddy or two. Depending on the woman, sometimes three!"

"And Olivia?"

“Just the one. Just Jeremy....massive man. He had to be at least six-five. Easily two-fifty. Hung like a goddamn bull!”

Elliot just sat staring at the table. He did not know whether he should be angry or shocked.

“But he was a real idiot,” Morse rambled. “And she knew it. A few minutes after he was done, she was showing him the door....*if* she could stay awake afterward.” Morse took a long pause and sighed. “It kind of makes me wonder where the hell she found the guy. I mean he definitely was not the sort you’d meet....hell, I doubt he was even smart enough to find his way to the bar. No...it’s good that she didn’t have it. She’s better off.”

Elliot scoffed. “You think of Olivia having a miss...a miscarriage as a good thing?”

Morse shook his head. “If you’d seen the guy, you would agree. I never even met the guy, but I could tell he was a complete idiot. The way she looked at him too... there was a strong chance that baby would’ve been a real moron. Albeit very *good-looking*, but just as stupid as they come.” He paused noting Elliot’s stern demeanor. “What was fascinating is that I knew before she did. I saw that she missed her period, but she didn’t even seem to notice until another week went by and even then she didn’t believe it. Even when she started throwing up every other morning, she was in this state of denial or something. She kept looking at her calendar and counting the days up over and over again. It was kind of funny to watch that part actually.”

Morse let out a laugh. “Halfway through that second month, she came home with a little EPT test, but she just left it on her dresser, for like days. And I’m watching her, *knowing* that she had to see it each time she walked by. It’s like maybe she didn’t want to know or something. But, then she finally took it...and that look on her face...eyes squinting at the test thing, head cocked to one side, biting her lip slightly. I didn’t have to see it to know.”

Morse sat back across from Elliot who had spent the entirety of his story starting at the table.

“Then,” he continued in a loud, smug voice, “she runs out of the apartment and down to the...uh...corner shop a few blocks down our street. And it’s the middle of the night and I’m following her, freezing my ass off since she bolted so quickly, I only had time to grab a light jacket. I had no idea where she was going at that point, so I’m trying to watch, but trying not to be seen either and... Well, thank God she was so distracted because she practically ran into me on the way outta there and probably would have known I was following her too. But, yeah, so she buys, like five different types of these pregnancy tests and when she gets back home she sets up all five of them, at the same time! And she’s pacing back and forth the whole time waiting for them...Then, her timer goes off and she looks at the first one....throws it down, looks at the second one....throws *it* down. The third one, the fourth one....throws both down. Then the last one...she looks it, closes her eyes, leans against the wall and just slides down to the floor. It was the first time I’d seen her really cry.”

Morse shifted in his seat and gauged Elliot’s expression. The scowl that had set in Elliot’s face was accentuated by the finger-like, purple smudge that darkened the side of his face. The room felt warmer from only the angry heat emanating from the

seasoned detective. Morse shifted again and Elliot wondered vaguely how much he would be able to do to Morse before Cragen and the others came in take him off of him.

“Anyway,” Morse said after staring at Elliot for a long while. “She eventually got over the shock and then I knew she was going to keep it.”

“How’d you know?” Elliot said, no inflection to his voice.

“She kept walking around her apartment patting her stomach and then she would practice out loud what she was going to say to you. ‘Elliot, I’m pregnant.’ ‘Elliot...I’m pregnant.’ ‘Elliot, I have to tell you something.’ ‘Elliot, there’s something you really need to know.’ ‘Elliot, I don’t want you to think you have to treat me delicately or something, but...’ ‘I’m having a baby, Elliot.’ ‘You’ll never guess what!’ After she got her first ultrasound, she would be at her desk at home and take out the image. She would just stare at it with this little smile on her face and pat her stomach every once in a while.” Morse let out a long breath and shook his head. “And then...I’m still not quite sure what happened. I think some guy you all were chasing might’ve hit her or kicked her. It was just a rare chance that I’d been able to follow her across the city while she was taking down the guy. All I know was I saw her fall and hold her stomach. She was up again quickly though and took the guy down in another second. But, a few days later, she was in her hallway, walking off the elevator and she just....doubled over. She tried to keep walking, but this....pain looked like it ran over her and she just slid down the wall. That crazy neighbor across the way from her found her slumped on the floor.”

“You saw that she was hurt,” Elliot said, “and you did nothing?”

“No,” Morse said. “I was-”

“How long were you going to let her lie on the floor?”

“I *didn’t*,” Morse said leaning across the table. “When I saw what happened, I was about to run out the door for her when I saw her neighbor jump out in the hallway. I followed them when he drove her to the hospital. From what I could tell, all she kept saying was for them not to call anyone.”

“She didn’t want to anyone to know,” Elliot said monotone once again.

“She didn’t want *you* to know,” Morse said. “Not that way, at least. And...well, I wasn’t in the hospital with her, so I didn’t know how bad it was until the neighbor brought her home. She just slowly paced around the apartment holding her stomach for hours, until she finally leaned against a wall and just started crying. It was awful. I cried with her...” Morse sighed. “She’d been slightly showing even. I could see it when she got out of the shower. This slight curve in perfectly toned abs....I think it says a lot that you didn’t even notice anything. Not even a change in her personality.”

“Well, I think you had the advantage on me since I wasn’t the one stalking Olivia at the time,” Elliot said.

“I wasn’t *stalking* Olivia and I *you* have no right to judge *me*.”

“You know, you are so full of shit! You come here telling us you have information on Olivia and you’ve got nothing, but a bunch of made up stories!”

“Made up stories?” Morse screamed. “Who’s full of shit now? I gotta story for you detective: once upon a time a beautiful woman let her partner bully her to the

point where he thought he could get away with anything and when she stood up to him, he took her down the only way his feeble mind knew how!"

Elliot narrowed his eyes at Morse. "Tell me where she is, you sick bastard."

Morse just shook his head slowly.

"If she's somewhere..." Elliot said. "somewhere....hurt, so help me God, I will personally make you pay."

"Not before I make *you* pay."

"Enough with the games, you freak! Where is she?!"

"Look, you can call me a freak, a perv, a stalker or whatever. I don't care. But I'll be damned if I sit idly by when I know what's happened to her."

"You explain to me what happened and I'll make sure the same thing only happens to you a few times a week in prison instead of everyday."

He stares at Elliot and says, "I'll also be damned if I explain any of this to you."

"Tell me where she is?" Elliot says.

"Like I said, I'm not telling you anything."

"What happened to her?!"

"You tell me!"

Elliot slammed his hands on the table just as the door to the interrogation room opened with Don, Munch and Fin standing in the doorway.

"Morse, you remember Detectives Munch and Tutuola?"

"I do," Morse said, his eyes never leaving Elliot.

"They've a few questions to ask you," Cragen said. "And meanwhile Detective Stabler and I need to talk."

"Talk, eh?" Morse said. "Have a little talk. Have a little cover-up talk?"

"No one's covering up anything," Munch said.

"Like hell you aren't! Either you're all in on it too or you're all too thick to see what's going on. But the thing is, I don't think Olivia would work with such stupid people, so you all must be in on it!"

"No one's in anything 'cept you," Fin said.

Elliot and Cragen stepped out of the room, leaving John and Fin with a distracted Morse.

"Why'd you take me out again, Captain?" Elliot asked.

"It's not working," Huang said. "Olivia's the focal point of his life and he thinks you have something to do with her absence."

"I don't," Elliot said.

"But as long as he thinks you do, he won't be giving up anything regarding to Tuesday night to you."

Elliot shook his head. "He took her."

"We don't know that," Don said.

"You heard him in there! He's been stalking her for years! Probably planning this for just the right moment!"

"Alright fine," Cragen said. "We got his address and a warrant to search his place. Go to his apartment, Elliot. If he's been doing all that he's said he's done, we should find miles of evidence of it in his place."

"No," Elliot said. "I need to be here. I want to be here when he tells us what happened."

Cragen took a step toward Elliot so that both men were directly eye to eye. “*That’s* an order, Detective. I want you at Morse’s apartment executing this search warrant. If he’s done something to Olivia...I want as much evidence as possible.”

Elliot stared at his captain for a moment before sighing and moving in the direction of his coat.

“If Morse is here,” Huang said. “Then he’s probably covered his tracks at his apartment, too.”

Cragen sighed. “Do you have any idea if he’s involved?”

George shook his head slightly. “I don’t think he did anything to her, but he saw something. Something has set him off to think that Elliot’s the main player involved. If he’s been watching her all this time, he would have noticed anyone who was around Olivia. Old boyfriends, other cops. But he’s focused on Elliot as the one who’s hurt her. There’s something more to it and he *wants* to tell us. We just have to drag it out of him.”

Cragen felt his stomach turn. The crazy twenty-something in the interrogation room thought that Elliot was the one who had hurt Olivia and Don knew he had a mountain of evidence that pointed the same way. Every way he turned in this investigation, he kept running back into Elliot.

He ran a hand over his sparse scalp. His hope that Olivia would simply walk into the precinct having been off chasing a lead had long since vanished and the hope of finding Olivia alive was quickly fading as everything continuously pointed toward Elliot Stabler.

**Saturday Feb 3** (same chapter, but now onto different day)

([up to Feb 2](#)) ([down to next chapter](#)) ([down to Feb 4](#))

Around midnight, Elliot heads over to Morse’s place to execute the warrant.

His super says that Morse is a quiet guy who always paid on time and was always courteous, but every time he saw him, he was always moving in some kinds of electrical equipment.

Elliot is the first one through the door and his breath is knocked out of him when he and the team enter the place.

Every wall surface is covered with images of Olivia, many taken with a telephoto lens. Some in black and white, some sepia and some in color.

She’s all over the city in them, she’s laughing and smiling, she’s thoughtful or angry. He has a myriad of seemingly every facial expression she is capable of making.

Some of the pictures have Fin in them, a couple with Munch, but Elliot can see himself in scores of them. He and Liv eating lunch together, them in a car together, him driving her home, him just out of the photograph on the sides while the rest of the image was all Olivia. He even has pictures of other people taking pictures of her, like her past stalkers.

He felt afraid and sick, because he knew that Morse probably had hurt her and she was somewhere most likely dead while Morse paraded his charade in front of Munch and Fin.

They canvass the place and find stock piles of external hard drives with anywhere from 200 to 500 GB’s a piece.

He has layouts of her apartment and journals scattered every where.

His entries include her menstrual cycle, the last time she slept with Jonathan, the probability that the food in her fridge was decomposing, how many showers she'll take before she'll clean the bathroom and predictions on which Golden Oldies CD she'll listen to when she starts cleaning.

He has several computers with video editing equipment set up on them as well as a camera that is aimed directly at Olivia's apartment.

They go into his other rooms and find his "work." There are countless paintings and sketches of Olivia all in various stages. The one that faces his bed is absolutely beautiful; she has shorter hair and a stunning smile. The painting looks like a picture.

Elliot calls the captain and tells them that they have a real situation regarding Morse. Elliot eventually gets back to the house and Fin and Munch are still interrogating Morse.

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"And you still don't think you're a stalker?" Munch asked Morse leaning over the table at the narrow-eyed individual who he knew held their only information on Olivia's disappearance.

"No," Morse said. "No, I just followed her and watched her. You know a stalker has plans to ...do things. I just wanted to see her. I didn't even want to touch her or be with her. She was like my magical star. You can't hold it or touch it, but you can always gaze upon its beauty and worship it from afar."

"You're sick," Fin said his lips curling in a sneer.

"How am I sick?" Morse asked. His bright eyes were beginning to lose some of their vivacity and were becoming pink near the brim. "I just watched her and loved her from across the way. I've never laid a hand on her or wished an ill thought in her direction. Not one person in this precinct can say that about Olivia, no matter how hard they try or how long they've known her."

It was Fin's turn to slam his hands on the battered table separating the detectives from their perp. "Alright, why don't you just cut crap! Tell us where Olivia is!"

The pink along Morse's eye brims turned to red and he looked as though he were about to cry. "I...I should've known better. I underestimated him. I underestimated everything, and now she's gone because of it."

"Tell us," Munch said. "Where is she?"

"I went for a walk," Morse said softly. "She seemed like she was in for the night and I decided to go for a walk, thinking I'd be back by the time she went to sleep and I'd just catch up on the previous night during the day when she was here. Where I couldn't follow her."

"You're leading us through this bullshit again," Fin said. "Just tell us where she is. It's all we wanna know."

Morse gave Fin a weak smile. "I...underestimated everything. I thought I had enough room for the rest of the night, but...."

"But what?" Munch asked.

"When I came back home after an hour...I'd run out of room. Everything had stopped taping."

"Is that when you snatched her?" Fin said. "You broke in her place and took her because you didn't get to *watch* her that night?"

Morse's weak smile turned somber and he broke into a sob. "You don't understand. I didn't do anything. In her greatest moment of need, I went for a walk around the city....I went out for a walk and when I got back everything had stopped....and she was gone."

Munch and Fin were silent and watched together as a tear rolled gently down Morse's cheek.

"Don't you get it!" Morse said. "Of all the times in the world to take a fucking a walk, I did it then! The one time when it would've mattered the most!"

"Where is she?" Munch said.

Morse shook his head and loosened several more tears to make the trek down his face.

"When I came back....and saw that the cameras had stopped, I looked up and saw that she was gone. And I *knew*. I knew right in that instant that he'd done something to her."

"Who?" Fin said.

"Fuck who!" Morse screamed. "Him!" He pointed back at the two mirror behind which Elliot stood stoic and fuming.

Morse pulled a small disc out of his jacket pocket and slid it onto the table. The disc, about half the diameter of a normal DVD, glowed in the poorly lit room and all those present stared at it as if it were enchanted.

"I've...made copies," Morse said. "I made loads of copies of it, so I don't want to hear about any of this Blue Wall nonsense. I saw what went down that night and I'm here to make sure everybody knows about."

"You just said you went out for a walk and when you came back Olivia was gone," Munch said. "Which is it? Either you were there and saw what happened or you didn't."

"When I saw that she was gone, I rewound the last hour to see if maybe she just took a walk like I did. Imagine my surprise and horror when I saw that *he'd* been there." Morse nodded toward the mirror. "*He* knows where she is because...he attacked her."

"And you say you taped it on that disc?" Fin asked.

"Yeah," Morse said. "On this disc and the one I've got in my car and the five others I've got in my apartment. Not to mention the ones I've put in my safe deposit boxes and gave out to some friends of mine, all in just in case you people lose the one I brought...You see, I know what happened, and I want everyone here to know too. I need the world to see what he did to her."

Munch licked his lips never taking his off of Morse. "What makes you think that Detective Stabler has anything to do with her disappearance?"

Morse slid the disc toward Munch. "Watch it. It plays in any DVD player. It's all on there. Watch it and tell me you don't think he had something to do with this. That he didn't hurt her."

Elliot is tense and Cragen goes into the room.

"If you've got plans to air something like that, you're dreaming. The media's not going to air that especially with you here. And considering what my squad has just found at your place, you're in for the long haul."

"Oh," Morse said eyes slightly brighter. "You've seen my...uh...wallpaper."

"Yeah," Cragen said. "We saw it."

“Well, then you know I mean business.”

“I know you’re a sick freak with nothing better to do than stalk innocent people!”

Morse laughed. “Yeah, you’re one to judge who’s innocent. Anyways, once you watch that video, I want Detective Elliot Stabler arrested or else I guarantee you that tape will run.”

“And I’m telling you,” Cragen said, “you’re not releasing anything to the media.”

“Who said anything about the media?” Morse said, darkly. “I gave copies of that video to three friends who, if they don’t hear from me by 6am, will upload that video to the internet. The internet. And label it, “Cop Murders Partner, Caught on Tape.” It will spread like a virus and in less than a day, the whole world will know the little secret you’re trying to keep quiet about Detective Stabler. Now, I *know* you all have more than enough evidence against him and I want him arrested for murdering Olivia, *tonight!*”

Munch and Fin stare at Cragen who picks up the disc off the table and heads toward his office motioning for Elliot to follow.

Cragen turns on the TV in his office and puts the disc in the DVD player.

Before the disc starts, he shuts off the whole thing and turns to Elliot also sitting in his office.

“Is there anything that you want to tell me before we watch this?”

Elliot sighed and rubbed his hands across his face. “Olivia and I had an argument that night.”

“Just over the Drover file?”

“Yes. I wanted the file because....I was certain he was the guy that tried to solicit Dickie, and I wanted his file.” He paused. “I went over to Liv’s that night to get the file, because I knew she took it. She took it because she knew what I was about to do.”

“And?” Cragen said.

“And...we argued. And fought.”

“What do you mean fought?”

“Look! She yelled, I louder. She pushed me away and....I lost it. I grabbed her and pushed her against a wall. Her...her frames started falling down. She slapped me, we struggled for a bit. I pinned her toward the ground and I told her all I wanted was the Drover file, but she still wouldn’t give it up.” He paused again. “She struggled, she hit me twice in the eye and flipped me. She handcuffed me, left me on the floor and poured herself a drink. Then she tells me that....uh, this was the reason I couldn’t have the Drover file. Because she knew that I wouldn’t be able to control myself. After a little while, she uncuffed me and then I left. That was around 12:30 or so.”

Cragen, “Why didn’t you say something earlier?”

He shrugged. “Because.... I was ashamed and because she was fine. I had lost complete control and had wrestled her to the ground without another thought. When I saw myself in the mirror Wednesday morning, I saw exactly what I had done. But when I left she was fine. I walked out the door and she was perfectly fine. I figured that maybe she was still pissed and was...uh...going to take a personal day, before she came back in.” He shook his head and stared at the floor. “When I left her, she was fine.”

They are silent for a moment and then **Cragen plays the disc:**

The video is only on her apartment from the angle that shows her living room from the door.

They fast forward through most of the day.

Liv comes home and just lies face down her couch for about five minutes.

She calls Maya and they listen to the conversation about Elliot blowing up at her that day.

They talk about Jonathan and then Elliot some more.

Olivia wipes away some tears while on the phone.

She changes into pajamas; a tank deep purple tank and black pants.

She just allows herself to drop into bed.

Around midnight, there's banging on her door and they hear her walking carefully to the door.

Elliot barges inside.

They argue and Elliot grabs her arm.

She snatches it away.

They argue some more and Elliot slams his hand on her desk.

Her lamp crashes to the floor.

They softly argue, but begin to louder and louder.

Elliot pushes a finger into her.

Olivia pushes him back.

Then Elliot pushes her back over a series of words.

Olivia pushes him back, but he doesn't budge.

Elliot pushes her into her wall and her frames start crashing to the floor.

They talk softly for a bit and Elliot leaves.

Olivia goes to her desk and puts the Drover file into her lockable drawer.

As she's doing that Elliot comes flying back inside the apartment.

She throws the keys down into her cami bra and steps back with her hands up in a defensive position.

Elliot screams that he wants the file.

She says she doesn't have and that he should leave.

Elliot lunges at her grabbing her arms.

He grabs her arms and she screams.

They wrestle upright for a bit and end up knocking over her coffee table.

He finally wrestles Olivia to the floor.

They are rolling around all over the place and Elliot moves his hands all over her upper body in search of the keys.

They get to the glass on the floor and they both visibly cut themselves on the broken glass, it doesn't stop either of them.

They stop for a second both breathing hard.

Elliot is lying completely on top of her and is whispering something in her ear.

She elbows him hard into the stomach and he leaves up a bit.

She gets out from under him and then kicks him in the stomach.

She tries to scramble away from him.

Elliot gets his wind back and grabs her by the leg.

She struggles and he pulls her back to him.

He straddles her for a moment fully holding her down.

He's screaming that he just wants the file.

Olivia rolls over and is trying to scramble away from him again.  
He falls on top of her and he ends up grabbing her by the shoulders and then gets her in a head lock.  
Olivia's face scrunches as she grabs his arms and then the video goes to snow and then a blue screen.  
Cragen turns off the video and Elliot rubs his face again and stares at the floor.  
They see the video.  
Cragen is speechless and is trying to figure out what to say when there's a large commotion outside his office.  
Jonathan is screaming for Elliot and when he sees him, he starts going crazy.  
He lunges for Elliot screaming that he'd killed her and now he, Jonathan, was going to kill Elliot.  
They subdue him and get him to a room.  
Maya's been calling every ten minutes since the 10 o'clock news aired.  
She's in a panic over Olivia.  
Cragen asks her to come down and has her view Morse while he's still in the interrogation room.  
She nearly passes out. Morse is the guy she used to digitize all her tapes from her high school days and such.  
She thought it was kind of weird that he sort of sought her out and came to her requesting to do the digitizing.  
They look at each other wondering who's going to watch the videos they collected from Morse's apartment.  
Munch owns up and takes them. He and Morales get set up with the videos which are all dated on the cases.  
Huang watches too in order to discern maybe what it was about Liv that he focused on.  
The whole time Elliot is just in Cragen's office, replaying the video in his head.  
How could he have let it go so far She was his partner. How could he do that? And now Cragen thought he probably did something more to her.  
Cragen talks to Elliot about Warner's report.  
Elliot said there was glass on the floor and they both got scratched while they were rolling around on the floor.  
Cragen goes through everything they have on Elliot: The way they've been arguing lately; anger over the Drover case in general; the fact that he went to Liv's apartment by himself making it look bad because someone could argue that he had the time to clean up any evidence; the simple look of Liv's apartment when they get there; both his and Liv's blood on the floor; his refusal to let on about what had happened between them earlier in the week; and now they have a witness to what happened and a tape showing what happened.  
Cragen tells Elliot that they've convicted for less, far less.  
Elliot is silent.  
Cragen tells him that he's known both Elliot and Olivia for a long time, but his instincts tell him that a lot of things can happen between partners.  
Elliot reiterates that Liv was fine when he left. He ended up...throwing her against a wall and when he realized what he was doing, he let up immediately. She started

whaling on him in retaliation and he just let her. That's how he got bruised up, but he keep saying that she was fine when he left.

Cragen asks how could he let this get so out of control.

Elliot feels like he's about to cry. The pressure bearing down on him is almost too much to take.

(New chapter, still early Saturday Feb 3) ([up to beginning of Feb 3](#)) ([down to Feb 4](#))

Jillian comes in and she's losing it. She wants to know why she had to find out from the television that there was possibility that Liv met with foul play.

They are trying to calm her down and she's Cragen and Elliot talking and falls silent. She demands to be notified if there are any changes in the case and leaves.

Then Jonathan comes in soon after.

He is screaming about using every connection his family has to offer to fire each and every officer present unless somebody gives him some information on Olivia.

Cragen and Elliot come outside due to the disturbance and Jonathan eyes Elliot all bruised.

He starts screaming that Elliot did something to her. He has to be held down and it takes several officers to do it as he struggles, red faced, trying to get to Elliot. He calls him a bastard and screams that he just couldn't keep his hands off of her. They take down Jonathan and shove him in the lock up.

Cragen only stares at his detective as this is now the second person who's said that Elliot might have done something to Olivia and Jonathan hadn't even seen the video.

Everyone is staring at Elliot at that moment and there are even some whispers floating around about him.

Fin then comes out of the interrogation room where he'd been listening to Morse talk for the past few hours.

Fin reports that Morse was really off balanced. He talks as if he really worships Olivia and he seems to spend every waking minute thinking about her and ways that he can follow her without her knowing it.

He says that the dresses, wigs and makeup they found at Morse's place were all part of his scheme to look like different people while following Olivia.

Cragen tells Fin about the tape and Fin says that it didn't make sense since they'd all, but made up. He goes silent and Cragen asks what. Fin is quiet for another moment, but mentions that last week, Liv told him that she had helped Kathleen get some birth control and that Elliot nearly took her out that night.

Cragen sighs and shows Fin the tape and asks what he thinks now. Fin says he still doesn't know. Elliot was angry, but this was Olivia they were talking about.

Cragen asks if he thought that Morse had anything more to do with it, but Fin says the guy is just crazy, literally, for Liv.

The both go back in and talk to Morse.

Kathy calls Elliot at the precinct. She said that she just saw what happened and needed to make sure that he was okay. Elliot asks why so late, but Kathy said she wrestled with the idea of whether or not it was her place to even call. Elliot says everything's fine, but just try to make it so the kids don't see it.

They talk to Morse again.

He says he wants to know when Elliot will be arrested.

Cragen says he thinks someone's doing a great frameup job on Elliot and that someone like Morse would be the perfect guy to do it, since he's someone with limitless means and time to set it up.

Morse says that he had nothing to do with it and that they were wasting time because it was getting closer and closer to 6am.

Cragen begins to interrogate, hoping that Morse would spill on something.

The only thing he gives up is that Elliot nearly tried this same thing last Friday and he'd caught all of that fight. This one he'd missed only to have it go to snow so that he could not have irrefutable proof of what Elliot did with her because he was certain that he'd murdered Olivia.

Morse talks about how he set up the camera immediately after he saw he'd run out of tape and then found that Olivia was gone.

When he rolled back the tape there had only been six minutes between the time the tape had run out and the time that Liv was taken from her apartment.

Cragen notes this and goes in to see Munch and Huang watching Liv's videos. They'd been watching from back several weeks ago in awe of how well he managed to tail her and how often he managed to do it. There were even a couple times when he came right up to the precinct.

He tells them to find the tape of the 30th and of the 31st.

They skip through the day and they get to the part where Elliot attacks and he notes the time.

They view the next box and it begins just six minutes afterward.

This means that Olivia disappeared from her apartment in just six minutes.

They continue watching the tape and Cragen gets some relief from the tension in his stomach.

He sees Elliot enter the apartment on Tuesday.

Elliot has a look around the place and looks generally concerned that Liv isn't there.

Cragen knows that this is genuine since Elliot had no way of knowing he was taped.

He sees Elliot spot Liv's keys in the place by her door and tells them to stop the tape.

This means for certain that the door was locked from the outside, but Liv's keys were on the inside.

The door was locked by someone who had a copy of Liv's keys.

They find the previous Friday and see what Morse had just said about Elliot and Olivia fighting.

They also see Jonathan and Olivia arguing about an hour before Elliot arrived.

Cragen storms in to see Jonathan in the drunk tank.

Jonathan demands to be released since he didn't do anything wrong.

Cragen said he would probably be charged with assault if he did not cooperate.

Cragen asks where were the keys that Olivia gave him to her place, taking a chance that she most likely did.

Jonathan says they're in his coat pocket.

Cragen and Fin take him into an interrogation room.

Jonathan says the whole thing's ludicrous and that they should be looking at Elliot for this.

Cragen goes in saying that Jonathan probably never liked Liv's partner so it was easy to try to blame him and when Olivia dumped him, perhaps it was just too much for him to take.

Jonathan admits that he was trying to be the man of the relationship by not calling her over the weekend and it turned out to be the longest weekend of his life.

He just wished that he could apologize for being an ass about everything and that if they could just find her and find her quickly he would do anything or say anything for them.

Cragen grills him a little harder, sending a few other detectives to nail down Jonathan's alibi.

Jonathan dissolves into a ball of tears saying that if he could just see her, he would tell her how sorry he was. He loved her so much and surely they knew what it was like to be around her.

It gets close to 6am and they're all exhausted.

Cragen sends Elliot home, not officially suspended, but he knew things would be better if Elliot was not working Liv's case.

Cragen also has some uniforms sit on Elliot just to make sure he hasn't done anything.

Morse says that all they have to do is arrest Elliot and he'd call off the viral spread.

Cragen says that he sent Elliot home because he knew his detective and he knew Elliot was not involved.

Morse says that he can see it in Cragen's eyes that he didn't believe it and he knew Elliot was guilty.

Cragen says that Morse can't see shit, but Morse guesses that Cragen probably had Elliot followed by a few other detectives...just in case.

As Cragen muses on this, Morse looks at his watch and says that 6am is his favorite time of the day and he speaks on what Olivia would normally be doing on a Saturday at 6am and he trails off into the next section.

Go into Olivia (don't specify date and time--> call it Unknown Date and Time):

She's lying on something hard, either a board or maybe just floor.

She can't focus her eyes through the darkness of her surrounds.

She can barely breath and she feels like she's wheezy.

She feels sick and utterly groggy and she has no real control of her motor functions.

She does not know where she is, but she knows something isn't right.

She hears noises which are actually voices.

One sounds somewhat familiar, but the other touches a chord in her soul.

She tries to move, but her eyes keep rolling backward.

She feels like she's drugged.

She manages to get an arm slightly forward and then just starts calling out his name.

"Eh...Eh...El.." She eventually stammers out "Elliot" after several tries and that is the end of the chapter.

### **New chapter; still Feb 3**

Cragen gets some sleep on his cot.

He gets awakened when Jonathan's lawyer arrives around 9am.

He threatens litigation, but Cragen says he was out of control over Olivia and they haven't ruled him out as a suspect yet.

Huang tells Cragen there's something special about Morse's videos. They are all edited. Anytime there's any nudity, the video flickers and moves up anywhere from several seconds or several minutes. He's beginning to think that Morse really did not physically want her. The probability was very low that he was the one who took her. Cragen gets kind of angry. With Morse down and Jonathan about to come up with a stellar alibi, it left them back at Elliot. He wonders whether Morse's threat was real; if he really had people upload the video. As he's thinking this his chief/deputy inspector Kelly comes in saying that the case should be handed over to Missing Persons or they should at least let them lead the case. Cragen refuses and says that she's *his* detective. The deputy director says that while he knows the SVU has their concerns over the detective, they still have a job to do. Cragen says that she's been missing for five days and they've reason to believe there's been foul play. He can't believe that the inspector wants him to back off and demands an explanation. The deputy inspector pulls out a folder. He says it's come to his attention that blood was found in her apartment. It was both Olivia's and Elliot's. He threatens that hiding this information is the kind of violation that breaks careers and cuts pensions. He also says that he'd rather the media not get a hold of this information, in order for them to thoroughly conduct their investigation. Cragen says he kept it all under wraps because he had...*has* faith in his detective and did not want the information leaked to the media either. The deputy inspector also mentions that a video has been circulating the internet; found by computer crimes this morning. This video depicts Detective Stabler attacking his partner over several minutes and it goes to snow when he takes her down and it fades saying that the viewer could easily make up his own mind on what happened. Cragen is speechless. Inspector says that he heard it on good authority that they could've stopped this video from leaking. Cragen says the guy who brought it to their attention was certifiable and still in here and not reliable. Inspector says that he wants Elliot suspended while this investigation continues and he demands that the case be worked jointly with Missing Persons. He says that he's more than displeased by every mistake that the SVU has made in this investigation and if this turns into a homicide, he would hate to have to relieve him of his command.

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Elliot lied awake on his couch just staring up at the ceiling. He hadn't gotten any sleep and all his thoughts were on Olivia. What had happened to her? If it was Morse, he should have cracked by now. There was no telling if it was Jonathan. That smug bastard had the means to do such a thing.

He really thinks about that night and how angry he was.  
How on Earth could he have put a hand on her? She was his partner. He didn't realize that even he could get that angry.  
Then there was Cragen and the squad. While Fin still seemed to be undecided, Cragen and Munch had all, but decided that he was responsible.  
Since he was demanded off the case, there was now no way to clear himself.  
At any hour such as this, he needed Olivia more than he'd ever needed her.  
He cursed himself for all the times that she came to his aid, but he just pushed her away.  
How he longed for her to just be by his side when it seemed like anyone he could even begin to trust had turned away from him.  
He feels his stomach aching, but he does nothing to stem the pain.  
He wants to get up and do something anything, but he can't even get his focus off of Liv for long enough to stand for more than a minute.  
He hears the phone ring, but he does nothing about it.  
When sunlight reaches his eyes where he lies on the couch, he feels himself sinking further into a depression. He can't even spend anymore time with his children because they'll ask why he's not working and he didn't want to have to lie to them.  
The phone rings again. It's Cragen who asks to meet him in the park.  
They meet and Elliot asks why not at the house.  
Cragen says that Elliot's suspended for the time being with pay. He didn't want to bring him back in with all that's going on.  
Elliot asks what's up.  
Cragen says that many of the officers know that it's his blood mixed in with Liv's in her apartment and Morse made good on his threat to show the video.  
They were already getting reports at the precinct about it and it was probably going to run on the news.  
It would just be better if he stayed away for a while.  
\*\*\*\*\*  
Munch is back at the precinct and gets up from taking calls about Olivia.  
Distant relatives from all over the country are calling in.  
Maya shows up crying asking if they'd found anything more. Munch doesn't have anything to tell her.  
Munch reviews Olivia's messages on her desk phone and she has seventeen all from Evelyn Rivers.  
She is sounding increasingly agitated.  
Around 3pm, the amount of calls escalates significantly due to the video being spread to venues like YouTube and MySpace.  
\*\*\*\*\*  
Elliot took a long drive, with his cell turned off, and when he gets home, his phone is ringing.  
It's Kathy and he can hear Kathleen screaming, "Mom! Call him again! You have to talk to him!" in the background.  
Kathy's afraid because Kathleen just showed her this video of he and Olivia.  
She asks gently if there's anything she can do.  
Elliot asks if she even wondered if he was responsible.

Kathy is silent and then says that she knew he could get angry sometimes and it was probably just a culmination of the past few weeks.  
He says thanks, but he hears a struggle and then Kathleen is on phone screaming.  
"Dad! What did you do! You didn't hurt her, did you? I told you last week, I came to *her* about the pills! Please tell me I'm not seeing what I saw in that video!"  
He spends a little while longer trying to console Kathleen, before going out to meet her.  
She's completely distraught, but he manages to tell her what happened.  
She believes him, but was just so scared by what she saw.  
She then asks what happened to her.  
Elliot says he doesn't know, but he knows they'll find her and she'll be fine.  
Kathleen says that she hopes so.

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Maya comes back in again asking if they've anymore information on her friend.  
She's distraught and she'd been talking to Jonathan who thinks that Elliot is somehow involved.  
They finally manage to calm her down and then Munch and Cragen begin to talk to her.  
"Maya," Cragen says as sternly and sincerely as he can manage at the same time. "We are talking to everyone in Olivia's life. If you have "any" information, anything at all....We need to know everything that you know, even if it seems small and trivial. We need to know it."  
Maya sat there with her mouth gaping and tears beginning to form in her eyes. "I...I talked to Livia that night."  
"Okay," Cragen said intensely. "What time?"  
"I called her 'bout...maybe nine-thirty?"  
"Are you sure," Munch said. "You need to be sure of the time."  
"I...I don't know. It was kind of late....Nine-thirty...maybe closer to ten?"  
"All right, what did you talk about?" Munch asked.  
"Nothing. J-just stuff."  
"Stuff?" Munch said raising his voice in frustration. Maya was proving to be far less helpful than he was wanting and he knew time was pressing. "What kind of stuff? You need to be specific."  
Maya started breathing hard as her tears were brimming at her eyelids. "I don't know! Just...stuff. Things we always talked about. Our other friends, me not working, her job, Jonathan, her partner...."  
Maya trailed off and she began to shake as the tears which had been threatening had finally begun to fall.  
"What is it, Maya?" Cragen asked.  
"Liv...we just talked."  
"What were you going to say?" Munch asked in full interrogation mode.  
Maya sniffed and ran her fingers through her hair.  
"Livia was...," Maya took a deep breath.  
"What?" Munch said impatiently.  
Maya was beginning to hyperventilate. "She said she was scared."  
"Of what?" Cragen asked, his voice now filled with Munch's impatience. "Of who?"  
Maya put her forehead in the palm of her hand and started to cry.

"Maya, please," Munch said, this time calmer, as if speaking to rape victim. "We need to know what you and Olivia talked about."

She raised her head, her face now completely tear-streaked. She could not look either detective in the eye, feeling that if she did, the tears would just continue spilling over her face. "Livia said," she spoke slowly and hesitated, "she was scared about what her partner was gonna do once he found out that she took some file."

Munch and Cragen took a quick glance at one another.

Cragen spoke first. "You're telling me Olivia said she was afraid of Elliot?"

"Ye...N-no," she said crying again. "I mean she wasn't *afraid* of Elliot. It's...it's just that this case she's on...She said she took this...file. She took it because Elliot was...I don't know...going about the case wrong or something."

Both officers were silent and Maya's eyes grew wide. She started breathing harder, feeling that she'd said too much. "But, I *know* Livia... *and* Elliot. I mean she said she was scared, but it was like a figure of speech or something. I mean she wasn't *actually* scared, you know-"

"Maya," Cragen said. "We need to know exactly what was said. As it stands right now, you were the last person to talk to Olivia before she disappeared."

"What about Elliot?"

Cragen and Munch shared glances again and Maya continued. "I mean I....I saw part of that video. It was on YouTube. Fucking YouTube. Some stupid site for teenie boopers. It wasn't even on the news."

"So, you understand why we need you to be honest and specific," Munch said.

"Look," Maya said, trying to regain her calm. "I know what she said that night, but she didn't really mean it. Okay, yes. She did say that she was scared of what Elliot was gonna do when he found out about that file, but she didn't mean it like she was scared for her life or something! She said it...in like jest or some shit! Okay, look I know both of them and I know he wouldn't actually hurt her and I know for damn sure that she wouldn't go out without a fight. I mean, if he really did try to hurt her, he wouldn't be standing, okay? There's just no way!"

Cragen nodded at Maya, not in agreement, but with a finality of the questioning. Munch set back in his chair and sighed.

Maya was now crying again and she continued looking between the officers in front of her. "Please," she said. "Look, I know it sounds bad for Elliot, but he....he's a good guy. Whatever was happening on that video...I don't know what was up, but...I'm telling you, regardless of what Liv said to me, he wouldn't have really hurt her. I mean what does Elliot have to say about it?"

"Detective Stabler is saying just what you're telling us," Cragen said.

Maya sniffed and smiled slightly while nodding. "See...he...we...I." She paused trying to find the right words. "Look, I know that something happened to her, but I'm telling you, Elliot didn't have anything to do with it."

"You do realize that your statement says otherwise," Munch said.

"Yeah...okay, yeah. But, I've known Olivia Benson for over thirty years. If there's anyone who knows her, it's me and I'm *telling* you, if she really thought that her life was in danger because of Elliot she wouldn't have just calmly said it on the phone....she'd have had her gun out and she'd be meeting him head on. Okay? I

told you what we talked about on Tuesday because it was the truth, but I promise you, it's not what sounds like."

Munch and Cragen tell her that they are actually relieved that she could believe this especially since she'd already seen the video.

Morse starts demanding a lawyer when they officially charge him with voyeurism and Casey manages to help them trump it up to terrorism.

His attorney, is his grandfather's, and gets Morse committed instead back to Bellevue, where the judge orders him to stay for the voyeurism and stalking, but dismisses the terrorism charge.

The news airs that the jury selection for Kreider's case has begun and then they say that one of the lead detectives on Kreider's case is currently under investigation for his partner's disappearance.

They show the video and the calls start coming in ridiculously.

Cragen gets a call from the police commissioner who isn't pleased.

Morales and Fin have been watching the vids, Fin to take a "break" from the phones, and they come up with someone else to investigate. One Matthew Williard, but they don't know who he is yet.

Fin goes over to Elliot's and ask if they know who he is. Elliot tells them it's Matt Williard, a guy Olivia dated for about a month. Elliot asks what the problem is and he shows him the video of Williard actually slapping the crap out of Olivia.

Fin and Elliot go see Morse at Bellevue.

Morse is in terrible shape. He is just shaking by the window when they see him.

He freaks at first when he sees Elliot, but eventually he calms down when Fin tells Elliot to go outside and tells Morse that if he really believed that Elliot was responsible they would need some proof on the situation.

Morse tells them more about Williard and Olivia and how he could not believe that Olivia had let him hit her on those six occasions.

Fin asks about Tuesday and how sure he was about the time.

This means indefinitely that Liv was taken within six minutes.

Fin and Elliot also get out that Morse had put in exactly twelve cameras all around the apartment.

Three detectives from Missing Persons come to the house.

Munch, Fin and Cragen are all immediately on the defensive.

Cragen brings them up to speed.

Munch and Fin go through Liv's apartment and find all the cameras.

They find fifteen of them, but Fin tells them that Morse only put in twelve.

Cragen says that he probably just forgot about the others.

Fin takes a lot of the tapes of Liv to Elliot.

He says that even though Elliot's technically suspended, they need his help and the people from Missing Person's don't know enough about Liv to make the correct assessments.

Elliot thinks about the events of the past day.

He'd received several calls from other cops and two of his brothers.

He doesn't want to talk to anyone about it and is wondering how long before he'll have to get an IAB lawyer.

He realizes that he's just as fixated on her as Morse.

Elliot spends the rest of the night watching Olivia on the tapes.  
The tapes look edited like Fin said they were, but he notices the little idiosyncrasies that Morse had talked about in Liv and for the first time in days he feels slightly at peace.  
He can understand why Morse was in the situation that he was at the hospital. He'd been without working beside Olivia for just five days. God knows what he'd be like if he spent every single second of his day focused upon her.

\*\*\*\*\*

Liv:  
She feels like she's being moved.  
She can feel the cold air.  
Some people are around her.  
She feels like she knows the smell of one of them.  
They are arguing.  
She wants to reach out and defend herself, but she can't move.  
She feels a sharp pain in her neck and everything goes black.  
End chapter and day.

#### **Sunday Feb 4 ([up to other chap in Feb 3](#))**

Elliot does not go to church; the first time since he could remember.  
He sees outside there's a media zoo outside his apartment.  
His door is banging and the doorbell is buzzing.  
He just turns up the tv channel  
The preacher is one of those charismatic preachers with one of those super churches.  
Elliot lies on the couch listening to the preacher go on about Cain killing his brother out of anger. How we have to wonder what that anger was like and how it drove him, Cain, literally out of God's light.  
Elliot feels more than annoyed.  
He's hungry, but he hasn't gone shopping for groceries since Kathleen was around the past weekend.  
He gets a call and notes that it is Maureen.  
She's crying on the phone and wants to know why he hadn't told her.  
He said he wanted to keep her from knowing for as long as possible.  
She asks the question and assures her too that everything will be okay.  
He continues watching the videos.  
He's amazed by all the things the camera catches.  
The looks and the gazes between he and Olivia.  
He notes Liv pacing around the place, and then dressing and heading out the night Valerie Sennett died.  
He wondered vaguely how their daughter was doing.  
He wondered if she'd seen the story and if it had affected her further.  
As he comes loser to the vid of Tuesday she was taken.  
He's concerned about Philip.  
Philip had made a call from his house on hour before 12:30, but Elliot never really liked that alibi.

Philip is seen hovering around the building, but he does not look like he's visiting his mother.

One night his mother walks by, but he continues to wait outside.

He ends up following Olivia up to her apartment.

The next vids are from inside Liv's place and inside the hall.

The two of them argue and Liv throws him out.

Elliot tries calling Cragen, but the line is busy several times.

He dresses and heads out the door.

He's followed by a barrage of reporters spouting out question.

Does he wish to give a statement on Olivia Benson? Did he kill her? Where's the body? What about Jeffrey Drover? Is he involved? How do you think this will affect your career?

He gets downstairs and the media's hounding him even further.

He gets out the back door and to his car.

He goes to the house and everyone's staring at him.

Jonathan is there and he actually gets to Elliot and they fight for a bit, but the other cops break it up.

Elliot tells Cragen that they should look further at Fitzgivens.

Cragen tells him they're already on it and asks how he's doing.

Elliot says that he's practically homeless because of the media at his house.

Cragen says that the deputy inspector is forcing him to make a statement in regards to Elliot.

Elliot is silent for a bit before asking what they'll say.

Cragen says just the truth: that they have other suspects and several theories of the case and that there's some evidence including the video that goes against and supports Elliot.

That Elliot had explained precisely what happened on the video prior to any detective watching it. He has been showing the cooperation and the honesty completely becoming of the NYPD.

That yes, he has been suspended with pay for the time being and that he, Cragen, expected that Elliot would be assisting them with Olivia's case in a few days.

Elliot leaves; Munch avoids eye contact and avoids Elliot in total.

He asks Fin what's up.

Fin says that it's not that Munch thinks he did it, but he's just frustrated that they don't have any other leads and Elliot was not immediately forthcoming about what had happened.

Elliot walks by his desk on his way out.

He checks his messages.

Evelyn Rivers has called a dozen times because Olivia still hasn't been by and she saw something on the news Olivia's missing.

Elliot tells her he's coming to see her.

\*\*\*\*\*

Munch and Fin go see Philip Fitzgivens.

They grill him pretty hard, but he's not cooperative.

He keeps saying that he was nothing, but nice to her and she still turned him down flat.

They say that his alibi is shaky and that anyone could have made that call from his apartment.  
He insists that he didn't do anything to her and that he wouldn't.  
They look up everything on Philip, but he's very boring.  
Fin suggests they talk to Elliot about whether or not Olivia had said anything about Philip having any stalking behavior.  
Munch says no, because Elliot already told them to talk to Philip and would have mentioned it if there was anything more to it.  
He dodges the media and gets to her half way house.  
At first, they won't let him through.  
He shows a badge and they let him through, but he hears the comment as he walks by, "hey isn't that the cop who just killed his partner?"  
He goes to see her and she's just sitting in the corner crying.  
She's scared and she thinks that he's going to kill her.  
Elliot asks what else she knows about Olivia.  
Evelyn starts panicking saying that she knew Micah would do something.  
She starts sobbing that he killed her and how he was going to care for her.  
Elliot tries to reassure her that Micah Diorel was in jail when Olivia went missing.  
He hugs her and lets her cry on his shoulder still crying that Micah's about to kill her.

\*\*\*\*\*

Liv:

She wakes up groggy.  
At first she's unaware of her surroundings and everything's black.  
She starts feeling utterly cold.  
She shivers and rolls.  
She's on a cement floor.  
Her eyes start to adjust to the dark a bit.  
She can see shapes moving in the darkness.  
She calls out, but the shapes move away from her.  
She tries to move, but the cold makes her ache.  
She moves her legs, but she feels that she's attached to something.  
She moves her hands down her legs to her feet and feels cold metal.  
From what she can feel there's chains around her legs.  
She moves around more and feels that she's chained to some kind of pole.  
She feels along the pole until she touches a cold, wet wall.  
She manages to stand after much strain and feels along the wall.  
She starts feeling around trying to see if there was a place to lift the chains.  
She has a coughing fit.  
She knows she's sick from the cold and she's only wearing pajama pants and a tank top.  
She starts shaking, but feels along the wall again in the dark when she hears breathing from behind her.  
She looks out in the darkness and asks who's there.  
A deep voice says she's here to stay.  
She takes a step forward toward the shape she sees in the darkness.  
She hears something coming through the air and she feels a hard smack across her face.  
Her head slams backward into the wet, wall and everything goes black.

## Monday Feb 5

Elliot wakes up in the motel room he'd checked into feeling very cold. He thinks of Olivia and has a gut feeling that wherever she was, someone was hurting her. He felt his chest catch when thought about what he'd do if...no *when* they found her, someone had raped her.

He knew that he'd give the media a real reason to trail him and use their headlines of the cop who lost it and murdered someone.

He watches the television and the biggest new story is Olivia.

They play some of Cragen's speech on the case and on Elliot.

He feels slightly relieved, by Cragen's support, but he can't get over the fact that there's not much else he can do except watch these tapes.

He talks to Evelyn Rivers a while longer just to keep her stabled.

He'd brought the videos with him on his laptop.

He'd watched that Tuesday more times than he could remember and he still could not figure out how he'd allowed himself to let it get so far.

As he watches again, he realizes that since the tapes are so edited, there have to be originals somewhere.

He gets out and heads off to the house.

\*\*\*\*\*

At the house, loads of calls are still coming in, but nothing is resulting in anything.

They are getting calls about Olivia being seen anywhere from in Texas to as a ghost in her apartment.

Psychics are appearing on talk shows and such saying that Olivia is dead and outside of this plane of existence. One talk show has four psychics each claiming that Liv is dead, but there is still something unresolved in her soul. One suggests that maybe it has to do with the fact that she was a detective in life and cannot rest until the cops find her killer. Another suggests that perhaps she has something unresolved with her former partner. The third, the oldest, suggests that it is something between the two suggestions that there is unresolved tension with her partner going back to her murder. The third suggests that she was killed by her partner; that Olivia's spirit contacted her and told her what had happened and that she knew where the body was buried if the NYPD wanted to contact her....for a small fee.

Jillian comes in the house and gives her speech on Maya and Elliot.

Munch has long talk with her and she just dissolves to tears because it's been a week and they've nothing more on her.

Elliot tells them about the other tapes, but they're too bogged down with physical leads they have to knock down first before they chase more videos.

\*\*\*\*\*

Elliot goes to his old house. The kids are so happy to see him.

Kathy tells him that Kathleen was depressed and in her room because kids at school were calling her father a murderer.

Elliot tries to talk to Kathleen, but she's crying.

She says she's just worried because it's been a week and no one still knows what happened to her.

Elliot just says that he's worried too and that he knows that when they find her, she'll be fine and she'll have a story that will captivate them.  
Kathy asks Elliot if he wants to spend the night and he does on the couch.

## **Tuesday Feb 6**

Munch and Fin start chasing down any lead that comes in.  
Cragen starts using some more junior detectives to help aid in their actual SVU cases.  
Mark comes in and says that he feels the need to come forward.  
He says that Elliot could not be responsible for Olivia's disappearance.  
He says that he was home that night and remembers the disturbance coming from Liv's place, but he distinctly remembers hearing Elliot's footsteps leaving her apartment and getting on the elevator.  
Mark blames Adam Jackson who he'd seen around the building and seen checking out Olivia more than usual.  
They run a report on him and they find nothing.  
They go see him and he takes offense that they think he, a black man, had anything to do with a white woman's disappearance.  
Cragen asks for Elliot to come back to help them out.  
They are swamped from both Olivia's case and their own case load.  
Munch and Elliot speak for the first time in days and they talk about Mark.  
Elliot says that he remembers Jackson from the videos, but he wasn't sure if he had anything to do with Olivia.  
Elliot and Munch go see Morse who's doing a bit worse.  
They ask him about Adam Jackson and Morse flies into a rage.  
He asks why were they going after someone who just flirted with her on occasion when the guy who took her was still out there.  
He makes an innuendo that that guy was standing in front of him.  
Cragen uplifts the suspension on Elliot only after he lets Huang talk to him.  
Huang and Elliot have a lengthy conversation that ends up with Elliot saying he just wished he had a chance to tell Olivia exactly how much she meant to him.  
He ends up crying because she's his best friend and really his confidant and now she's gone.  
He had told her that all he had was her and the job and he'd lost both.  
He literally lost everything that he needed to survive and didn't know how he was going to make it if they found her murdered.  
Huang clears him and says that he truly feels that Elliot is not responsible for Olivia's disappearance.  
Elliot goes over Morse's background again.  
He finds that he has a controlled air storage unit near Central Park.  
He, Munch and Fin go and they brace themselves for what they are about to see.  
All three think that they're going to find Olivia there and no one wants to open the door at first.  
They open the place and all they find is thousands and thousands of hard drives.

Cragen assigns detectives Jessica Browning and Andrea Cooke to watch the tapes because none of the other detectives feel comfortable watching *everything* there was about Olivia.

They make a new chart.

Micah Diorel is off the list. He's being sent to prison for three years in combination of the assault and also the battery on Evelyn.

Morse, Kreider, Drover, Fitzgivens.

Cragen says that they have confirmation on Jonathan Halloway's alibi so they cross him off the list.

They also nail down Adam Jackson's alibi.

They talk to Drover again, now sober and he says that he didn't hurt anyone and he would least of all hurt Olivia since she was the only one who even pretended to hear him when he said he didn't do it.

Kreider's still on trial.

They go see him.

He says he couldn't've killed Olivia, because she was not to be killed. She would have behaved unlike the boys.

He also says he doesn't understand why the DA won't take a plea.

Elliot tells him that he wasn't getting a plea because he was going to spend every minute of the rest of his life in prison instead of some 25 to life deal.

They nail down Kreider's alibi and Morse's as well.

### **Wednesday Feb 7**

They focus on Fitzgivens and nail down his every movement for the past week.

They get a warrant on him and search his place.

There's no sign of Olivia.

Evelyn Rivers continues calling, but Elliot has to rush her off the phone when he remembers something.

Elliot remembers the six-minute gap.

He tells the others that there were six minutes between the end of the tape and when the next one started.

He says that he and Olivia wrestled for maybe five minutes altogether and there's four and half full minutes of them going at it on tape.

Elliot says there's maybe another minute before she lets him and he leaves.

Olivia, they realize, disappeared within a four-minute gap.

They get a warrant to search her floor, but not the whole building. If Olivia disappeared in four minutes, that means she had to go somewhere in her building.

Per Munch, they start with Mark who is hesitant at first but finally agrees.

They find some of her hairs in his apartment, but he keeps saying that she's his neighbor and that there could be a thousand reasons for why her hair is in his apartment.

Liv: fends off the potential rapist in the dark.

### **Thursday Feb 8**

They do some searching on Mark. He does a computer job that does not make him leave his apartment at all.

They bring Mark in and they say that he needs to say what's up.

They say they have a match on Mark with some of the prints found in Liv's place, but he keeps saying that they've been neighbors for years and that he could've left them at any time.

They tell Mark not to leave the city.

They are well into making their case for Mark.

He was actually on the phone with a phone sex girl at the time of Olivia's disappearance.

They are about to talk to the phone sex girl when Cragen tells them that they've found another boy matching Kreider's MO.

Ryan Daly is found in the same part of town with no witnesses.

He is twelve years old and has been killed in the same manner as Kreider.

(Olivia should have had a file of either Jacob or Connor or one of the others; Mark should have stolen this at one point)

### **Friday Feb 9**

They talk to Ryan Daly's parents, but the major change was that he was a loner.

He did not play any sports or had any relation whatsoever with Drover or Kreider.

They are stumped on this one because Kreider's details had been splayed all over the place and anyone could be a copycat, since Kreider's been in prison this whole time.

Casey tells them Kreider's lawyer is demanding that his case be dismissed.

He wants to prove that Kreider didn't even do the original murders.

Melinda proves that Kreider's DNA was a match to the originals, but not Ryan Daly.

Cragen divides them into two teams: one for the new murders and one still on Olivia.

The media circus shifts its focus off of Olivia and onto Kreider since she was one of the cops who had put him away and now his MO is appearing again.

Fin and Munch are to work the Ryan Daly case while Elliot, partnered up with Jessica Brown, is to continue working Olivia's case.

Elliot and Jessica run down every lead they can get on Mark, but he's so solitary they've got nearly nothing on him.

Apparently the only person who knew him best was Olivia which, according to Maya, wasn't that well.

Olivia's Aunts Sylvia and Sabrina, as well as one of her older cousins, Allison, appear at the house wanting to know about the case.

They know that they are her only real family and that they need to know that her case is still being worked and that they don't give up on her.

Elliot tells them that the cops have no intention of giving up on Olivia's case, but he doesn't mention that they are quickly running out of any types of leads.

The aunts have nothing more to give, but let Elliot know that they'll be paying special attention and that they don't want to find out anymore devastating information about Olivia from the news.

Elliot promises to keep them in the loop.

He has to calm down Evelyn Rivers as she calls again for Olivia.

Kathy asks that Elliot come over for dinner because he wasn't able to take the kids for obvious reasons on his weekend.

He and Kathy talk for a while after dinner and he asks just what went wrong.

That he feels so helpless and there's nothing that he can do for his partner.

Kathy just tries to comfort him.

### **Saturday Feb 10**

Elliot had fallen asleep at his old house again and Kathy set a blanket around him.

First thing he remembers is the phone sex girl.

He and Det. Brown track her down.

The girl says the guy was distracted the whole time.

He would get quiet for minutes at a time, but then again, lots of her customers would sometimes grow silent while they...took care of themselves.

Brown says they should try looking at Fitzgivens again because the tapes show him around her apartment a lot.

Elliot suggests that it's probably because Liv's neighbor was his mother.

They try talking to Mark again, but his lawyer insists that they've nothing to talk about.

Mark reminds Elliot that it was his words that pretty much exonerated Elliot and this was how he treated him in return?

Elliot tells Mark that he didn't need anyone to come forward and say what wasn't the truth because he knew he didn't do anything to Olivia, but not the same could be said about Mark.

They watch the tapes of the days coming to that night again trying to pin down something.

Brown senses how uncomfortable Elliot is with seeing Olivia in the nude and being with Jonathan.

Brown takes Elliot out for a beer that evening, but Elliot verily remembers how things were with Dani Beck and pushes away from Brown immediately.

That night, Munch and Fin get called out again for another copy cat death: Andrew Shaw, another black boy.

\*\*\*\*\*

Liv:

Liv's eyes finally adjust to the point where she can see color.

There are other women in the place.

She insists that they are all going to get out of there together.

One of the women tells her that her name is Amy Kettering and that "He" will be back and he'll kill them.

Amy tells Olivia that he moves them to the other room when he's ready and he's only changed his mind once and that girl told the rest about the smell. It's the smell of death.

Olivia tries to pull on the chains more and she ends up fighting off the guy again.

### **Sunday Feb 11**

Munch and Fin investigate the next death and now they are faced with community outrage.

They say that their sons are being murdered because the detectives took out the wrong guy.

Cragen has to hold another meeting saying that Kreider is definitely the guy for the former murders and that they are closing in on the individual who's responsible for these.

Elliot and Jessica are no closer to finding Olivia and now things are becoming dyer.

The inspector removes the Missing Persons people and insists that the case be moved to Homicide.

Detective Green catches the case, but promises that Elliot will be in the loop every step of the way and if they find out who's responsible, Elliot and the SVU will get the collar.

\*\*\*\*\*

Liv:

Spend a good deal of time on this third part with Liv.

She's been using the bones they've been given to eat and sheer will to break her chains.

She starts on Amy and the others when the big man comes in for her again.

He turns on the light and before she feels blinded she can see that the women are all different races and are all terrible thin.

The walls are black and there are no windows.

The guy comes at her while she's still temporarily blind and she makes a run for it.

She doesn't know where she's going and just runs into another room.

He comes after her and she ends up find room with an armoire.

She hides behind it and when he finds her she kicks him in the balls.

He gets mad and throws the armoire on her as she's trying to run away.

She can feel him touching her face and that's when the smell of the room hits her.

It's completely black in there in what she feels is night.

She can hear something that sounds like a news announcer.

She swears that she can hear own name being said, but smell makes her want to pass out.

The smell makes her throw up while she's under the armoire.

As daylight begins to shine against the blocked up windows, she can see faces.

She's horrified when she realizes that they're all dead women in varying degrees of decomposition.

They are all over the place and she just screams because she can't figure this out and calls out for Elliot.

## **Monday Feb 12**

Elliot wakes up from a nightmare where Olivia is trapped somewhere dark and was calling out his name.

He takes his kids to school and Kathleen is still stressed about Olivia as they are approaching two weeks.

Kathleen sounds depressed because she doesn't think they'll ever find her.

Kathleen also says that she and her boyfriend broke up since he could not handle all of her stress.

Maya comes by again in a panic because it's coming on two weeks and Liv hasn't been mentioned in the news in several days.

Elliot tries to work another homicide still partnered with Brown whom he increasingly does not like.  
He sees the body and the woman's brown hair makes him think of Olivia while she was asleep on the tapes and he almost loses it.  
He talks to Huang who says that this is normal and that it will pass with time.  
Elliot asks whether it will pass since they'll never find Olivia or whether it will pass once they do find her and end up burying her.  
Huang cannot answer him.  
That night another boy is attacked, Zachary Calbhach, but he is rushed to Mercy General.  
He says what happened to him and is able to describe the guy.  
He says he never got a really good look at him because it was dark, but the guy was shorter than both Drover and Kreider and that his hair was lighter as well.  
He thinks that he can point him out of a line-up if they found him.  
Warner says the kit turns up that his attacker was the same guy who attacked the other boys.

### **Tuesday Feb 13**

They are working with Zachary trying to give him as many photos as they can and working with a sketch artist for an image.  
Jonathan and Jillian both come into Cragen's office wanting know why the case on Olivia seems to be dwindling and why hasn't Elliot been arrested.  
Cragen tells them that they have absolutely nothing to go on and also that they believe that Elliot is not responsible.  
Jonathan shouts that he wonders just how long a woman cop has to be missing before they'll consider what they don't want to think about.  
Elliot gets a call from Evelyn saying that she just couldn't live like this anymore.  
That she knows Micah will be out soon and will kill her eventually just like he killed Olivia. She did not want to live like this anymore.

\*\*\*\*\*

Liv:  
Breaks leg.  
Manages to limp around.  
Finds way back to Amy and the others.  
He finds her.  
He chases her on the bad leg.  
She locks herself in with Amy and the others.  
He burst through the door.  
Liv runs for it.  
He chases her and starts shooting shouting, "Fucking New York cop! What they hell did he give me?!"  
Liv sees the window and that she's trapped.  
He shoots at her and the bullet hits her side.  
She has no choice, but to hope she's not the high up and go out the window.  
She feels herself falling and falling before the utter pain of hitting something hard and soft at the same time.  
All she can do is cry for help through the pain and the bitter cold.

\*\*\*\*\*

Cragen gets the call about a woman found.

While in the squad room, Cragen tells them that a white female, shoulder-length brown hair, dark brown eyes was found in the upper 90s.

Elliot has his coat on the second Cragen has the words out of his mouth.

Elliot gets to the scene, where uniforms notify him that she was found naked, and badly beaten.

He steadies himself and pulls back the sheet.

At first he wants to cry because she's so badly beaten that her face is unrecognizable.

He pulls back more of the sheet and as he's doing so he has a flash back of some time ago when he and Liv were alone in the crib and she asked him about any other tatoos.

He smiled and sort of flashed her the one on his ass. He asks her if she has any. She smiles and makes sure the door is closed. She undoes her belt, unzips her pants and pulls her pink underwear slightly down to reveal a very small pink heart on her skin. She explains that it was a drunken night that she Maya and Jillian and couple others had back in college and they all had matching ones as a sign of "Friends Forever."

Elliot pulls back the sheet to reveal her abdomen and lets out his breath. She has a tatoo, of a butterfly slightly higher on the pelvis as Liv's tatoo.

"It's not her." he says breathlessly as Fin, Munch and Cragen arrive shortly afterward.

Maya shows up at the house crying.

She says, "you're never going to find her are you?"

"We'll find her."

"When? It's been two weeks and she's just gone. And now, I'm hearing that the leads are running out. You guys have no idea what happened to her."

Elliot can't say anything and just looks at the floor.

"You know how I met her? In kindergarten, that's how far back we go. Our teacher had us make this stupid paper nameplate thing and I couldn't spell out my entire name. Mayanjula. I kept messing it up and needing to start over. On the fourth or fifth time, I started crying and the girl next to me very calmly and coolly suggests that I just go by "Maya" instead. Maya. That's how I got my nickname and Liv's been bailing me out of my own trouble ever since."

"Maya," Elliot says staring at her intently. "We *are* going to find her. I promise you."

She nods. "But you can't promise me that you'll find her safe and sound, right?"

Elliot says nothing, but he feels himself fighting back tears at the thought.

Maya says, "I didn't think so." And she just walks away, out of the office, leaving Elliot standing there with his thoughts.

## **Friday Feb 16**

For Wednesday and Thursday, Elliot has been forced to do other cases.

He spends a lot of time in Liv's apartment.

Green tells him that between homicide and computer crimes there's no evidence that she'd been involved with something online.

Elliot probes anyone from Narcotics to the Mob Squad, but no one has anything that's even remotely related to Olivia.

The man and his nephew find something special in a dumpster.  
End chapter, but same day.  
End Part Two: Flight from Fear

Begin Part Three: Flight from Fate

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Begin Part Three: Flight from Fate

### **Friday Feb 16**

They find Liv in the dumpster  
A cop who knew Liv arrives first at the scene calls a bus and calls Elliot immediately afterward.  
Elliot gets a call at his desk for a woman matching Liv's description just found around 90th.  
Elliot finds out what hospital and flies there with lights and sirens on  
He actually beats the ambulance there  
He's there when they're unloading her and he feels like he's panicking.  
She's bloody all over her; her hair's matted to her head, but she looks purple because she's nearly blue, but in combination with the blood, she looks purple  
She has scratches all over her and she's unconscious  
Elliot keeps calling for her while they are wheeling her in the place.  
"Olivia. Olivia!"  
She's been non-responsive," the EMT closest to him said.  
"What's wrong with her? What happened?"  
"She's been shot and she's got several visible broken bones."  
They're wheeling her in and Elliot's asking all these questions about her: where'd they find her, how long's she been out.  
"If you need anything....anything at all...."  
"We'll take care of her, Detective."  
Anything...I'm her blood type."  
The nurse glanced at him. "Exact type? You're sure?"  
"Yes. Exactly."  
She nodded toward one of the nurses alongside of Olivia's cart.  
"Get him hooked up."

\*\*\*\*

Elliot sat with his head in his hands on the wooden bench that ran along the hall. All around him, nurses and doctors scurried about the place, nearly oblivious to his internal pain.

He had been waiting for hours, refusing to move even though he was told by the doctors that she would not be out of surgery for some time.

He could not chance it. He could risk that she needed him, if even for just a moment, and he not be there. It was imperative that he stay.

"Detective Stabler?" a female voice said from a few feet down the corridor.

Elliot jumped up immediately. The blue-eyed woman who stood in front of him, held a wearied expression and the lines in her face seemed deeper than the rest of her demeanor would suggest.

"I'm Doctor Haddley, Olivia Benson's surgeon."

"Yes," Elliot said expectantly. "How is she?"

Dr. Haddley sighed. "She's in a coma and still very critical. She'd lost a lot of blood and we used all that you gave us....Her heart stopped momentarily."

"Momentarily? How long is that?"

"Two minutes, but it doesn't like her brain was cut off from oxygen long enough to cause any real damage."

Elliot ran a hand over his face and sat back on the bench, his legs feeling weak beneath him.

"I'll be honest with you, Detective," Haddley continued. "She still is not out of the clear. Aside from being shot, she had several broken bones, including a broken femur, a shattered left fibula, a snapped right fibula, broken right arm, broken collar bone, several ribs and finger bones, not to mention a host of cuts and bruises all over her."

"How bad was the gunshot?"

"It just got her on her side. It wasn't too bad, but it didn't help. She's also suffering some mild hypothermia."

"Just from the cold? How long would she have been outside if she's showing symptoms?"

"She was wearing only a cami and thin pajama bottoms when she was brought in. Even if she was outdoors for a few hours, it would have affected her."

Elliot nodded to himself, taking note of every statement. "Was she raped?" he asked after a moment.

"It doesn't look like it, but from what I can see, she was involved in a grievous fight with someone. She took some kind of beating, but we took images of her injuries because I know they'll help you find out what happened to her."

Elliot let out a breath. "Why's she in a coma?"

Dr. Haddley was quiet for a moment. "It looks like she might have fallen."

"Fallen?"

"From a considerable height. More than twenty feet. She hasn't regained consciousness and the MRI shows some swelling in her brain, especially around the base of her spine."

Elliot stared at her. "Is...Is she going to be p-paralyzed?"

"There's no way to tell just yet. We're remaining hopeful, but we just don't know and we really won't know until she's conscious."

Elliot wanted to sit down at the news, but he was not sure if he'd be able to get back up again.

"There's something else. She was exposed to some kind of chemical inhalant. It looks like some kind of combination of a diethyl ether and chloroform and something else were not quite sure of."

Elliot blinked expectantly at her wishing he could summon Melinda to explain things to him immediately.

Noting Elliot's expression, Haddley continued. "They're anesthetics and they're creating some adverse reactions."

"How bad?"

"She's been having seizures. We've been able to stop them for the time being, but depending on how long she's been exposed to that...cocktail, she may suffer further side effects....*once* she wakes."

Elliot could not help, but notice the doctor's emphasis on Olivia waking eventually for his benefit.

"How long do you expect that she'll be out?"

"Could be a day, could be a week. We're still uncertain."

"Can I see her?"

"She's in the ICU, but I can have someone take you to her room. You won't be able to go in, but you'll be able to see her."

Elliot nods and walks down the corridor with her.

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Cragen hurries into the hospital and finds the ICU.

Elliot is standing outside her room, staring at her, with his forearm pressed against the glass window and his head resting on his forearm.

When Cragen arrives, he does not even notice him.

Cragen is breathing hard and when he sees her, he lets out a long breath unable to believe what he is seeing.

Liv's state:

She's unconscious

She has several tubes hooked up to her and a long one mostly breathing for her.

Most of her body is covered in bandages and casts.

Her face is cut in several places and she is very bruised and swollen on one side.

She has a white, plastic neck brace holding her neck steady.

The two of them just stare at her for a moment before Elliot starts explaining what her state is.

"She's in a coma," Elliot said, deadpan.

"For how long?" Cragen said.

"They're not sure. Her doctors don't think she's been like this the entire time, though...."

"I heard she was shot."

"Yeah," Elliot said matter-of-factly. "But, apparently it wasn't that bad. She did fall though."

"From where?"

Elliot shrugged still staring through the large window into Olivia's room. "Still don't know. They think from maybe a story or two."

"Where'd they find her?"

"A dumpster on 90th. Guy and his nephew were dumpster-diving and found her there. She'd been there for half a day...lying there, bleeding out. They nearly lost her in surgery. Her heart stopped for two minutes."

"Good God," Cragen whispered. "What the hell happened?"

"No one really knows at this point," Elliot said, his eyes still fixed on his broken partner. "Was she...?"

"No," Elliot answered quickly, immediately knowing the question Cragen could not say.

"But her doctors say that it looks like somebody tried. She's looking at breakage in 60% of her bones and there's swelling in her brain. They say there's a possibility that she won't walk again, though they can't be sure until she wakes up....if she wakes up."

Cragen shook his head and silence fell upon them.

"She was brought in wearing her pajamas," Elliot said finally breaking the silence. "The same ones I saw her in that Tuesday. Means that for seventeen days now, someone has had her and had been hurting her this entire time. She disappeared in a matter of four minutes and she turns up two weeks later in a dumpster, with the trash. We had every cop in the city looking for her and we still couldn't find her."

"You can't start blaming yourself for this, Elliot."

"Who should I blame?"

"The guy who did this to her."

"We've been on her case for *two weeks* and we didn't even find her. Some idiots going through garbage had to find her for us! That's where they found her! In the trash! This guy beat her, shot her and threw her away like she was nothing and is going to get away with it because we'll never find him!"

Tears were beginning to form in Elliot's eyes and he did nothing to quell them.

"Elliot, we found her. We know where she is now and she's getting help. It's over."

"Is it? Who's it over for, Captain?" He turned and stared at Don. "Is it over for you, 'cause it's nowhere near over for me. The guy...the people who did this to her are still out there. She just now turned up on 90th and that was after the media coverage began to focus on someone else. It wasn't even as if he got spooked because she was getting so much air time. She was found because he was done with her."

Elliot rested his forehead against the window and closed his eyes.

Cragen stood silently watching the ventilation machines breathing for his detective. "Her doctors are saying that some tried to hurt her, right...?"

Elliot turned his head and stared at his superior. "From where it looks right now, Cap, I'd say they succeeded."

"They *tried*, Elliot," Cragen continued. "I think she's here, alive right now because she's tough and she got out."

Elliot sighed.

"And we're gonna find the people responsible," Cragen said. "It's only a matter of time."

Elliot said nothing, only staring through the glass.

"You should get some sleep," Cragen says.

Elliot chuckles a bit. "Yeah, sleep."

"Come on, I know you've been here all night. I'll stay. You go get some sleep."

"Naw cap. I think I start *sleeping* when she wakes up and tells me to go to sleep herself."

Cragen only nods as he sees two of his best detectives at their most vulnerable. Cragen stays for a bit, but then leaves, saying he'll be back later. He tells Elliot that he can take as much as time as he needs. Maya runs into the hospital in a panic. Elliot grabs her and she dissolves into tears in his arms. She says she'd been out all day asking every person she'd every met, if they had any idea what had happened to Olivia and when she got home, she saw her messages. Elliot reflects on the fact that Maya is Liv's other case of emergency person. Maya says she's just so happy that they've found her and she just sinks to the floor and cries because she'd been expecting the worst for days now. Eventually, he convinces Maya to go home because they won't let anyone in to see her yet. Soon after that Munch and Fin show up. They force Elliot to try to get some sleep while they stay with Olivia. He tosses and turns all night, partly from what had happened and because of the media circus that has been plaguing the area. He wakes up to people shouting, We want the Truth! From outside his window. He just cries by himself because he's so glad that they know where she is, but he can't help but reflect on how she may never walk again and how someone had had her and hurt continuously for more than two weeks.

### **Saturday Feb 17**

Saturday February 17, 2007

12:09PM

Elliot's long legs took him briskly toward Morse's padded cell. He knew the rest of the day would be spent at his post in front of Olivia's window, but he had one last errand to run before returning.

Time had come to a halt as he stared into Olivia's room wanting to see some improvement in her condition materialize in front of him as nurses continually streamed in check on her.

At some point in the morning, Munch and Fin had arrived at the room, displaying the same shock as Cragen. After getting a report on how Olivia was fairing, they nearly dragged him out of the hospital and threw him into a cab, knowing he probably lacked the capability to drive at that point. He swore, insisted that he was not leaving her for anything and even took a half-swing at Fin as they streeled him down the corridor. The only reason he allowed it instead of kicking his way out of their grasp was due to simple exhaustion and the guarantees from both detectives that they would not leave the hospital and would notify him of the slightest change in her condition.

"If she blinks, he had threatened, or even shifts her head, I want you to tell me."

He had actually fallen asleep for a few hours in his apartment and, as usual, he had awakened to some terrible nightmare where Dr. Haddley continuously told him that Olivia had not survived.

When he had risen from his bed, he checked the nineteen messages on his phone. Most were from his family, who he had gone to visit that morning to relay the more

positive aspects of Olivia's condition. He left out any mention of possible paralysis noting the expression in Kathleen's watery eyes.

The orderly in front of him paused by Morse's door and heaved the lock out of place to allow Elliot to quickly enter. Morse lay in the corner asleep on the bare floor. He looked considerably worse than the last time Elliot had seen him. His hair had fallen out in patches and made him look like he was suffering from an eczematic condition.

"Wake up, Morse," the orderly said in a gruff voice, heaving with the irritability of having dealt with the youngest of the Morse clan for an extended period of time.

"You've got a visitor."

"Go away, Detective Stabler," Morse muttered still facing the wall.

"I've got something to tell you."

"You always have something to tell me, and you come with the questions... Like, you're just so certain that I know where she is, but I'm just not telling."

"I know that you don't know where she is," Elliot said.

Morse turned slowly on the floor and then stood.

"Finally, we're getting somewhere." He took a step toward Elliot. "What's with the sudden change of heart? You finally grow some iota of intelligence?"

Elliot glared at Morse for a moment. He was painfully thinner and paler than when he had first entered the squad room weeks earlier and Elliot tried not to be overwhelmed by pity.

"I probably shouldn't even tell you this," Elliot said. "It's not like you deserve it. I should probably just let you wither away and die without knowing anything."

Morse's eye twitched as he took another step forward, his face frozen in anger. "What are you playing at, Detective?"

"We found her. She's alive."

Morse's eyes rolled back into his head for a moment and then his face broke into a wide grin as tears immediately formed in his eyes.

"Where is she?" he asked.

"A hospital. Don't bother asking because I won't tell you where."

Morse nodded. "How is she?"

"She's been better, Morse."

"Is...is she talking? Did she say what happened yet?"

"No," Elliot said solemnly and the smile faded from Morse's face.

He stared at Elliot for a long time before speaking again. "She's dead, isn't she?"

"I just told you she wasn't."

"But, I can read you like a book. She may be alive, but she if she's not talking then... she's probably near death."

"She's in a coma."

"Ah, yes," Morse said sarcastically. "A coma. How wonderful. So, how long are the doctors going to keep her around before they bring up the subject of her plug? Are you going to come tell me when you're the one who pulls it?"

"Olivia's not on life support. She's breathing on her own, but she's just sick."

"Sick. Oh, that's original."

Elliot shook his head. "You know, I don't even know why I bothered coming here. You're gonna be a prick 'til the end of your days."

“Why did you come here? Felt you could get me to admit something by sharing a little bit of news?”

“I want information,” Elliot said.

“Just like always.”

He crossed the room and stared down Morse with intense eyes.

“I need you to cut the bullshit for once. Just once. I’m not asking for much, but I just need you to search in that little head of yours and give me a name.”

“Why?”

“Olivia is...”

“She’s going to die, isn’t she?” Morse asked.

“Look, Morse. Every second, I’m standing here is a second I’m not with her. I need a name.”

“For what? She’s been found.” Elliot’s eyes fell to the floor, but Morse read the body language. “You want me to give you something in case you really do need to start investigating a homicide...”

“I just need a name, Morse,” Elliot repeated. “Someone we haven’t looked at yet...I just need you to give me a name.”

Morse paced in front of him, his eyes never leaving Elliot’s before he stopped and sighed.

“I was thinking about you and her this week. The things you’ve done. The things you’ve said. If you’re looking for a name, the first one that comes to mind is really Stabler, but I suppose since you’re here in front of me, looking so sincere, I can think of another.”

“Any name...”

“I thought about that night those years ago... It took me a while, but I remember his name now. Williard.”

“Who?”

“Williard,” Morse repeated. “Matthew Williard. I was thinking about it for a long time when it finally hit me. No pun intended.”

“You’re sure it’s Williard?”

“Positive.”

“Well, given the way Olivia looks right now, I’d like to have someone other than an old boyfriend.”

“You asked for a name... How about Jeremy Cross?”

“Okay, who’s that? I’ve never even heard about him.”

“Yeah, you have, you dolt. The fuck buddy, remember?”

Elliot froze as he remembered the night Morse had come to the precinct with his details on Olivia.

“Right...”

“And don’t forget that Landon across the way.”

“He’s at the top.”

“Just make sure you look.”

“From what you’ve seen,” Elliot said nodding. “From what you remember, is there anything that makes you think Halloway’s did something to her? Anything that would make you think that he’d let us find her when things were getting crazy?”

“No,” Morse said. “Never. He might raise his voice every once in a while, but he wouldn’t lay a hand on her. Even if she deserved it. He wouldn’t know how.”

Elliot stood silent for a moment. "Three weeks ago, someone could've said the same thing about me and Liv."

Morse's eyes narrow at Elliot. "Like I said, *Halloway* would never hurt her. He cries in his car every time they have a fight and he has to leave. And like I said, *Halloway* wouldn't even know how to do anything to her. It's not in his character. *You* however....I saw it in you the first time I saw you drive her home."

Elliot rolled his eyes and turned to leave.

"Detective?" Morse said getting his attention once again. "I don't care what the rest of the world may think. Or even what Olivia may think of you. I saw what had been building over weeks and weeks and there's no doubt in my mind that if she hadn't been strong enough to get away from you, you would have killed her." He paused. "Take it from someone forced to stay in the psychiatric ward....you should really think about getting some help before you do something your cop buddies won't be able to fix for you."

"We found Olivia," Elliot said dryly.

"But, that still doesn't change my opinion of you. Remember Detective, I've been watching for years and I know you almost as well as I know Olivia."

Elliot simply shook his head as he passed the orderly and out the door.

An hour after he had regained his spot by Olivia's room, Elliot spotted the form of someone new coming down the corridor. He had been either sitting or standing in the hall for so long that he could recognize all the doctors, nurses and hospital staff that worked on the floor and he knew just from the outline approaching him, that this was someone he had not seen in a long while.

Sylvia Whitmore's graceful stride brought her down the corridor quickly and Elliot soon stared into a face that had an odd familiarity to it. Large green eyes had given way to a series of fine lines and wrinkles in an otherwise attractive face and her silver-blond hair caught the light as she turned toward the window and swallowed.

It's worse than that other detective made it out to be, Sylvia said. Much worse.

"I'm so sorry," Elliot said to her.

"What for? You didn't do this."

He wanted to reply, but knew she was correct and simply continued his stare at Olivia's unconscious form.

Sylvia began a silent pace behind Elliot, her eyes constantly on the window, for several minutes before she paused and removed a small black flask from her large handbag. She unscrewed the cap and paused briefly to stare at Olivia, and took a drink.

Elliot stared at her with a frown on his face and she pointed her index finger at him.

"Don't..." she began. "Don't you dare judge me. The only piece of my sister I've got left is nearly gone. I think I can take a drink if need one."

He nodded slightly and she slipped away the small flask.

"You'll let me know if her condition changes?"

"Absolutely."

"Thank you, Detective," she said quickly, then turned and left.

A while after Sylvia had gone, Elliot retched himself from the room for long enough to grab an expensive cup of coffee from upstairs and a few minutes afterward, Maya appeared at the window, with Jillian at her side.

Jillian gasped and burst into tears when she saw Olivia lying unconscious beyond the window. She glared at Elliot when she regained her composure and he had the feeling that if she was not so very conservative she might have decked him on the spot. Instead, she quickly left without saying another word.

"She's sorry," Maya said, looking as if she had been crying non-stop since he had last seen her. "About all the things she and Jonathan had been saying to you. I know she is. It's just...she's Jill. She doesn't really apologize, even when she should, but I know she's sorry."

"Don't worry about it," Elliot said.

"Has there been any change?"

"No. I've just talked to her doctor. She says she looks a little better, but there's not been any real difference. She's still unstable."

Maya nodded and dabbed at her eyes.

"Have you talked to Jonathan?"

"I haven't and no one's been able to reach him. According to the house sitter he's spending time at someplace upstate, but there's no phone to reach him at."

"Yeah," Maya said. "I figured he might do that. He'd been saying he needed some time away from the city to clear his head, but he's got horrible timing. Always has."

"We'll let him know if we hear from him."

Maya swayed as she stood, her eyes drooping.

"You want me to take you home?" Elliot asked.

"No, somebody should stay."

"If anything happens they'll let us know. C'mon. I'll drive you."

Maya sighed and allowed Elliot to usher her down the corridor and into his car.

"How are you doing otherwise?" Elliot said trying to make some kind of small talk as they drove through the park. "I mean, are you sleeping or-"

"God, you sound just like Jillian," she said leaning against the passenger door.

"I do?"

"Yeah, constantly checking on me. Jonathan too. In fact...now that I think of it, I'm really not surprised that she gets along with you so well. I mean there's so much of Jill and Jonathan in you. Or maybe all that's the other way around."

"Yeah, okay," Elliot said figuring she was delirious from lack of sleep and grief.

"I'm serious," she continued. "From the way I look at it, if you put Jonathan and Jillian together to you get Elliot. Maybe that's why you all argue so much. You can drop me right here."

Elliot paused the car on West 75<sup>th</sup> Street. "You need help?"

"I've got it. You'll let me know anything about Olivia?"

"Of course, but I imagine I'll probably see you at the hospital tomorrow regardless."

Maya flashed a sleepy smile and nodded as she turned to go into her building.

He sat in the car for several minutes reflecting on the past twenty four hours and weighed whether he would try to go back the precinct or risk another nightmare in his apartment. Choosing neither, he turned the car around and drove down 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue until it turned into Hudson Street.

The air in Olivia's apartment was stale from lack of its occupant and glanced around it half expecting her to call from the bedroom that she would be "ready in a second."

He walked a circle around the apartment stopping at her desk in hopes of seeing some sign of Matthew Williard, yet there was none.

Overlooking the items that Maya had neatened on her desk, he spotted a familiar picture tucked away in the corner. He reached for it with a smile tugging at his lips. It was the same brilliant picture he had given Cragen when their search for Olivia had just begun.

Framed photo in hand he took a step away from the desk and towards her sofa, seeing from the corner of his eye her case files that had been left, untended. He made a note to grab them on his way out of the apartment and slowly lowered himself on to her couch. The afghan that rested along the backside of the couch smelled like Olivia and he pulled it around himself as he rested against the couch pillows and closed his eyes. He had hoped for some kind of divine inspiration by coming to Olivia's apartment, but his eyelids suddenly felt very heavy and he wondered if he even had the strength to lift himself from her couch.

The picture shined in the moonlight that poured into her apartment from the nearby window as it lay on the hope chest Olivia used as a coffee table. Elliot sighed as he took one last look at it and allowed his eyes to close as he lied wrapped in Olivia's blanket.

### **Sunday Feb 18**

Elliot does not go to church again and heads to the hospital first thing, having fallen asleep on Olivia's couch.

Elliot's eyelashes fluttered open as sunlight streamed through Olivia's windows. He stared at her ceiling for a few moments trying to get his bearings before he rose to leave the apartment. As he locked the door, Mark Landon opened his own apartment door carrying a large trash bag.

"Good morning," Elliot said flatly.

Mark scowled at him and slammed his door shut, leaving Elliot to shake his head as strode down the hall.

"She's doing much better," Dr. Haddley said as they stood outside of Olivia's hospital room. "Her temperature is good and her heart rate's just about returned to normal. The frostbite on her feet is clearing up nicely, so I don't think we'll have to remove anything."

"What about the gunshot?" he asked quickly. "And, she's still got that tube?"

"Yes... We're still keeping an eye on the bronchitis. It's quite severe and we're trying to keep it from turning into pneumonia. But, the wound is healing fast."

"And the seizures?"

"I think she might have gotten it all out of her system. I'm still thinking it might have just been the stress her body was under all this time."

"Do you have any idea when she might wake up yet?"

Dr. Haddley shook her head. "Unfortunately, we don't. Her brain waves are very active, but she just hasn't regained consciousness yet. But, on a more positive note, as long as her condition does continue to improve, we might be able to move out of ICU by tomorrow."

Elliot nodded and Dr. Haddley left down the hall issuing instructions to a lanky nurse who walked with her.

He stared Olivia's comatose form and sighed. Her face looked much better as some of the bruises had begun to subside, but she still looked very pale and the oxygen tube distending from her mouth was unnerving.

A ring from his jacket pocket, jarred from his constant staring, willing Olivia to suddenly wake.

"Stabler."

Twenty minutes later, he arrived at Melinda's lab having been directed there by several surprised CSU officers. They had been expecting to see Detective Spencer at the CSU lab, but Elliot breezed through combing for information as Spencer had already told him that CSU had results on Olivia's case. Melinda normally only worked Homicides, but pulled strings of her own to have the case handed to her.

"You have something for me?" he asked.

"Lots. We'd done analysis on all her clothes and it looks like she's been in them the entire time. We found some seminal fluids on them as well as wood chips, glass, and just general dirt."

Elliot nodded though his mind had stopped when he heard "seminal fluids."

"There was also lots of blood and hair," Melinda continued. "And it's not all hers. I found seven different types of hair and at least two blood types."

"Seven?" Elliot's eyes were narrowed at the idea of it. "How many people could've possibly had her?"

Melinda shrugged. "Just telling what I've found. I've more analysis done by tomorrow. I'll let you know what, if any, matches I find, but I just wanted you to know, she's at the top of my list."

"Thanks Melinda," he said. He opened his mouth to give her an update on Olivia when his cell rang from his pocket.

"Stabler," he said without reading the display.

The small smile that had been lurking behind his guise of thankfulness for the medical examiner's efforts faded quickly and Elliot closed his eyes and hung his head.

He listened to the rest of the other party's words and replied with a sigh. "Goddamn it."

\*\*\*\* stars

All Saints House

10:58AM

Elliot squinted slightly at the flash of a camera at the very end of the long corridor. A mass of detectives and uniformed officers had already gathered at the bathroom that sat at the end and were floating in out of the area speaking in low voices.

Normally, he would not have been called in such a case, but, as the officer at the other end of his earlier phone call noted, these were extenuating circumstances.

Elliot swallowed as he entered the bathroom preparing himself for what he was about to see. A tall, detective nearest to the tub, stood holding a small, handwritten piece

of paper and the CSU officer next to him slowly bent to pull the blood-stained razor off the checker-patterned tiles and into an evidence bag.

The bathtub itself seemed to glow against the deep red that surrounded its insides and Elliot suppressed a shiver as he first took sight of Evelyn Rivers lying up to her neck in a mixture of water and her own blood. Her eyes were closed, but her face had frozen in combination of fear and grief and he could make out the salt stains her previous tears had left on her face hours earlier.

“She left a note,” the tall officer said handing Elliot the piece of paper. His voice was flat and uncaring. “It just says she couldn’t live like this anymore. Whatever the hell ‘this’ is supposed to be.”

Elliot read Evelyn’s tear-stained handwriting with shaking hands: *He’s tried to kill her and I know he’ll kill me next. I can’t keep live like this anymore, so I’m just going to beat him to it.*

“Should be pretty open and shut though, eh?” the officer said, breaking Elliot’s moment of silence for Evelyn. “Don’t know why they even keep razors around a place like this when all the women all like they’re ready to start slitting stuff when they bring them in here.”

“Why don’t you have a little respect?” Elliot said nearly shouting.

“What respect?” the officer said. “If she had any respect, she probably wouldn’t’ve ended up in a place like this in the first place.”

Elliot glared at him wanting to hit the man in his red face, but simply handed him back the note and stormed out of the bathroom, not wanting to do anymore to sadden the scene of Evelyn’s death.

He drove back to the precinct feeling cold and hot at the same time. A part of him wanted to pull his car into an alley and just cry for his inability to keep Evelyn from hurting himself, while another part wanted to scream out at the frustration of the same calamity.

When he finally stepped off the elevator and into the squad room, Alexa popped out of nowhere to berate him.

“How come I’m just now finding out what’s going on?” she said with wide, angry eyes.

“I know her too. I wanted to know. No one even bothered to tell me about Olivia.”

Elliot brushed past her and headed toward Cragen’s office, but Alexa continued.

“You know, you can’t keep treating me like I did something wrong. You can’t just ditch me anytime you feel like it. I know this whole thing’s been rough on you, but you can’t-”

He did not hear the rest of her rant as he closed Cragen’s office door behind him, leaving her with her arms crossed and pacing in front of the door.

“Evelyn Rivers is dead,” he said flatly. “She killed herself this morning. Said she thought Diorel had tried to kill Olivia and would eventually kill her. She said she was beating Diorel to it even though...even though I told her repeatedly that Diorel wasn’t involved.”

“I’m sorry,” he said.

“Me too.”

“Elliot, you did everything you could. That girl was fragile to begin with. You can’t beat yourself up about this.”

"I could've done more."

"How? She was a wreck for weeks."

"I could've read the signs a little better. If I'd just been a better cop, I could've saved her life."

"Evelyn Rivers refused to leave Diorel even though he was about two steps from killing her. We already knew she was in a state before we even got her case. You knew that and so did Olivia. That's why she had to practically drag her away from Diorel."

Elliot shook his head. "What makes this all even worse...is that I know, that if Liv had been here, she could've kept Evelyn from killing herself."

"Elliot, it's like I said. Given the state she was in, I don't think anything anyone could've said would've kept her from doing it."

"Liv...Olivia saw something in Evelyn that I could never get in touch with. If it had been up to me, we would've put Evelyn on the back burner and forgotten all about her until Diorel murdered her, but Liv always wanted to check in on her and see how she was doing. Now, that I think about it, I never once called the girl just to make sure she was doing all right. Just to keep something like this from happening."

"We were too busy finding answers about this newest string of murders and looking for Olivia."

Elliot ran a hand over his face. "Speaking of...I spoke to Morse again. I want to re-interview Mark Landon."

"Naturally," Cragen said sardonically. "Did he give you anyone else?"

"Yeah, two. The guy who slapped Olivia on his videos. Matthew Williard and also a Jeremy Cross he said we may want to look into."

Cragen shook his head. "It's Spencer's case."

"C'mon, Cap. Even Craig knew this was never his case. Olivia's not dead and for all intents and purposes this has SVU all over it."

"Fine," he said after a moment of silent staring. "Do what you need to, but... I want you to make a better effort with Brown. She's a good cop, Elliot."

Elliot glanced out Cragen's office window to see Alexa in a heated discussion with Andrea who looked thoroughly annoyed.

"I'm not ready to concede to a new partner just yet."

"No one's asking you to, but if you're taking on Olivia's case, we need to have results. When Liv wakes up, and I know she will, she's going to want answers. You'll have more to tell her if you work with someone rather than just working alone."

Elliot rolled his eyes and sighed, but marched out of the office and nodded at Alexa.

"I need you to help me find some information on a Matthew Williard. I want to find him today. He's already hurt Liv once and I wouldn't put it past him to try hurting her again."

Alexa nodded quickly and nearly broke into a run towards her own desk area where she pulled up a search on her computer. Elliot watched her with another sigh as Andrea, who had finished noting Morse's videos, closed the video room and headed toward her own desk, reports in hand.

\*\*\*\* stars

Matthew Williard's real estate office was large and comfortable with all the markings of a successful and growing business. He stood as Elliot and Alexa entered his office and gave them a dashing smile etched on a handsome, tan face. Tall and blue-eyed, Williard had a likeable air about him and an endearing charm enfolded throughout the rivets of baritone and bass in his voice that many people loved instantly. Elliot hated him on sight.

"Please," Williard said shaking Alexa's hand. "Have a seat. People think I'm crazy, but I've always had a soft spot for the NYPD."

He reached out a hand toward Elliot, who, feeling an old anger stir inside of him and with several mental quips he had been rehearsing on the drive to Williard's office, stared at his hand for a moment and simply nodded with his hands held tight behind his back.

The moment Williard came into view, a flash of Olivia falling backwards after he had slapped her across the face floated across Elliot's eyes like a hologram and it took every bit of his resolve to let the awkward moment where Williard pulled his hand away and glanced at Alexa with high eyebrows pass without further incident.

"Now," Williard said seated behind his large oak desk. "What can I do for you? I haven't broken any laws, have I?"

Alexa returned his wide smile weakly. "Do you know a Detective Olivia Benson?"

"Course I do," he said settling back in his thick leather chair. "I've been hearing her name on the news for weeks now. Yeah, we dated for some time a while back. She broke up with me, but I've always thought I should've chased her a little harder. I can't help thinking she was the one who got away."

"I see," Alexa said flatly.

"She always had so much patience with me and such a great attitude. I really hope she's doing okay. I have been worried sick since I heard that she'd been found.

"Have you?" Elliot said softly his eyes burning into Williard.

Williard glanced at Alexa for moment with raised eyebrows. "Yeah... Is there something wrong?"

"You tell me," Elliot said. "We did a little background checking into you and no one can account for your whereabouts on Tuesday January 30<sup>th</sup>."

"January 30<sup>th</sup>? I can barely remember what I had for breakfast this morning if I didn't have my Blackberry I'd probably forget my own last name. But, what do you mean you did a little checking into me? You're talking to me like I'm some kind of suspect."

"Funny thing is," Alexa said. "You are."

Williard laughed. "I'm a suspect? In what?"

"What the hell do you think?" Elliot seethed. "Olivia Benson's lying comatose in the hospital and *someone* did something to put her there."

"Wait... Someone? You can't possibly think I did something to Olivia?"

"Well," Alexa said. "Now that you mention it..."

"This is ridiculous," Williard said flattening his tie.

"You know what I think's ridiculous," Elliot said. "That you're willing to sit there looking smug after all you've done. After the way you hurt her. You're nothing, but a dog and if I wasn't wearing a badge I kick your ass river to river."

Deep down, everything instinct within Elliot told him that Williard was not involved. His demeanor was simply too calm. Even the greatest sociopaths showed some signs of distress when the police began questioning them about a possible quarry. However, something had to be done. The image of Williard's hand sliding through the dark to strike Olivia was far too vivid in his memory and though Elliot knew there was little he could do to ensure that Williard spent time in prison, he still needed to suffer.

"Hurt her? Olivia?" Williard scoffed. "I think it's a bit rich that you're calling me names and threatening me for hurting Olivia. Especially since it wasn't too long ago that I saw something off the internet that showed you and her in a very *compromising* position."

"Get up," Elliot said coming around the desk.

"What? Why?"

"You're coming down to our precinct."

"For what? No, forget it. I'm not going."

"You can either come under your own steam or you can be dragged up there under whatever trumped up charge I can think of. It's your choice, but your coming."

\*\*\*\*

The drive to the precinct had been tense and silent and Elliot allowed Williard to sit alone in an interrogation room for several hours while Alexa, Munch and Fin dug through Williard's records. They quickly found that was a divorcee who had had two previous domestic violence accusations filed on him in earlier years, but for some reason, both his wife and girlfriend, thereafter, recanted.

From the records they could also see that Olivia discovered this very information the night she had confronted Williard and he struck her for the third and final time.

"How you been?" Elliot said to Williard another hour later.

"You can't keep me here like this," he said immediately. "If you insist on keeping me, then I'm asking for my lawyer."

Munch opened the door and wheeled a small television into the room.

"What's that?" Williard said with wide eyes.

"Don't worry about it just yet," Elliot said smugly, but Williard shook his head.

"These cop tactics aren't going to work with me. I used to date one of your own remember. She told me lots while we were between the sheets."

"Couldn't've told you that much," Elliot said. "She doesn't take kindly to abusers."

"Abusers? This is nonsense. I never touched her like that. Not once."

"Who said anything about touching Olivia?" Munch said taking the seat next to Elliot.

Williard glared at him. "You're insinuating it, but I never did."

"We'd like to believe," Elliot said with a smirk. "But, we've got evidence that says otherwise."

"That's bull. I never laid a hand on her."

Munch turned on the television and pressed a button on the small DVD player that rested on the cart behind it. The screen went blue for a moment before showing Williard and Olivia arguing from a night years earlier. All three men watched in silence as the arguing continued and Williard let out a gasp as he watched his own hand strike Olivia so hard she fell to the floor.

“Wh-where’d you get that?” he said with watery eyes.

“Does it make a difference at this point?” Munch said. “We just trapped you in the worst lie I’ve heard all week.”

“I...I...”

“Yes, please,” Elliot said seething. “Tell us. *Explain* to us what was going on that night.”

“That was a long time ago.”

“Yeah, it was,” Munch said. “But lucky for you that tape’s dated. It was made less than three years ago.”

“When’s the statute of limitations run out on filing assault, battery or personal injury in New York County John?” Elliot asked brightly.

“Why, Elliot, I think it’s three years.”

“Three years?” Elliot said and turned back toward Williard. “Well, isn’t that interesting.”

“I...I understand where you’re going with this, gentlemen,” Williard said softly. “But you have to understand-”

“Yes, we do want to understand, don’t we, John?”

“We do, Elliot.”

Elliot smiled. “We want to understand everything so that we can pull every single niche out of the penal law to make sure you serve as much time as possible.”

“I was under a lot of stress back then,” Williard said his foot tapping nervously. “Some of my places were being eaten up by the competition and it was looking kind of bad there for a while and then all of sudden she comes at me with this old crap and I just...lost it.”

“Oh, you lost it,” Elliot repeated.

“I did! But I swear on my life, I’ve been getting help since then. After Olivia pulled that gun on me...I finally realized what I was doing and I got help. I’m seeing a therapist three times a week.”

“Does that help?” Elliot asked with feigned care.

“Absolutely! She has taught me things about myself I never even knew.”

“And if it doesn’t,” Munch said, “you can always smack *her* around until it does.”

“I swear to God I don’t do that anymore and I haven’t had any contact with Olivia since the night she threw me out.”

“You’re sure?” Elliot asked now serious. “That’s the story you wanna stick with?”

“I swear. I mean would you try to talk to a woman who just aimed a gun at your head?”

“Guess we can say you’re a smart man, eh?” Munch said.

“Look,” Williard said, “if I had any information, anything at all I’d tell you. I tell you because I’d want you to tell her how much I’ve changed. Maybe she’d give me a second chance.”

Elliot shook his head as he stood. “As far as I’m concerned, she gave you more chances than you ever deserved and if I’d known what you did to her at the time, I’d’ve gladly served the time for breaking your neck.”

“We filing charges? Cragen asked Casey when Elliot and Munch entered the small room that sat outside of the interrogation room.

She shook her head. “I can’t see how. The statute’s about to run out anyway and with Olivia in a coma... And he seems like the kind of weasel who’d have a lawyer or two just greasy enough to get him out of serving any time even if we could make the charges stick.”

“So, what do we do?” Elliot asked.

“Let him sweat in there for a few more hours,” Cragen said. “Then I’d let some of his past records slip to some of clientele and competition. How are you doing on this Cross guy?”

“Alexa’s working on him.”

“Well find him. This’ll be the first we’ve really looked at him, so find him and grill him hard.”

“Got him!” Alexa said excitedly as Elliot left the interrogation room.

“Who?”

“Jeremy Cross. He works lugging boxes down by the docks.”

Elliot nodded as he reached for his coat. “You drive. I’ve got a couple phone calls to make for our friend Williard in there.”

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Gansevoort and Washington Streets

5:38PM

"Cross?" a stout manager with a clipboard said to Elliot and Alexa when they approached him. "He's over there, but I don't know how much you expect to get out of him. He's kind a dull...you know? Slow."

Something large moved behind the truck at which the manager pointed and Elliot felt slightly caught off guard by the sight of the man who had just heaved three large crates from one truck onto another.

Jeremy Cross’s mess of brown hair and round face gave him an initial appearance of young boy, but the body on which rested his large head proved he was anything but. Six foot six and easily two-hundred and fifty pounds, Elliot felt dwarfed by the large man and Elliot wondered why Jeremy was spending his days moving boxes instead of blocking others his size on a football field somewhere.

“Jeremy Cross?” Elliot said holding out his badge.

Jeremy set down his crate and stepped from behind the truck.

“Yeah?”

“I’m Detective Stabler. This is Detective Brown. We need to talk to you for a couple minutes.”

“Yeah...sure,” Jeremy said taking a few steps toward them. He spoke with deep voice and a strong accent and Alexa, barely standing at his elbow, eyed him suspiciously. “What’s going on?”

“I’m sure you’ve seen reports on the news about a cop’s disappearance. A Detective Olivia Benson?”

Jeremy nodded and blinked large brown eyes. “I heard she was found. Is she okay?”

“She’s fine,” Alexa said quickly jumping into the conversation. “We’re still trying to figure out what happened to her.”

“I was really happy when the news said you found her. Do you know what hospital she’s at? Can I go see her or talk to her?”

“No, sorry,” Elliot said crossing his arms as he stared up at the man. “She’s still in the ICU and she can’t have any visitors.”

“ICU?” Jeremy said, a quizzical expression on his face.

“Intensive Care Unit. Look, Jeremy, when was the last time you spoke to Olivia?”

Jeremy looked up as he thought for a moment. "Think it was maybe a year or so ago. She's usually the one who calls me, but she hadn't in like a real long time, so I called her."

"And you haven't spoken to her since?" Alexa said.

"Naw....don't think so. Hey, am I in some kind of trouble here?"

Elliot and Alexa glanced at one another.

"No," Elliot said. "We're just talking to anybody who had any contact with Olivia and might know what happened to her."

"Oh," Jeremy said, looking down at his shoes. "Sure wish I could help. If I knew anything, I'd tell you."

"I'm sure you would Jeremy," Alexa said.

Elliot gave Jeremy his card and he and Jessica walked back to the car.

“What do you think?” he asked.

She paused, surprised that he had asked her opinion. “I don’t know. I think he seems genuine though. And, I hadn’t seen him on any of the tapes passed the time when Jonathan Halloway began showing up.”

"Morse must've had it wrong," Elliot said as they drove back to the precinct.

"Why? What do you mean?"

"Alexa, I know Olivia and she wouldn't go out with a guy like that. She likes smart people. Guys who can make her laugh. He's not even close to her type."

Alexa sighed. "You didn't watch the unedited version of those tapes, Detective, but you're right. They never went *out* anywhere. She'd dress up, he'd meet her at the door and they wouldn't make it out of her front door. It doesn't take a 160 IQ to be good at what he does."

Elliot rolled his eyes as they headed back up 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

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“Hey! Zachary, right?”

Zachary Calbrach nodded with a smile at Munch as he and Fin stepped into his hospital room.

“I’m Detective Munch and this is Detective Tutuola.”

“Are you here to talk to me about what happened too?” Zachary asked.

“We are,” Munch said.

“Sorry, I didn’t do so well last time.”

“You did just fine,” Fin said, “but we just wanted to know if you could remember anything else that might help us catch him.”

Zachary sighed. “I’m starting to remember now. I’d seen him before. Like a couple weeks ago, but I still can’t make him out. Like, I see him...but I don’t. It’s weird.”

“It’s okay,” Munch said. “Do you remember where you might’ve seen him?”

“Like at school and stuff. I just remember thinking...like ‘It’s that guy.’ You know what I mean?”

They spent another twenty minutes trying to pull memories from Zachary, but he quickly grew frustrated and when his mother insisted that he had had enough for one day, they shifted their efforts back to interviewing witnesses in the case.

Taking a short hiatus to check on Olivia and see Elliot back at his post by Olivia's window, Munch and Fin spoke to all three possibly witnesses as well dropped visits on those who had discovered the crime scenes in Ryan Daly's and Andrew Shaw's murders. The day had been long and the tasks at hand arduous and unfulfilling as not one person interviewed had any relevant information to add.

Cold and bedraggled, Munch suggested they check in on the neighbors who lived several doors down from the Calbrach house.

"Just terrible," Mabel Hickins said as she lowered her eighty-year old body into an arm chair in her living room. "To think that someone could do something to such a lovable little boy. He used to come here and let me read to him when he was little. Now, he's a little too grown to spend all his time here, but he still waves on his way home from school."

"When you saw him around the area," Munch began, "did you ever notice anyone ever following him or paying him any attention?"

"Not so much," she said. "The school's just a stone's throw away from here and I see most of the kids every day. It used to be safe for them to just walk home, but nowadays..."

"You seem to know the area pretty good," Fin said.

Mabel nodded. "I've been here forever and even if the neighborhood does go down the tubes even more, I don't see myself moving."

"So, have you noticed anybody around the area or around the schools that seemed out of the ordinary?"

"Well... There was someone staring at the kids a few days back."

"What did they look like?" Munch said taking out a notepad.

"It was a young man. He was kind of far away so I couldn't tell how old he was. Maybe in his twenties. Maybe younger. Maybe older. But he was standing nearby the fence watching the kids leave the school, maybe a day or two before this happened to Zachary."

"Can you remember what he looked like?" Fin asked, but Mabel shook his head.

"Reddish hair is about it. I wish I could tell you more. But, um, tell me something. You're all cops... what do you know about that young woman I've been seeing all over the news. The one they just found on 90<sup>th</sup>?"

"What about her?" Fin said.

"Just wanting to know how she was doing," Mabel said. "I try to follow the news as best I can and didn't know if you knew anything else about her. I mean, to tell you honestly, with all this fuss over those other two boys and now poor little Zachary, I'd all but forgotten about her. But, I guess that's just the way the mind goes when you get to be my age..."

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Elliot sighed as he watched the lanky nurse with the mousy brown hair change the bandage on Olivia's side.

With Williard and Cross no longer viable witnesses and with Mark staunchly hiding behind his attorney, he had found no other evidence to use to pursue the case and he found it painfully ironic that the one person off of whom he could bounce ideas until one sounded plausible, was the only person he could not ask.

He pressed his hand against the window and willed her to wake for another twenty minutes before he turned to leave. The moment he turned, he caught sight of Maya and another woman walking down the corridor. The other woman's brown hair was lit with highlights and she was tall like Maya and Olivia, but had the body of a mother.

"Elliot," Maya said with a small smile. "How is she?"

"Better. Her doctor says she's mostly stable and they might be able to move her out of the ICU tomorrow."

"Good...good," Maya said.

An awkward silence fell over them before the woman's hazel eyes glinted behind her black Emporio Armani glasses and she opened her mouth.

"Sarah Hyman," she said offering her hand toward him in a business-like manner. "Wish we could have met under more light-hearted pretenses."

"Me too."

They stared at one another for a second awkward moment, before Elliot cleared his throat.

"I've, uh...got some things I still need to get done. Maya, you've got my cell just in case anything changes. Sarah...good to meet you."

"Likewise," Sarah said, though her tone suggested different.

As Elliot strode down the hall, he could hear snippets of their voices coming like echoing hisses off the polished walls.

"I can't believe he has the nerve to be here," Sarah said. "After what Jillian told me...the other cops in her unit think he's involved."

"He's not, Sarah," Maya said. "I know him and he wouldn't be here if he was."

"But what if it's a cover? What if he's just trying to see exactly how much he did to her?"

"Sare, he didn't"

"You need to come back here tonight and make sure he doesn't come back to finish her off..."

Elliot simply shook his head as he climbed the stairs back to the street, but his mind was plagued with thoughts of Olivia by the time he got back to his car.

*What am I going to do if she never wakes up? What was going to happen if something's really wrong with her? What if the seizures were a sign of brain damage? What if she really couldn't walk again?*

He pushed a hand to his side as the burn in stomach hurt worse than ever at the same time his phone rang from his pocket.

"Yes," he said quickly noticing for the first time that he never bothered to change the number's display from "Home" to simply "Kathy" or "The Kids."

"It's me," Kathy said brightly. "I was just wondering if you were free to have dinner with us tonight?"

He nodded into the phone, the burning subsiding momentarily. "Sounds like a plan."

Elliot's original plans for the evening included another round of "Beast," hopefully sans-Jonathan, and a night of staring at his ceiling praying for a peaceful slumber, so

the idea of having dinner as if his family was whole again seemed the perfect distraction.

“Dickie,” he said into the living room as Dickie and Lizzie were deep into a racing game on the television instead of helping make dinner. “How ‘bout you help Maureen set the table?”

“Rick.”

“Sorry?” he said through furrowed eyebrows.

“Rick,” Dickie repeated never taking his eyes from the game. “I’m trying it out for a while. Rick.”

Elliot closed his eyes and shook his head with a grin. Kathleen laughed as she stirred spaghetti sauce into which Kathy sprinkled basil every few strokes.

“All right, fine. *Rick*, help your sister set the table. *Elizabeth*, come tear lettuce with me.”

Dinner felt just like old times and after Maureen had left and the others had gone upstairs to bed, he and Kathy sat on the sofa and talked like they had before life had grown so complicated. Elliot felt his heart ache for his old life as Kathy told him how grumpy Dickie had been recently over losing Jessica Barrow to the basketball player, how Lizzie’s music was coming along so well and how Kathleen’s spirits seemed to brighten after Elliot had told her that Olivia had been found.

Talk eventually turned to Olivia’s state and he felt oddly surprised to see Kathy so interested in his partner, regardless of what had happened.

“Kathleen says she wants to see her,” Kathy said sipping her ginger ale.

“No,” Elliot said. “I don’t want any of the kids to see her like that.”

“Well, how bad is it, El?” She paused, but when she received no response, continued. “I mean, I haven’t heard much from the news except that she’s still critical. You’ve all been keeping a tight lid on just about everything.”

“Just as it should be. This is bad enough without the press crawling all over her room.”

“How bad is she?” When he fell silent, she pressed him further. “Look, I need to know. I need to know if I need to brace myself for how Kathleen will be if her Olivia’s condition worsens... How all the kids will be, for that matter.”

Elliot sighed. “It’s bad, Kath. Her doctor says, if she wakes up from the coma...she’ll probably never walk again.”

“Oh Jesus,” Kathy whispered. “Do you have any idea what happened yet?”

“We don’t know. I mean... Cragen’s making me work the case with this girl who... I mean for Chrissake, Dickie could make a better cop at thirteen than she is.”

“I guess we all have to crawl before we can walk.”

“Yeah, well. I wish she’d just crawl back to wherever she came from so I don’t have to deal with her.”

He grunted slightly and shifted on the couch as the burning sensation in stomach grew worse.

“What’s wrong?” she asked.

“Nothing,” he said rubbing his side. “Just my stomach.”

“You should probably see your doctor about it, she said concern written all over her face. He scoffed and shook his head.

“I mean it, Elliot,” she continued. “With all that’s been happening this past month, you’re probably working on an ulcer.”

“Probably,” he said sleepily.

She pursed her lips. "You look tired. How 'bout I make up the couch for you again and you can take the kids to school again in the morning?"

Elliot attempted to nod, but had already leaned his head back against the arm of the sofa and by the time she rose to grab a blanket for him, he began to snore softly.

Kathy broke into a wide smile and she pulled a blanket over his sleeping form. She watched him sleep for a long time before retching herself from his side and stepping softly up the stairs to her empty bedroom.

## **Monday Feb 19**

### Chapter Twenty-Five

Monday February 19, 2007  
First Avenue and East 30<sup>th</sup> Street

Melinda rings him on his cell first thing in the morning.

"What's up Doc?" Elliot said brightly as he strode into Melinda's lab. He had fallen into dreamless sleep the previous night and while his neck hurt slightly from sleeping on his old couch, he felt rested and mildly happy.

"We got the analysis back on Olivia's clothes," Melinda said, "and I've got lots for you." "The hair?"

"I ended up finding eight altogether. Some were actually from you and I also found a match with that handsome Halloway she's been seeing. Four of the samples were in the system too."

"Whose are they?" he asked expectantly.

"All Missing Persons cases. Two from women who had gone missing about three months ago and one who went missing a month before them and another who's been missing for close to a year. Their DNA had been catalogued from hair brushes and things just in off chance that they'd be found and were unidentifiable. The other two are clearly men, but they aren't coming up with any names in the system."

"Figures," Elliot said shaking his head.

"But, there's a plus," she continued. "One of those was involved in an older rape case in Brooklyn. The woman claimed that she was raped on camera by a man in his early twenties, but that he let her go. They were never able to catch the guy, but from everything I've seen, he's been involved with a homicide and several other Missing Persons cases."

"And his hair was found on Olivia."

"His blood too and..." She rifled through a large envelope on her desk. "I'm willing to bet that these probably belong to him too."

"Bite marks," Elliot said just above a whisper as he stared at a black and white image of what was clearly Olivia's left shoulder.

"I had the hospital send those over this morning."

“So, this guy... whoever he is... He’s had Liv this entire time and he did all this to her.” Melinda sighed. “I still don’t know for sure, but since his blood was on her clothes, I’m willing to bet he didn’t get away without a few problems.”

“Yeah,” Elliot said laughing flatly, but never taking his eyes off the grey image.

“I ran the dirt on her clothes and found some weird stuff.”

“Like what?”

“Well, some of it looks like dust, really. Accumulation of dead skin, little hairs and other things that would just collect from the air. Basically stuff you’d find in the corner of a bathroom or under a bed or something.”

“How is that weird?”

“By itself it’s not, but I also found wood chips, cement dust and... what looks like decaying tissue.”

Elliot’s eyebrows flew toward his hairline. “What do you mean decaying tissue?”

“Like... the kind of stuff you’d expect if you stuck your hand inside a casket that had been buried for about four or five years. There’s skin, other than hers, rubbed all over her clothes. They’re old too. Also found rat droppings and some unhatched fly larvae.”

“Jesus,” Elliot said rubbing his head and staring at the bite mark on Olivia’s shoulder once more.

“I’m not sure how much any of it will help. It’s not making a lot of sense to me right now, personally, but it might later.”

Elliot nodded and waved the photograph. “What about these? Do you see anything else from her injuries?”

“I did,” Melinda said. “They took pictures of most of her bruises and they also sent me X-rays. Now, some of the bruising looks older than some of the others, especially these on her back.”

“That one is older. There was an... incident with a suspect.”

“There’s two rather large ones though. I’d say this other one’s a little newer than the one you pointed to, but still older than the rest.”

She paused and stared at Elliot with large, questioning eyes.

Elliot replayed the events of that night in his head. He had literally thrown Olivia into her side wall. He saw her double over and that was what brought him to his senses.

That was also what caused an eruption in her and sent her flying back at him.

“When I last saw her...” Elliot began. “That night, we, um... I thought at one point I might’ve broken one of her ribs, but she seemed okay. ”

She nodded, having already known the answer and continued.

“Well, her X-rays tell me a lot. She definitely fell. I’d say from about thirty feet or so in the air. Maybe even forty.”

“Why forty?”

“Just from the depth of the splintering and the breakage. Do you know how much it takes to break a femur?” Elliot shook his head. “It takes a lot. The thigh bone is one of the hardest and thickest in the body and it takes a good seventeen hundred pounds of pressure to do it, so a fall from thirty feet at just the right angle might do it, but...”

“But...”

"Physics tells me that if she fell straight from thirty feet and landed on the ground, she'd be suffering worse problems than she is right now. She'd have bad injuries from a fall from just ten feet. I'd say something broke her fall and gave just enough cushion to keep her alive."

"What though?"

"Well, they found her inside that dumpster on 90th. I'm thinking she wasn't put there, she fell into it."

"You mean out of a window and into the dumpster?"

"That would explain all the glass and many of the lacerations she has look like those of someone going out of a window."

"Was she pushed or did she jump?"

"Still can't say yet. I'd have to get a better look at the scene."

"How soon can we get started on it?"

"Give me a few hours and I go up there with you."

Elliot nodded and gave her a weak smile.

"How's she doing?" Melinda asked. "I haven't gone to see her yet."

"Still in the ICU and in a coma, but her doctor says they may be able to move her some time tomorrow. She originally told me today, but this morning she decided to give it another day. Just in case."

Silence fell between them before Melinda spoke again.

"She's going to be okay, Elliot," she said.

"I know," Elliot lied. "It's just....she's been having these seizures and they don't know if it's this chemical she's been exposed to that causing them."

"What kind of chemical?"

Elliot shrugged. "Her doctor didn't specify. Just some kind of chemical that's causing all these problems."

Melinda's eyebrows fly up into her hair. She walked across the room and flipped through a few reports.

"The same substance found on the floor of her apartment... and on the boys. It's on her clothes too. I'll have to check it again, but I'm pretty sure it's the same concentration as the others and... if it was inhaled for an extended amount of time, it could cause some seizures or brain damage."

She froze regretting her words.

Elliot was silent a moment. "....someone came at her with this stuff the second I left her place."

Melinda nodded.

"Where can you buy this stuff?"

"You can get the components from a lot of sources. Any chemical supply place, but a lot of these are all regulated. If these were made from legal transactions, there'd be a record."

Elliot parked the navy sedan on East 91<sup>st</sup> and headed west down the street with Melinda. He had gone to see Casey while Melinda was completing several other projects in her office and even after pleading with the best sad eyes he could muster, Casey insisted that there was no way to get a warrant to search the entire block.

The police tape that surrounded the dumpster in which Ray Meekham and his nephew, Deondre, had found Olivia had been removed as CSU had finished their scope of the area. The dumpster rested in an alley between two large unoccupied buildings and showed signs that it had been moved recently.

“Yeah, we move ‘em,” a grizzly man told Elliot when questioned. “Depends on whose trying to piss out his territory, you know?”

Elliot nodded. Melinda stood a foot away from them, slightly apprehensive about the man’s appearance.

“Were you around here on maybe Friday night or Saturday morning?” Elliot asked.

“Already told the other cops who was out here,” the man said. “Just saw the man and his boy the other night and that was it. Didn’t even see nobody putting that lady in there.”

He thanked the man and he Melinda stepped across the area staring at each of the buildings. The row was falling apart and even the black and white letters of the “Absolut” billboard in the distance did little to suppress the gloom.

“What do you think?” Elliot said as he stared up at row upon row of boarded and broken windows.

“There’s no way to say for certain,” Melinda said, “Most of the windows around here are broken and boarded up, but just from judging the area and the crime scene photos, it’s got to be one of these left. I’d say the forth floor for certain since the dumpsters are tall. If she fell from up there, it would definitely account for her injuries and whatever was in the dumpster could have broken her fall just right.”

“C’mom Casey,” Elliot said pleading once more in her office an hour later. “We’ve gotta be able to get something.”

“It’s out of my hands,” she said sitting back in her chair. “Especially if the homeless up there are moving the dumpsters around just for the hell of it. That dumpster could have come all the way from the park and we’d have no way of knowing. Only one of those buildings up there even has an owner and he’s been MIA for years.”

Elliot looked noticeably dejected and she sighed and continued. “I want to get the bastard too, but I don’t want us throwing our weight all over the city, only to have him get off on a technicality once we find him.”

He turned to leave, but paused. “What about a list of names?”

“What do you need?”

“Melinda told me there’s this chemical that was found on Liv’s clothes. It’s been found on her floor too and in the most recent case with these boys. I need to know who makes some of the components and a list of who’s bought them recently.”

Casey turned to her monitor. “Give me an hour and I’ll have a warrant to get you what you need.”

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Elliot rubbed his eyes and pushed away from his desk to stare at the ceiling in the squad room. He had obtained the lists of consumers in the city who had purchased large quantities of anesthetizing agents from the warrant Casey had had signed within thirty minutes, and he and Alexa had been combing through the pages and pages of records for hours without finding anything relevant.

He had been fervently searching for something relating to suspects he had been able to cross off his list: Harry Morse, Owen Kreider, Philip Fitzgivens, Adam Jackson, Matthew Williard, Jeremy Cross, Jonathan Halloway and especially Mark Landon. Hours into his search, he was still unable to come up with anything.

"You should go," Alexa said softly from behind the list she was reading. "You look extremely tired."

"I am," Elliot whispered.

The constant stress of the previous weeks combined with days upon days of extremem fatigue and poor eating habits had finally caught up with him and he felt sicker with each passing minute. He his clothes fit looser from the weight he had lost and the circles under his eyes did not seem like they were disappearing any time soon.

He rose from his desk with a sigh.

"You gonna be okay?" he said to Alexa. "I mean we need to at least go through these tonight. I can catch a quick nap in the crib and help you later if you want."

"I'll be fine," Alexa said. "Just get some rest. You look like you're about to collapse right before me."

Elliot nodded and quickly left the squad room, and the moment the elevator doors had closed, Alexa leapt from her seat beside Elliot's desk. She padded quickly toward Cragen's office and stared at her superior for a moment as he sat behind his desk.

"Yes?" he asked, eyebrows high.

"I just thought you should know what I've found...or really didn't find when I was going through all these records."

Cragen leaned back in his chair and crossed his arms. "Okay...what *didn't* you find?"

"Stabler's name, of course."

"I didn't know you were looking for it."

"Well, I was keeping an open mind about the case."

"Elliot's involvement has been nullified by his actions," Cragen said trying to keep a scowl from spreading across his face at the young detective.

"Captain," Alexa said taking a step forward. "I understand that Elliot is every body's favorite around here, but the fact is a detective still went missing and he was the very last person to see her from January 31<sup>st</sup> until last Friday. Combined with what we saw in Morse's videos, I made a judgment call."

"And it was the wrong choice, Alexa."

"I see it as good news. This way we can say for certain that Elliot's not involved."

"Only the rat squad does something like that."

"But, as far as I'm concerned we're still trying to find out what happened to Detective Benson. I know no one wants to think it, but if he was any other guy off the street, we would've checked him thoroughly too. I mean, we still checked Halloway and he and he's *dating* Olivia."

"And the difference between Elliot and Halloway is Elliot is a seasoned cop who I'd trust with my own life. The fact you didn't find anything just proves what kind of person he is and what kind of person *you* are. It's not something anyone does here in SVU and you should be ashamed of yourself for even checking."

Alexa stared at him for a long while before straightening her posture and blinking rapidly to hold her resolve.

“My father used to be a cop,” she began. “And he’s spent the last ten years in a wheelchair after his old partner lost it after his divorce and shot my father in the spine. His partner did it in the middle of the night and claimed he didn’t know what the hell had happened for days. He stood by my father’s bedside, came to church with our family, held my mother’s hand as she cried...everything. I know...that we all want to believe the best of people, but I think it’s a little naïve to do so blindly just because someone wears a badge.”

“That kind of stuff doesn’t happen all the time, Alexa,” Cragen said in a much softer tone.

“But, the fact is, it *does* happen and as much as people revere Elliot Stabler in this department, he was still the last person to see Olivia before she disappeared. Cops do wrong too, but at least now we’re that much closer to being certain that he’s not involved.”

“He’s a good cop.”

“And so was the one who shot my father.” She sighed and took a step toward his door. “I just thought you should so that maybe the higher ups might get off your back about it a bit.”

She left and Cragen ran a hand over his face feeling both relieved and heavily burdened at the same time.

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nix the rest and go onto the 20<sup>th</sup>.

Tuesday February 20, 2007  
Mercy General Hospital East  
1:09PM

Elliot’s heart raced as the orderlies and nurses slowly pushed Olivia’s bed and the various IVs out of her room and along the corridor. Maya stood next to him with her hand at her chin and shivering from her tattered nerves.

When Dr. Haddley removed the large tube from Olivia’s throat, he and Maya were able to see Olivia up close and it was only then that they could see the damage that had been done. The swelling around her eyes had gone down significantly and many of the cuts had healed into brown scabs in spots on her face, but it was the lack of colour and the gauntness of her face that caught Elliot’s breath. She had lost a considerable amount of weight and even though Dr. Haddley insisted that Olivia was getting “better,” her waxy, grey skin told Elliot otherwise.

“She’ll be monitored around the clock,” Dr. Haddley said once Olivia had been set up in a new room. “I’m still slightly worried about the bronchitis, but I think the change might do her some good.”

“And, if it doesn’t?” Maya said, face stricken.

“Then we’ll try another course of antibiotics and she may have to go back into intensive care.”

“So, what do we do now?” Elliot asked. “Is this just a waiting game?”

“Well...yes. We need to wait for her bones to set. A broken femur is no small matter. Besides the bronchitis, she’s also in danger from infection from there and also the gunshot wound. But...I’ve seen people bounce back from worse.”

“Can we...can she hear us?” Maya said. “I mean can we talk to her to just let her know that we’re here for her?”

Dr. Haddley nodded. “You can talk to her. Her brain waves are very active so I know she can probably hear us.”

The doctor left Elliot and Maya alone in Olivia’s room as the sound of heart rate monitors and IV drips echoed in waves.

Maya pulled a chair close to Olivia’s bed and patted her left hand that was the only extremity to not break throughout the ordeal.

“I guess,” Maya said a sigh. “I guess all we have to do now is wait.”

“Yeah...”

“Livia,” Maya said softly. “It’s M-J.”

As Elliot expected, there was no change in Olivia’s stoic and unconscious face, but Maya continued.

“Livia...We’re here for you...You should just wake up ‘cause... you look like hell.”

Elliot let out a soft laugh and Maya turned around, facing him with shining eyes.

“Figured, I’d put her on the defensive...might her snap her out of it.”

Elliot nodded, but Maya continued staring at him.

say something to her

elliot shook his head. “No, I...no...”

please maya said tears reforming in her eyes. It’s Livia. She’d want to know that you’re here too.

Elliot sighed and walked across the room. His body cast a grey shadow over Olivia’s small form.

Liv,’ he said softly. It’s me...

Her body immediately jerked and Maya stood quickly dropping her hand. The heart rate monitor emitted a piercing sound as the vibrating lines on its screen splattered erratically.

“Nurse!” Elliot shouted, but a team of nurses and doctors on the floor had already run into the room dragging a crash cart from behind them.

He and Maya backed into the corner, watching in horror as the doctors worked on Olivia’s frail body. Tears streamed down Maya’s face as the crash cart seared and Elliot felt his own heart stop as the solid flat sound that signified that Olivia’s heart had stopped beating resounded about the room.

Three shots of epinephrine and three jolts later, the heart monitor popped back to life and the tension in the room eased over the course of several minutes.

Elliot pulled Maya into a hug and allowed her to cry into his shoulder while he held back tears of his own.

\*\*\*\* stars

“...we’re still unsure if it was the seizure or something else that elicited it, but it’s definitely pneumonia at this point.”

Elliot and Maya stood outside of a large window that displayed a new room in the ICU. Olivia, paler than ever, lay with several new IVs and the intubation tube

reconnected. Maya had her hand over her mouth, still in shock, and shook as she stared through the window.

"We'll keep her under close observation overnight," Dr. Haddley continued.

"What made her heart stop like that?" Elliot asked.

"We're still unsure...which is why she'll stay down here for another night. She's stable now, but I don't want any other surprises."

She left a short while later, noting that no other responses were imminent from either Elliot or Maya and a cold silence descended on the corridor until both present heard the sounds of someone running towards them.

"What happened?" Jillian yelled. "I want to know what happened! She was fine and now she's down here again! What happened!"

"Jill..." Maya said, approaching her cautiously. "They tried to take her out, but just wasn't ready, she'll be okay."

Jillian's eyes were fixed on Elliot and she pointed at him as her cheeks turned red.

"You see!" she screamed. "You see what happens! You leave her alone with him for just one minute and now she's back in intensive care!"

"Jillian, please," Maya hissed grabbing her arm. "Stop yelling. You're not making any sense."

"The hell I'm not! You were here earlier and she was getting better! You leave him alone with her and now she's sick again!"

"Jill, I was standing right here the whole time. She just got sick."

"*He* did something else to her!"

"She's got pneumonia!" Maya said. "Her doctor said it was a possibility. She'd been out in the cold for hours. Let's just be thankful she's not any worse off!"

Jillian dissolved into tears, shaking her head. "No! He's not going to stop until she's dead! He doesn't want her to wake up and tell the world what he did! I told her she should've gotten out of that unit because of him and now look! Look! He's going to kill her and it'll be all my fault because I didn't force the issue. I didn't tell enough people about the type of person he was!"

Maya pulled Jillian into a hug. "Livia's a smart woman, Jillian. And she's strong. She wouldn't go down without a fight. That's why she's here now and not....somewhere else. Elliot didn't have anything to do with this and you know it."

Jillian just cried in Maya's arms and together they sank to the floor as Maya looked on at Elliot helplessly.

"I'm sorry," Maya said an hour after she had ushered a sedated Jillian Harfort into a cab.

"For what?" Elliot said, never taking his eyes from Olivia's window.

"About Jillian."

Elliot shook his head. "You've already apologized about her and I told you not to worry about it."

"I know, but...I still feel bad about it. I should've waited until I was little more collected before I called her."

"Has anyone been able to contact Holloway yet?" he asked, changing the subject.

"No, and seeing as how this is almost Wednesday and he still doesn't know that she's even been found, I'm sure we'll all be facing a shit storm once he rolls back into the city. Maybe it was better that he wasn't here for this today. With Jillian flying

down the hall like that, I'm sure Jonathan would've pulled a gun on you at this point."

*Too late for that*, Elliot thought with a sigh.

"You want a ride home?" he asked.

"That's okay. I think I just want to stay for a little while longer. I know it's not going to do anything, but I just want to be here for her...just in case."

Elliot wanted to ask "in case of what" as he left the hospital, but decided against it. His dreams were already haunted by visions of Olivia's death and he knew that he would have enough trouble staving off the demons without Maya's tribulations to torment further.

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Wednesday February 21, 2007

SVU Squad Room

9:07AM

"It's her. I know it."

"Are you sure?"

"I just said I was."

Alexa rolled her eyes at Elliot as he sat with a case file open on his desk.

After spending the morning wanting Olivia to wake and lighting a candle for her in the hospital chapel, Elliot had settled back at his desk to comb through Missing Persons cases of Amanda Hill, Kimberley Nelson, Taynesha Grant and Amy Kettering. Hair from all four women had been found on Olivia's clothes and he knew that somewhere in their files lay the key to discovering what had happened to Olivia.

The sight of Kimberley Nelson, missing since late October, in a photo with a smiling beau had elicited a sharp memory from a video that had been buried under a stack of manila files for nearly two weeks.

"It's the same girl from the DVD," Elliot said. "Munch handed this to me weeks ago. It's her."

"That doesn't make any sense," Alexa said. "That was made in December and she hasn't been seen or heard from since before that and everything in her Missing Persons file makes it look like she was probably killed at the same time she disappeared."

"Did you look at the video? It's her."

"There's no way."

"She was about fifty pounds lighter, but it's her."

Alexa shook her head. "I don't see it."

"It's her," he repeated. "And the blond guy who's in all of them...he doesn't kill her on here, but I'd say the last of the movies on that DVD definitely looks like he murdered that girl."

"I can't see how this is going to help us find out what happened to Olivia."

"Alexa," he said trying to remain composed. "Olivia was brought into the hospital wearing the same clothes I'd seen her in three weeks ago. We found hair from half a dozen people on those clothes and this girl, Kimberley Nelson, was one of

those people. Think about. Kimberley's been missing for months, but Liv came in contact with her during the past three weeks. To find out what happened to Olivia, we need to find out what happened to that girl."

"But, how do we start? We only have that video and some hair."

"We need to know what's in those original case files. You up for a drive?"

She eyed him suspiciously for a moment, but nodded her head and thirty minutes later, they were heading towards the Brooklyn precinct where Detectives Partelli and Charaden held the Missing Persons case file of Kimberley Nelson and the others.

"I love Brooklyn," Alexa said from the passenger side of the car provoking a sideways glance from Elliot. "It just feels so historic to me. There's something in the air."

"How long have you lived out here?"

"Long enough to know that Manhattan's gotten too damn expensive for any normal person live in anything other than a hole in the wall."

"Tell me about it..."

Partelli and Charaden had little information to give them and both seemed irked that Manhattan SVU saw fit to leech into what was their case.

"What do you know about the guy who's in all the movies?" Elliot asked the detectives who stood, stony-faced with arms crossed.

"We've been getting these trickle in for a couple years," Charaden said shaking his head.

"But, the people who bring 'em in are always anonymous and by the time we see what's on them, no one can find them."

"We gave the ones where it looks like a murder goes down to Homicide," Partelli said.

"And, they don't have anything on him either. It's either a private dealer or just an amateur because there's no production info and there's never anybody else on them. Just him and some girl. Sometimes it's different girls; sometimes the same, but it's always just him."

"How'd the women turn up missing?" Alexa asked.

Charaden let out an annoyed sigh. "Usually just disappearing in the middle of the night. Never a note or a call. They just vanished."

"Friends and relatives?" Elliot said glancing at Alexa.

"All been quizzed and shown a picture of this guy's face. Nobody knows anything. You might want to bother Bronx Missing Persons too. I know they've got a case that sounds kind of similar."

Missing Persons in both the Bronx and Manhattan gave as much information as possible, but it seemed all the boroughs were stuck from lack of evidence. A number of women had gone missing in the city, only to be seen later in an all-too-realistic pornography months or years later. The closest thing to a trail Bronx Missing Persons had been able to find ended when the lead which came from the guy who had brought in the original tape who got it from a friend of a friend of a friend who got that tape from a seedy store in Chinatown brought the detectives to an empty building. What struck Elliot most about all the open cases was that each of the women who had later appeared in a video in one form or another, had simply vanished into the night, not unlike Olivia.

Brooklyn SVU detectives were able to give them the name of the woman who claimed to have been let go by the same man seen in the videos, but they quickly learned that

she had committed suicide not long afterward, still thinking that “he” was going to come after her again.

Tired from a day of discovery nothing more to lead them closer to what had happened to Olivia, Elliot and Alexa returned to the precinct to report on what they had not found about the case.

As daylight slowly turned into evening, Elliot started ask Alexa if she wanted to buy half a pizza, figuring they were both in for a long night, when he received a call from Maya. The call was quick and to the point. The hospital was about to move Olivia from the ICU again and she thought he would want to be there when they did.

Alexa asked if she could tag along with him when he started to leave the precinct for the hospital, but Elliot made certain not to even bat an eyelash in hopes that she would simply assume he had not heard her.

When he got to hospital, Maya had already begun arranging a series of cards and taut plastic balloons on the small window sill to the far left of the room.

“Who are those all from?” he asked softly as he in the chair beside Olivia’s bed. He wanted to keep conversation to a minimum as the last time he had spoken in Olivia’s presence, she had gone into shock and though he was in no mood to repeat the experience, his curiosity got the better of him.

“Mostly well-wishers. She probably doesn’t know most of them, but I still figured it might brighten the place a little. Especially, considering she might be in here for a while.”

“You think so?”

“I know so,” Maya said. “I spent most of last night reading up on bone breakage and expected healing times. She’d be in the hospital for a while even if she wasn’t...” Maya’s voice trailed and she sighed as she turned another “Get Well Soon” card so that it caught the shrinking outside light.

"Do you have any idea what happened to her yet?"

He shook his head, not wanting to voice the words “we haven’t got anything” so close to Olivia.

"Well, I have faith in you just like I have faith that Liv will wake up any day now and tell me...tell me...how my haircut doesn't fit my face or how I need to stop jumping from man to man or how I should just get over my parents and work on growing my practice. After all this is over...she'll be okay."

Elliot turned his gaze to Olivia and simply stared at her, wishing she would wake as Maya stepped about the room behind him. His gaze on her face had been so intently he barely lifted his eyebrows when Maya told him she was leaving for a bit or when a new figure appeared at her door.

Jonathan’s breath caught as he came within a few feet of Olivia’s bed and Elliot’s leapt to a stand upon noticing him. Eyes red and black hair shining even in the flat hospital light, Jonathan stared unblinking at Olivia.

Elliot stood silent not knowing if there was to be said or done. He knew that Cragen would have most likely notified Jonathan not too long after calling Maya, but Jonathan had been unreachable for days. Elliot shuddered at the thought of receiving the news from numerous messages left after days and days of calls.

“Olivia...” Jonathan muttered softly as he stared at her. He then glanced at Elliot. “Can she even hear me?”

Elliot nodded and Jonathan eyes welled before him. Watching in silent awe for the wealth of emotions flowing from the man, Elliot simply stared as Jonathan fell to his knees and sobbed at Olivia’s side.

Remembering the look of absolute grief and despair upon Jonathan’s face when he last saw, Elliot slowly crept out of the room as Jonathan’s wails filtered into the corridor even through the closed door.

When he returned to the hospital the next day, Elliot immediately checked the visitor log for Olivia’s room, noting that Jonathan, Maya, Jillian and Sarah, had each come and gone in the morning hours and that a “P. Shah” remained still in the room. With the name Shah and a conversation he had had weeks earlier in mind, he entered Olivia’s room expecting to see a slightly older version of Maya sitting in the room, but found instead an elderly woman slightly bent over Olivia’s unconscious form and rubbing something into the fingers that stuck out from her cast.

“What are you doing?” he asked immediately, his full interrogation voice echoing vehemently.

The Indian woman glanced at him for a moment before returning her attention to rubbing Olivia’s hand.

“It’s a kind of lotion,” she said in a voice surprisingly deep for her short-stature and mild face. “It’ll keep her hands from drying too badly while she’s in here. Hospital air is notably horrible for your skin.”

He crossed the room never taking his eyes off the woman. “Who are you? You only listed an initial on the visitor’s log.”

“My name is Priyal Shah, but you can call me *Mrs.* Shah.”

“You’re Maya’s mother.”

“Yes,” she said, the expression on her face turning sour for a moment. “I suppose I am.”

She moved to the other side of Olivia’s bed and squeezed a dime-sized drop of the white demulcent into her hand to rub into Olivia’s skin. Elliot could see that her eyes held the same kind of youthful spark that Maya had when she was laughing, but the rest of her vaguely familiar face spoke a story of a woman not younger than eighty.

“I think we’ve met before,” he said. “I’m Elliot Stabler. Olivia’s partner.”

“Yes, I remember,” Mrs. Shah said. “Serena’s funeral. These years later, I’m still shocked. She was such a nice young woman.”

“I didn’t realize you and Ms. Benson were so close.”

She sighed for a moment as if searching her memory for a scene from years earlier.

“We didn’t have much in common until I realized she worked at the university with my husband. Completely different college, though. The Humanities will never be the same without her. Always pleasant as long as she stayed away from that bottle.

But, yes. We did get to know one another rather well over the years.”

“Through Maya?”

“She was a mistake,” she said abruptly, but then formed a smile. “But, she brought little Olivia into our lives, so I suppose she makes up for it.”

Elliot’s eyebrows furrowed at the comment. “A mistake?”

“Yes, a mistake. I was nearly forty-three-years old when she was born. My four others were nearly grown when she came around. There.” She rose from her seat having capped her small bottle. “She should be good for a few more days. I’ll send *that girl* in here with more later in the week. It’s getting harder and harder to make these longer trips into the city.”

“You mean, Maya? She’s here every day, in fact she was in here this morning. You probably just missed her.”

“Yes, I’m sure,” Mrs. Shah said curtly. “Probably shirking her responsibilities as usual. *That girl* has been a disappointment from her very first step to the moment she tried to tell me something had happened to Olivia. She’ll most likely suffer from an extra long bout of imprudence and stupidity now that our Olivia won’t be around to tell her how to walk and breathe at the same time.”

“Oh...” Elliot said crossing his arms and taking a step backward, floored by the brass comments flowing from Maya’s mother’s eighty-year-old mouth. “Well, we all have somebody who helps us out. I’ve just now realized how much I’ve come to depend on Olivia myself.”

Mrs. Shah sighed as she slowly crossed the room. “Depending on someone is one thing, young man. Not being able to stand on your own two feet as an adult without someone strong like Olivia propping you up is another.” She paused and a small, sad smile pulled her at lips as she came near the doorway. “I’ve watched this one for a long time. Olivia was clearly the child we should have had instead of the spoiled thing that came to us...It was good to see you again, Detective. I hope to be notified if there are any other changes to her condition.”

Elliot nodded and she continued. “I’ve taken it upon myself to make sure she’s looked after the way her mother would’ve. Now, the driver’s been waiting downstairs for quite some time and if I leave him to his own for too long, he’s starts to find mischief. Has been nothing but trouble since the day he was hired. Probably should’ve married Mayanjula off to him so they could have their own brand of misfit children. Goodbye.”

She stepped from the room, leaving Elliot dumbfounded as he took the seat next to Olivia.

Munch came by a short while later and he tried to uplift Elliot’s spirits by cracking several jokes about what Olivia was going to do once she found out they had ransacked her apartment, but the light humour consoled him for only as long as Munch stood by the bed. By the time he had left, Elliot was left with the sinking feeling that Olivia might remain in blank, vegetative state for the rest of her life.

He left the room to quiz Dr. Haddley about Olivia’s vitals and the possibility of other seizures or surprise infections and when he returned to the room to try and talk Olivia into consciousness, Maya had taken his seat, reading a magazine as if waiting to be seen during a doctor’s visit.

“Hey,” he said softly. “You’re back.”

“Yep. My client and I had another long argument today and normally I would’ve asked Livia if she wanted to blow off steam with a quick drink, but seeing as how she’s slightly incapacitated at the moment, I decided to just be here for her for the time being.”

“Where’s Holloway? I know he was here yesterday.”

"Sedated on another floor."

Elliot stared at her with wide eyes and she nodded.

"According to Jillian, he kind of lost it last night when he saw her and he became so hysterical that they had to drag him away. Then, he was throwing such a fit that he had to be sedated. I went to see him before I came back here."

"How is he?"

"He'll be fine. I think he's more embarrassed than anything else."

"Oh... I met your mother today," he said pulling the other empty chair in the room beside her.

Maya scoffed. "Bet that was an interesting conversation. She tell you how she always thought I was her biggest disappointment?"

"No," Elliot lied. "We really didn't talk that much."

"Well, that surprises me," Maya said without looking up from her magazine. "She's always liked telling people that I was the mistake."

The heart rate monitor beeped twice in a second, eliciting a tense, silent stare from the both of them until it began to chirp at a regular pace.

"You...uh," Maya began, "ever have that friend who you were certain your parents loved more than you?"

"You think your parents loved Olivia more than you?"

"I know it for certain. My mother used to say it daily. When all my brothers and sisters had moved out and it was just me, her and Dad...we'd be at the dinner table and she would say, 'Oh, I heard Olivia made the honor roll again. It's shame we can't a child like that over for dinner more often. Someone we could love and be proud of instead of...' Then, she'd trail off and stare at me."

"You don't really think she meant it, though?"

Maya smiled and shook her head. "Senior year of high school, Olivia got the lead in our school musical. And it was crazy too, she just came to me after school one day and said she'd auditioned and that she'd got the part. She wasn't even in the choir or did anything that would bring a lot of attention on her. It wasn't until after the play was over that I realized she only did it because her mother was going to be at this....conference or whatever while the play was showing.

"Anyway, I went to see every show and so did my parents, and after the last show...you should have seen them. They brought her flowers and candy and took loads of pictures. They'd even taped the last one and kept it as a keepsake. And the way they were looking at her that night....that look. Just so filled with this glowing pride and happiness....so, enamored with her. They never looked at me like that. Even after I'd graduated law school. They never once looked at me like that."

Elliot nodded slightly, hearing the hurt in her voice. "Everyone's parents do something to screw them up....My old man used to tell me I was good for nothing all the time. I'm third of four kids; three brothers, but our father acted like our sister walked on water. She would do anything she wanted and be perfectly fine, but the rest of us... Your parents don't sound like they were ever abusive though."

"Yours were?" Maya asked. When Elliot shrugged, Maya sighed and continued. "When I was little, really little, before I'd even met Livia, my mother would be teaching me how to tie my sari and any time I'd make a mistake, she'd just start screaming at me. She would say how stupid I was, how I was never going to be like my sisters,

how she wished she'd had a miscarriage. It wasn't until I was older that I learned what a miscarriage was, and it hurt even more than when she had spat the word at me."

Maya paused, reflecting for a moment. "I'd asked Livia, when we were in the third grade, and we ended up looking it up in the dictionary, because she said *her* mother said that *she* wished *she'd* had a miscarriage too, but neither of us knew what it was. It just seemed like common sense to know....I think that was the moment Livia became more than just a best friend for me. Even though, I knew my parents cherished her and thought the world of her, far more than they ever could me, we...sometimes, she got it."

"Sometimes? You say that like you think Liv never really understood you."

"Oh, she understood. If there was anybody in the world who understood it was Livia."

"So why 'sometimes?'" he pressed. "From what I know about the two of you, you were two peas in a pod growing up."

"*Sometimes* Livia acted like my older sisters. It was she got that exasperated look that said she was annoyed with having me around. But, then there were other times when she did things just like I would've and those were the times when I knew she got it."

"Like when?"

She set down her magazine and gave Elliot her full attention. "When we were kids, just like sixteen, she was dating this older guy. I think he was one of her mom's students. So, she calls me this one day, *so* excited. David, that was his name. David wanted to get married and she was just so excited to be going, leaving. And, I'm listening to her go on and on about him and I felt really bad because then I had to ask the question: 'What are you going to tell your mom?'"

"And she was quiet for a really long time before saying that she didn't know and then changed the subject. But, later that night, she shows up at my house and she's really upset. I can tell she'd be crying the whole walk over. And, she's crying and telling me that she just needed to get away. That's all she kept saying. She had to get out, she had to get away. And so...we left. We got in my car and just started driving. We didn't have any idea where we were going, but we just drove. When it was like 3am, I just pulled over and made her tell me what happened."

"What had happened?"

Maya paused a moment staring at the floor, as if playing the memory of that night in her head. "She said she hurt her mom when she told her about David and that she didn't know what she was going to do."

"What'd you end up doing?"

"We drove around for a little bit more before we found this Bates-looking motel off Route 9. We stayed the night there and we started saying the craziest things. Like, what would happen if we just kept going. Just kept driving until we got to Canada. How we could start new lives away from our families and just....be." She paused and swallowed. "But....eventually my parents reported their credit card and their car stolen and we had no choice, but to go back home. I think my parents would have probably murdered me if Olivia hadn't been there. She ended up staying with us for two weeks after that. I didn't even know what to say when her mother showed up. She was just standing there in the doorway and she had

this look on her face like she was just....like she was just....a neighbor picking up some mail we'd been holding or something.

"I...I know it's not right to speak badly about the dead, but I never cared for Ms. Serena. I realized that when she showed up that night. I mean, if *my* daughter had been gone for two weeks, I'd be out of my mind worrying about her. Plus, after everything that had happened with David... Ms. Serena looked *rested*...like she didn't even care. And she and my mother used to get along so well, too. When Livia went back to her mother's house, my mother acted like Livia had just spent the night like she did when we were little. She and Ms. Serena both laughed and acted like everything was fine."

"Did your mother know what had happened?"

"Not the specifics. But, would your parents have been perfectly fine if one of your friends just started *living* at your house, without a call or anything from *their* parents?"

Maya sighed. "I think that might be half the reason why I don't want children of my own. Aside from these crazy genes I'd be passing onto them, I wouldn't want to make the same mistakes my parents and other people make."

Elliot simply stared at her.

"What?" she said.

"Nothing...it's just that you Olivia are so similar at times."

Maya shrugged. "We used to get that a lot when we were younger. Especially during the summer. But in my mind the thing that separates us most is that at the end of the day, Livia loved her mother, but I....I still hate mine and I'll hate her in her grave, too."

Silence fell upon them, broken only by the sounds of the many machines monitoring Olivia's signs of life.

"Well," Maya said standing and gathering her things. She brushed away a tear that was attempting to escape from her eye. "I actually have work to do believe it or not."

"*You* have work to do," Elliot said with a smile. "Get outta here!"

"Yeah, every once in a while I pretend like I'm an actual lawyer and I need to check on a few other clients before they wise up and get better attorneys. See you around, Elliot."

Elliot gave her nod to signify goodbye and let his gaze fall upon Olivia, willing her to wake up before he had to go face the world again.

When he left for the night, he tipped the nurses at the station and gave them a list of names.

"If anyone comes by to see her who's not on the list," he said. "I need you to call me at this number immediately."

The floor nurse tacked the list on a bulletin board and gave him a small smile as he turned to leave the hospital.

\*\*\*\*\* stars

Saturday February 24, 2007  
2:07AM

A quiet lull fell over the fourth floor in an odd shift from previous early Saturday hours. Normally, the hospital buzzed with victims suffering with anything from alcohol poisoning to life-threatening gunshot wounds and the noise would filter upward to cause a stir on the higher floors, however no such bedlam was present.

Danica Rodgers sighed as she mulled over the large text book that sat on the desk in front of her. She had been playing with the idea of taking the nurse practitioner's exam for years, but for one reason or another, had somehow talked herself out of doing it. With her recent night shifts taking a toll on her sleep, she had begun doubting whether or not she should even bother studying for the imminent exam.

The midnight shifts always seemed longest as they tended to drag on endlessly. Danica would find herself organizing files, taking a moment to stare at the clock, working on something else, and looking back at the clock only to see that just one minute had passed since the last time she had looked. The recent quiet made the boredom even worse and she stood quickly hoping to get her blood pumping enough to keep sleep at bay.

She had not had a dull moment in the past few days due to the most recent inhabitant of Room 108, one Olivia Benson. Danica had seen Olivia on the news and was mildly interested in her well being as it seemed she had gone through hell just to land in a coma weeks later, but the newness of the patient wore off quickly, even with the constant stream of visitors and especially cops.

Never had so many officers called or visited the floor in regards to one patient and Danica wished for another visit from one of them to break the monotony. Several days earlier they had witnessed quite the stir when a man from one of the wealthier families in the city came to visit Room 108 and fell into such a blaze of grief that he screamed himself into a panic and had to be admitted to the hospital himself.

Outside of him, a series of people from all walks of life had come by to see the patient. One of her favorites was the blue-eyed detective who came every day for hours at a time. He would always speak to her and the other nurses in a soft, but earnest voice, constantly wanting to be notified of the slightest change in the patient. Danica had half a mind to "accidentally" cause a problem with an IV just to get him to return when she wanted him.

A younger LPN, Sharisse McPhillips, came around the corner, having finished her set of rounds, and stepped into the semi-circle that created the nurse's station.

"They released that Halloway guy," Sharisse said as she flopped into the chair next to her.

"That's too bad, Danica said.

"He's dating that lady from 108, right?"

Danica nodded. "Yup. It figures too. He's rich and attractive, but he'll probably spend the rest of his life at her bed side while the rest of us go without a man."

"You just keep trying," Sharisse laughed. "You never know. I think I saw a movie not too long ago about something like that. The rich guy kept coming to see his wife who was a vegetable and then fell in love with either the nurse or the doctor. I think the wife eventually woke up though and caused a whole lotta drama."

"It figures. That's what would happen to me too."

"There's always Detective Pretty-Eyes to fall back on," Sharisse teased.

Danica fell into a fit of giggles. “You are too much, you know that?”

A light flashed just once on the display before her. It was not indicative of anything significant, but Danica rose to check in on Room 108 nonetheless.

She turned on lights in the room, making its occupant appear ghostly pale at once and set upon checking the assorted monitors near the bed.

Having checked that each of Olivia Benson’s vital signs appeared normal, Danica turned to leave, but a twitch of movement caught her eye as she did. She stood still, staring intently at the woman on the bed, waiting to see if there was another movement, but after several minutes of seeing nothing, she sighed and headed for the door.

Danica began to pull the door closed, but paused just before her foot had exited the room. *Did that sound just come from her?* she thought.

She stepped back into the room and walked toward the bed, eyes furrowed, but fixed on Olivia. Five minutes went by without any other sound or movement and she soon heard Sharisse calling for her.

“Something wrong?” Sharisse said entering the room.

“Look at her,” Danica said. “Tell me if you see her moving.”

They stood silent for another minute before Sharisse rolled her eyes.

“I don’t see anything. Besides, I heard her doctor the other day. They don’t expect her to ever wake up.”

“She’s not brain dead.”

“But, she’d be conscious by now if she was going to wake up. They don’t even know what’s wrong with her.”

“I guess. It’s just that I thought I saw her move.”

“Wishful thinking. You and that one cop.”

They left the room together and within an hour they had settled into a game of Hearts with two of the other nurses on the floor.

“How the hell did you just Shoot the Moon like that?” Kyle Sampson said hitting his hand on the counter.

“Just got it like that,” Danica said smiling.

No sooner had the words left her mouth that the control panel to the right of the group lit several flashing lights and an alarm erupted from it.

All four rushed down the hall to Room 108, where its sole occupant tossed and convulsed in the narrow bed.

“It’s another seizure,” Kyle said trying to set her back against the bed.

“Careful!” Sharisse said. “She’s torn the bandage on her side. She’s already bleeding.”

They each held her steady, but the convulsions grew worse coming in waves and hit an event horizon when her body contracted at the waist and burst to life. Brown eyes, red with burst blood vessels, flashed open at the same time her mouth gaped to emit a piercing sound that caught Sharisse so off guard that she released the struggling arm she had been holding only to be hit in the face as the cast-encircled arm quavered free.

An alarm blared almost as loud as the shriek, amplified by the ringing and beeps from the surrounding machines, and Danica, still holding on for dear life and yelling out for the doctors on call, closed her eyes as Olivia Benson screamed into the night.

## Chapter Twenty-Six

Saturday February 24, 2007  
Mercy General Hospital East

For the second time in so many days, Elliot found himself speeding up 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, passing cars as if they were standing still. He had received Maya's phone call in the middle of the night while he lay asleep on the old couch on which Kathy had set a pillow and blanket for him, and he left a quick note on the kitchen table to explain his hasty disappearance as he dashed out of the house.

When he reached the hospital, it was all he could do to keep from breaking into a sprint down the corridors. He had already run up the stairs having no patience to wait for the elevators at such a time.

It was far past visiting hours in the hospital, but between the NYPD and the generous donations made by Jonathan Halloway, his mother, sister and older brothers, those who had made Elliot's list were free to visit Room 108 at any time of night.

Elliot rushed into the room to find Olivia, still unconscious though she looked far better, and Maya sitting in the chair next to the bed reading a copy of Jane. She broke into a smile when stepped into the room breathing hard.

"Sixteen minutes from Queens," she said, eyebrows high. "That's got to be a record."

"Not a chance," Elliot said with a smile. "I know I broke that getting here last week."

He sat down in the chair beside.

"They've got her sedated," Maya said knowing the question ready to spring from his lips.

"Her doctor thinks that she'll be awake in a little while."

"But she woke up?"

Maya's smile faded. "Yeah, her nurses say that she was...um...screaming. And, it took them...you know...a while to calm her down." She sighed, shook her head and reopened her Jane as if it was her defense mechanism against the rest of her reality. "But, she should be awake in a few hours."

"You mind if I just sit here with you?"

"Please," she says smiling and removing her purse from the chair next to her. "I know she'll want to see you when she wakes up again."

He stared at Olivia, willing her to open her eyes; just to look at him and let him know everything in his life would be all right.

Maya glanced at him and lets out small chuckle. "I've already tried that Detective, and it doesn't work."

"What's that?" Elliot said in a bit of daze.

"Willing her to wake up." She smiled and turned the page of her magazine. "I'd been trying for over an hour before I gave up and figured I'd just wait her out."

"She's stubborn."

"You have no idea."

They both went silent for a moment.

"You don't you have to be working right now?" Maya asked not looking up from her magazine.

"Not at the moment. Technically speaking, I'm still on some kind of suspension in regards to the deputy inspector."

Her eyes met his, sincerity flowing in her face. "I'm so sorry. Look, if it had anything to do with what I said, I-"

"No," Elliot said shaking his head. "I lost my temper and I picked the fight with Olivia." He paused. "Nothing you said had anything to do with it."

"Don't lie to me, Elliot. I know it sounded very bad and I know Jillian and Jonathan didn't help any."

"What happened to me isn't your fault. It's me. Any of this that's affected my career is all on me." He sighed and ran a hand over his head. "I can't believe we even fought like that."

"Hey," Maya said. "I know the both of you. It was only a matter of time. The tension that I'd been hearing about...you two were either going to screw or throw down. Unfortunately, you chose the latter. Next time...just choose better."

She smiled at him and he could not resist returning it as his face grew warm at her suggestion.

"You've really known Liv since kindergarten?" he asked changing the subject.

She nodded returning her magazine. "Yup. Livia's been a part of every major moment of my life."

"Why do you call her Livia?"

Maya simply raised her eyebrows in his direction having not understood his question.

"You call her Livia," he said. "Not Liv or Olivia. Always Livia. What's with that?"

Maya smiled and set down her Jane again. "I told you, *Livia* and I met way back in kindergarten...."

"And...."

"Well, when I asked her what her name was....I didn't hear the O. She said her name was Livia Benson. By the time, I finally figured it out, the O had fallen off and Livia just stuck with me."

"Yeah, but I've never heard anyone else call her that."

"I know," Maya said smiling. "Maybe when you've known Livia for thirty years, she'll let you call her by some random nickname that no one else does, too."

Elliot smiled while silence settled between the pair of them, marred every few moments by the hums and beeps of the several machines that hooked into Olivia.

Elliot sighed and felt his eyes begin to grow heavy.

*She woke up.*

Just the thought that she was not going to lie comatose in the room for the rest of her life took a weight off him and suddenly he felt the fatigue of the past few weeks pressing against.

"What's with you and your mother?" he asked quickly. If he could just keep talking, he could stay awake. He needed to be awake when Olivia was regained consciousness.

"She hates me and I hate her."

"Something must've happened though."

"I was born." Maya sighed when Elliot stared at her, pressing for more information. "I'm the youngest of five and when I say youngest, I mean *youngest* of five."

"How big is the age gap?"

"Let's see... My oldest sister, Lavanya, just turned fifty-eight and she doesn't like me either. My oldest brother, Rajesh, is fifty-six and Jaidev and Priyani are twins and they are fifty-four."

"That's a helluva gap. Are you close to any of them?"

"My sister Priyani calls every once in a while and Jaidev and his wife still live in the city, so we see each other kind of often, but I honestly haven't talked to Lavanya in at least ten years and could've gone without talking to my mother until she was dead if all this hadn't happened with Livia."

Elliot shook his head. "My father and I didn't have the greatest relationship when I was coming up, but I could never say I hated him like that at any point."

"Then you had better parents than me. Once *Mātā* goes, I'll be throwing myself a little party."

"Well as much she seems to love Olivia, I'm sure *she'd* be upset."

Maya set down her magazine and stared at Olivia for a long time before replying.

"Okay, but that's because..."

\*\*\*\*\* stars

Olivia's listless form had not stirred in several hours, but the other occupants in her room laughed animatedly having shared stories about their experiences with said patient over the years.

"So finally, Livia comes out," Maya laughed. "And at first, me and Jillian don't even notice 'cause we're both just admiring our own gowns and how *not* ugly they were. And I'm telling you, I'd've worn that dress at any occasion. It was just that fabulous."

"So, Liv has good taste in bridesmaid gowns?"

"Flawless," Maya says using her hands to express her opinion. "But, yeah. The dresses were perfect and we're just admiring ourselves in the mirrors, when I see something white out the corner of my eye."

" 'Bout time." Elliot laughed again.

"Seriously! So, I turn around and...my jaw drops. She looked like an angel. Absolutely gorgeous. You wouldn't've believed it. I mean the dress was this really, really beautiful Ralph Lauren and the veil...I mean it was just perfect."

Elliot nodded and tried to brush away the image of his partner literally glowing in a bridal gown.

"So, we help her up onto the pedastal thingy and me, Jill, the seamstress...we all just take a step back and just start smiling because she looked so great in this dress. And, I'm starting to tear up myself 'cause I'm remembering, you know, swinging on the swings at the playground and getting dressed up for our first school dance and stuff and Jillian was just standing there crying her eyes out."

Elliot smiles at the image that played in his head. The only images of Jillian Harfort he had were of her screaming and pointing at him like a criminal. It was amusing to

think of her in her twenties before the weight of the world began to pound upon her.

"So, we're standing there looking at her like, 'Wow! Livia, you look perfect!' and she turns around so that she can see herself in the full length mirror. And, it was like this....second of...I don't know silence or something right before the storm because she's standing there, and at first she's smiling...but then her smiles fades and...Elliot, I swear to you, I've never seen someone turn colors that fast in my life."

"So what happened?" Elliot asked.

"Literally, all the color starting from her forehead just drains out of her face. And, all of a sudden, she's nearly as white as the damn dress. So, I'm like, 'Livia? Are you okay?' And then, her eyes just sort of roll back her in head and down she went."

"You're kidding?"

"I wish I were. She just passed out, right there. Thank God the seamstress had seen it happen before because she was right on the ball and got to Livia before she hit the floor. So when she grabs her, I'm standing there in shock and Jillian's just freaking out. And the worst part was, she wouldn't wake up. So, then we're at the hospital, in the bridesmaid's gowns, Livia still in her wedding dress. I'm starting to freak out 'cause it's been hours at this point and one of the doctor's had to give Jillian something because her nerves had already hit the breaking point....and then, she just wakes up and sits up smiling, like nothing had happened."

Elliot laughed, but when his eyes saw Olivia's still sedated form, the smile faded quickly.

"And I'm like, 'Livia! You totally just passed out in the bridal shop!' And she's looking around like she can't remember what went down. Then, I figure what hit her on that stand, came back to her because all the color left her face again."

"What made her pass out like that?"

Maya shrugged, but answered anyway. "Later, when it was just the two of us she told me....She said she saw herself in that dress and then she could see herself in front of the minister who was going on about forever and she said she just lost it."

"Wow," Elliot said. "I just can't see Liv just passing out like that."

"You're telling me. I mean it was nearly fifteen years ago, but I've known her forever, and I'd never seen her do anything like that. Anyway, so then she tells me she just doesn't think she can marry Jason."

"Eight days before the wedding?"

"I know, it was awful. So, I'm telling her to just think about it and sleep on it before she did anything drastic. And you can just imagine the kind of state she was in. I mean she was asking *me* for advice."

"Yeah, I'd say she'd have to be pretty damn desperate at that point."

Maya rolled her eyes and smiled. "So, I leave and I call her to meet her for lunch the next day, but she doesn't answer the phone. I call her partner at that time, and he says she's taking a sick day."

"Olivia?"

"Exactly! So, I'm over to her apartment in like twenty minutes. I'm double parked and banging on her door. When she finally opens it, she's a mess. I mean she looked so pitiful and you could just tell she'd been crying all night. And that's when she tells me she broke it off with Jason the night before."

"Wow..."

"Yeah, it was nothing short of a disaster. I mean, it was a week before the wedding. Dresses had been made, flowers ordered, gifts bought, the venue saved. Oh, and they'd already got their license, like three days before."

"Good God." Elliot said shaking his head.

"Exactly. It was an absolute disaster."

"So, what was the problem? She just didn't want to get married?"

"Well, the way *I* understand it, Jason just wasn't the one. All she was saying was how she kept envisioning herself married to Jason, and the thought of it made her ill....literally. She said she just couldn't marry him, when she knew he wasn't the one."

"If he wasn't the one, then why even accept the ring?"

Maya shrugged defensively. "Hey, I don't know! This was her madness not mine."

"Yeah, but she had to've said *something* about it."

"Look, all I know is that if a nice guy got down on one knee and offered me a ring, I probably would've accepted too."

"Without even thinking about it?"

"Well, you tell me," Maya began. "Think about when you proposed to your wife and tell me what you would've done if she sat there and *thought about it*."

Elliot stared at the floor. He figured that Maya had been so caught up in her story that she had forgotten the state of his marriage, but the words still stung.

Years ago, he had really proposed to Kathy; it was more Kathy coming to him and saying that she was pregnant. He did what he thought was the right thing, but Elliot could not help wondering if Kathy was just like Olivia; accepting a proposal just because it was offered.

As Maya went on to tell him about the aftermath of the engagement, a question ripped through his mind: How different would his life had been if Kathy *had* thought about it?

That night, he spent the evening with his family until his children all ran out of the house to be with their respective friends, and he and Kathy sat on the couch watching television.

"How is she?" Kathy said lowering the volume.

They had dodged the subject throughout dinner, but Elliot could by the look in Kathy's eyes that she pressed the question out of her own curiosity, not only for their children's mental well being.

He shrugged. "Hasn't woken back up yet."

"But, was she talking when she did?"

"They just said she was screaming."

"Screaming?" she said eyes wide. "That can't be good."

"Seriously..."

Sensing that he did not want to continue with the subject, Kathy reached for the remote control, but Elliot batted her hand lightly toward the couch.

"Let me ask you something, Kath," he said. "What was it that made you say yes?"

"I don't understand."

“When I asked you to marry me...why’d you say yes? Was it just because you were pregnant with Maureen?”

“No, Elliot,” she said softly. “I said yes because I loved you...like I still do.”

He sighed. “Then, how’d we get here? Why can’t we just sit here and be together waiting to bust the kids for missing their curfew just like old times?”

Kathy swallowed and shifted on the couch. “Because...Elliot, we’re not the same people we were twenty years ago.”

Nodding, he stood to leave, but Kathy quickly jumped off the couch with him.

“You can still stay, Elliot. You can just... You could just stay and come to church with us all in the morning. It would reduce the fight for the front seat for a day, at least.”

“No,” he said. “Not tonight. I’ll see you at church in the morning, though. ‘Kay?”

He left the house briskly, hoping she would not see the longing in his eyes and for just a moment, as he pulled out of his parking space, he mildly wished that Kathy had “thought about it” so many years earlier.

\*\*\*\* stars

Sunday February 25, 2007  
2:10PM

Elliot found the church service with his family fairly pleasant, though he could not bring himself to utter one word to Kathy given their conversation the previous night. Had not slept at all and though he suffered no new nightmares, his brain whirled with thoughts of many “what-ifs.”

At church, they had lit candles together for Olivia and he even went to confession before making the drive to the hospital.

When he checked the visitor’s log for Olivia’s room, he noticed with a frown that Jonathan had stopped by after he and Maya had left the night and had stayed well into the morning hours.

“He slept in there,” a bright-eyed nurse said. She wore a nameplate that read “Danica” on it and was dressed in the same pink scrubs as the rest of the nurses. “Is that Mr. Halloway you’re looking at on the sheet?”

“Yeah,” he said. “How’d he sleep in there?”

She shrugged. “We brought him another chair and a blanket from another room and he just made it work.”

“Thanks,” he said with a nod.

“No problem,” she said bouncing on her toes, smiling and he headed for Olivia’s room. Maya sat next to Olivia’s bed with what looked like a legal brief sitting on her lap and smiled at Elliot as he walked through the door.

“You missed Jonathan,” she said. “It was so cute. He was wrapped up in a little blanket and was holding her hand when I got here early this morning.”

“Yeah, the nurse said he slept here.”

“Speaking of sleep, it doesn’t look like you’ve had much of it.”

“No, I haven’t. Kathy and I... I don’t know. You mind if I sit?”

“Course not,” she said. “You don’t have to ask me. She’s your friend too. In fact... why don’t you just stay? I’m in serious need of coffee and probably another shower. I’ve been up since about four. I really couldn’t sleep either.”

She left giving him a nod on her way out the door, and Elliot staring at Olivia, willing her to wake once more.

Minutes ticked by and every once in a while she would stir slightly or he could see her eyes moving behind her closed lids, but she did not wake.

As lay beside him, guilt weighed on his heart, clenching with every beat. Perhaps if he had done something, none of this would have happened. Maybe if he had stayed with her a little longer, Morse’s tape would have caught what happened to her. Maybe if he just tried talking to her a little longer, the perp would have never snatched her. Maybe if he had been able to control his rage and had not gone to her apartment that night, nothing would have happened.

Elliot closed his eyes as he felt tears brimming and hoped that Jonathan was as far from the hospital as possible. Just when he had resolved himself to another day of wondering if Olivia would ever wake again, she stirred in the bed and a moan purred from her throat.

His eyes were fixed on her face, as he sat silent and still. By the time her eyes fluttered and slowly opened, the tears he had been withholding had slid down in his face.

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With her eyes half open, Olivia blinked twice at the figure before her, trying to make the picture come into focus. She took in the taupe walls of her surroundings and noticed immediately that something drastic had changed. The rank odor of death seemed far away and she knew that he was nowhere near her.

She attempted to blink the blurriness from her eyes to no avail, and took to making sense of every faculty.

*What’s that? Oh, that’s just my finger.*

*What’s this? It must be some kind of cast.*

*What are these? Some kind of tubes in my arm?*

*What’s that noise? Sounds like a heart monitor.*

*Is that a blanket? It feels soft, so it must be.*

*Dear God...I’m hungry...*

Olivia blinked around the room once more and shook slightly as she tried to force air out of her mouth.

“Heh...lo?” she breathed with a deep raspy voice that did not sound familiar.

“Liv?” the figure before her said.

The beeps of the heart monitor chimed in time with her own racing heartbeat as her eyes widened momentarily in fear.

*He found me! No! I can’t take anymore! But, no...this sounded different...better...good.*

She took a deep breath and allowed her eyes to finally focus on the person in front of her.

“El-liot?”

He grinned from ear to ear. “Olivia. Yeah, it’s me.”

“Where...am I?”

“Mercy East.”

“How...how...” She tried to form words, but her eyes fluttered and it soon grew difficult to remember what it was she wanted to say. Elliot stared at her intently and she tried again, but when she could not force the air through her throat or make the muscles of her larynx contract properly, tears formed in her eyes and she whimpered instead.

“It’s okay, Liv,” Elliot said softly taking her bare hand into his. “It’s okay.” Tears fell from her eyes for another minute, before she became silent and fell unconscious once more.

His heart pounded so hard he put a hand to his chest as if trying to keep it from bursting from his ribcage and he leaned in the chair to make himself more comfortable, never once releasing her hand. She had finally awakened; even said his name and he prepared himself to sit there for the rest of the night simply waiting for her to wake once more.

\*\*\*\* stars

Elliot flipped through another page in the magazine that lay open on his lap. His right hand grasped Olivia’s left and in the past several hours, while she did not wake again, he was comforted by the fact that her fingers would squeeze closed around his thumb every once in a while.

Jonathan and Maya sat next to one another on the other side of the bed speaking softly. When he had returned to the room, Jonathan simply stared at Elliot, his eyes narrowing upon noticing that Elliot held Olivia’s hand tightly. Elliot returned the glare, but refused to let go. Thankfully, Maya came several intense minutes after Jonathan and broke some of the tension with her light-hearted chatter about how even the city seemed brighter since Olivia had awakened. Afterward, she and Jonathan fell into light conversation about summer plans.

“...yeah, they’re almost done with the new room,” Jonathan said to Maya mid-conversation. “The whole thing will be done by summer, hopefully. We should all go up and get away for a while in maybe August. By then, Liv will be running with the best of them again and you can bring...whoever you’re hanging with at the time.”

Maya gave him a playful slap. “It’ll be Amit. Definitely Amit.”

“Finally thinking about settling down, are you?”

“I think my own near-death experience with one Mrs. Garriston has taught me a lot about married men...like staying away from them.”

“Is this the one who was supposed to leave his wife?”

“Well, they all say they’re going to leave their wives, but this one actually started to do it and nearly got me strangled in the process.”

Jonathan laughed. “Have you talked to him since?”

“Nope, nor do I aim to-”

Maya stopped mid-sentence as Olivia stirred in her sleep again and turned as her eyes opened.

“Hel-lo?” she said, again in the raspy voice.

Maya and Jonathan flew towards the bed and Elliot leaned in close to her, her hand still within his.

“Liv?” he said. “We’re here.”

“WhamI?” Her words came together in a raspy slur.

“You’re at Mercy General Hospital,” Jonathan said before Elliot could respond. “On the East Side.”

Olivia nodded slightly, her mouth gaping.

“Jonphan...?”

“Yeah, it’s me.” He leaned over and touched her face, eliciting a small smile from her mouth.

“Han’t seeu ‘na wall.”

“I know,” he said. “I’ve missed you.”

She smiled again, but it faded quickly as her eyes slid out of focus. “WhamI?”

“Mercy Hospital,” Jonathan said glancing at Elliot.

Olivia nodded. “Myh?”

“Livia...,” Maya said in a sing song voice bringing an even brighter smile on Olivia’s face. “I’m here.”

“Wuz mah han?”

“You’re right here, Liv,” Elliot said squeezing her hand tighter as he spoke. “I’ve got you.”

“El-lit...WhamI?”

Elliot suppressed a sigh as the smile that had been on Maya’s face since Olivia woke slowly faded. “You’re at the hospital, Olivia. Mercy General Hospital.”

“‘N-tha easside?”

“Yes, Liv on the East Side.”

“Jonphan?”

“Right here Liv.”

“M’sorry...”

He burst into tears for a moment, but wiped them away smiling. “I’m just so glad you’re here, Olivia.”

“He bent over the bed and kissed her on the check, creating another smile.”

“Jonphan...”

“Yes.”

“WhamI?”

Elliot and Maya exchanged glances as Dr. Haddley quietly stepped into the room.

Jonathan rubbed her other arm as he pulled his chair right next to the bed.

“You’re at Mercy General Hospital East, Olivia,” he said very slowly. “You’re on the East Side of Manhattan. In the upper nineties.”

“Hos-til...”

“Yes, you’re at the hospital.

“Ow...ow...get...”

Jonathan looked at Elliot, urging him to respond. He sat for a moment with his mouth agape, unsure of what to say. Of all the questions he had been prepared to answer,

“How did I get here?” was not one of them.

“Liv, it’s Elliot,” he said softly. “You were outside. Do you remember?”

“Ow-sye...? ‘M n’sye n’ow...”

“Yeah, but before,” Elliot continued. “Can you remember anything?”

“S’daw...” Olivia mumbled, but before Elliot could ask another question the grasp by which she held onto his hand grew weak and her eyes rolled back in her head as she fell back against her pillows.

“Is she gonna be okay?” Maya asked Dr. Haddley as she approached the bed.

“This’ll probably continue for another day,” she said. “It takes a while for patients to stay awake for much longer than a few minutes at a time when they come out of a coma, especially when they’ve undergone so much trauma.”

“She remembered all of us,” Maya said. “That’s got to be good, right?”

“But, she keeps asking the same questions,” Jonathan said staring at Olivia. “Or is something like that to be expected?”

“She’s still trying to get her bearings. She’s been unconscious for more than a week, not to mention whatever else she might have endured prior to getting here. When she’s able to stay conscious for a little longer we should be able to see the extent...of the damage?”

“Damage?” Maya asked.

Dr. Haddley pursed her lips. “Her MRI did not show anything severe, but she sustained a concussion and we won’t be able to see how badly she was hurt until she can stay awake for an extended period of time.”

“What kind of damage, though?” Maya pressed. “Her voice is a little slurred now, but half of that’s probably just painkillers, right? I mean, she recognizes all our voices, and she seems to know who she is. I mean, yeah, she’s asking the same questions over and over, but she’ll be fine, right?”

“We’ll have to wait and see,” the doctor said, the lines on her face looking deeper than ever. “The next step is to have her see a neurologist once she can stay awake, but it’s good that you’re here to talk to her. That way she remains stimulated and any injuries she might’ve suffered won’t be aggravated.”

She left a short while later after giving each of them her cell and pager numbers and urging at least one of them to stay with Olivia in case she woke up again. As Elliot had not released her hand in several hours and made no motions to do so, Jonathan stood with Maya, who said she needed something to eat before she collapsed from hunger. Before he left, he stared at Elliot with an expression infused with anger, sadness and sympathy. “I trust you’ll be here all night?”

“I’m not going anywhere.”

“Well...good,” Jonathan said. “I wouldn’t want her to wake up again and be all alone. C’mon Maya. I’ll get us something to eat and then I’ll have them bring up a cot or something...”

They left and Elliot sighed as he picked up the magazine he had thrown aside when Olivia last woke and began reading the first article for the third time.

An hour later, Olivia stirred again. At first, Elliot had not noticed, having dozed off in his chair without the murmurs coming from Maya and Jonathan in the room.

“El-liot,” she breathed and he jerked awake.

“Hey,” he said. “How you feeling?”

She nodded, her eyes falling half-closed momentarily. “How...did I get...here?”

Her voice was still deep and dry, but her words had all but stopped slurring. Elliot stared at her for a long time as he still had not come up with a valid answer since she first posed the question.

"You were...It looks like you were taken from your apartment."

"I...I...what?" She rolled her head from side to side and whimpered like she was about to cry.

"It's okay," Elliot said. "Just rest okay."

Olivia shook her head, trying to shake the daze out of her head.

"I was....I was in a building..."

Elliot's ears immediately perked up and he moved closer to her. He did not have a pad or pen with him, but he was intent on remembering everything she was going to say.

"Do you remember where?"

She shook her head slowly.

"Som-," she swallowed painfully, taking a breath every few words. "Someone was there...He was there...He pushed the thing and...he had...the gun...Then he was... chasing me."

"Chasing you?" His eyes furrowed in disbelief.

"Broke my leg...", she said through a sob. "And... he was chasing.... I had to run."

*She was trying to run on her broken leg, Elliot thought. No wonder her leg had nearly shattered.*

"There were.....there were others..."

"Where?" Elliot said intently. "Were they with you?"

"Mmm...other women...Amy tried...I couldn't...I couldn't...help..." Her eyes rolled in her head and her breath began coming in gasps.

"It's okay, Liv," he said as he took her hand in his. "You're okay. Just stay calm."

However, her breathing increased in pace and her cheeks were flushed. Her heart monitor was raced.

"P-pain..."

"Something for pain?" Elliot said, his own heart beat beginning to pick up pace.

She nodded slightly, repeating "arm" and he was up a moment later.

"I'm gonna grab your doctor, Liv," he said. "I'll be right back."

The doctor on the floor adjusted several of her IVs and gave her a sedative.

"She'll probably be out again in a few minutes," she said. "I've given her a couple inflammatories. It's hard to tell how much pain someone would be in with so many broken bones."

A few minutes after the doctor had left, Olivia began to calm as the sedative began to take effect.

"Ow long've I been gone, El?" she said her words slurring again.

"We found you nine days ago...it had been nearly three weeks."

"Three weeks? Ohmagod..."

"It's okay, Liv," he said taking her hand again.

"Okay?" she said as her eyebrows furrowed. "W-when?"

"That Tuesday. Do you remember? That night I was at your place?"

She nodded, but Elliot could barely bring his eyes to meet hers. He had said and done so many things that night that he could not fathom an apology grand enough to encompass everything.

"Elliot," she breathed. "That...that was..."

But it was what it was, Elliot did not hear as the sedative and pain medicine finally took hold of Olivia and she fell back asleep.

He took a deep breath and just rubbed her hand between both of his, in a state of disbelief. Fatigue bore on his mind and he wanted nothing more than to sleep for days straight. Instead, he remained next to her, eventually taking her hand against his cheek as he rested his head on her bed and allowed his eyes to fall closed.

\*\*\*\* stars

Monday February 26, 2007  
Mercy General Hospital East  
2:19AM

Olivia stirred against her drug-induced slumber and allowed her eyes to flutter open as a dull pain shot across her arm and shoulders. She sighed as she shifted slightly against the starched sheets and blinked around the room as she tried to remember where she was.

*Hospital...Mercy East...Got it.*

She looked to her left and smiled at the sight of Elliot with his mouth hanging open as he slept with his head resting next to her hand. To her right, Jonathan and Maya slept propped up against one another on a small cot and covered with a thin blanket. She swallowed, overwhelmed with thirst, but did not wake any of them, not knowing how long they had each been asleep near her and settled deeper into her pillows instead, content with the fact that the three most important people in her life, slept within an arm's reach.

It was still dark outside and the air had the brisk feeling of the early morning. She knew the early mornings well having been awakened at two or three o'clock in the morning many times previously.

As her eyes darted about the room, one question rolled in her mind: What had happened to her?

The last thing she remembered was falling and something with black letters that read "Absolut," but other than that, everything was a blur of colour.

Olivia searched her memory for a summary of her most recent thoughts, but could only catch fragments. There was definitely a man to be feared, but she sensed he was not near. The name "Amy" had a meaning, but she could not remember in what capacity and she suddenly felt nauseated with the flashing memory of gaunt faces staring back at her in the dark.

Shifting again in the bed, she noticed the cast on her arm, fingers and both of her legs, and did a quick inventory of the pain.

*Left hand...clenched with Elliot's, but okay.*

*Right hand...Jesus that hurts, but still okay.*

*Left foot...left foot...*

Olivia stared at a lump under her covers where she knew her left distended from the bed, but an odd feeling rested in her lower extremities rather than pain...nothing.

She pulled her hand from Elliot's and tried to sit up in the bed. Her body, weak from days of without use, did not obey the command, but even as she attempted to move, she felt nothing. No shift of the covers against her legs; no feel of the hospital gown moving across her thigh; no vibration of the sheet as she tugged it against her foot. Her legs were there, but were not at the same time.

Her breath caught as she focused every thought at moving her left foot, but it did not twitch. Panic set in and her hands began to shake as her breathing became erratic. Again, she set her mind on her feet and visualized them twitching, thinking that the nerves must only have been asleep. She had the ability to move them; she knew it, yet try as she might, not the slightest movement could be seen under the blankets.

*Oh, God! What's wrong? Move. Move! Oh, God! Oh, God!*

"Help!" she finally screamed allowed jolting Elliot, Maya and Jonathan from their sides of the bed.

"Liv?" Elliot said standing immediately.

"Oh God! Oh God! Please help me!" she shrieked. "I can't move. I can't *move*! Oh Christ! Please! Someone help!"

Jonathan ran out of the room for the nurse's station and Maya stood away from the bed, shaking her head with tears streaming down her face. Elliot snatched Olivia's quavering hand and held it tight as she continued yelling.

"I can't move! Elliot, please help me! Something's wrong. I can't move my legs! I can't move anything! Please help me!"

"Liv," Elliot said trying to remain calm. "Just focus, okay? Focus on moving your foot."

"I CAN'T!"

Her face had turned red as every part of her body above the waist twisted in the bed as she screamed and cried.

"Just focus, Olivia!" he yelled. "Move your foot! Just twitch."

"No, I can't! Nothing's moving. I can't feel anything! Anything! Help me please! I can't move! Why can't I move!"

Jonathan ran back into the room dragging a young doctor by the coat collar. "Do something!"

The doctor called for several other nurses who pushed Elliot and Maya out of the way as Olivia dissolved into hysterical screams. They administered a sedative and Olivia stopped shaking almost immediately, but could not stop the flow of tears.

"Please help me..." she whispered, dark eyes wet.

Maya sobbed in the doorway as Jonathan stood with both hands tangled in his hair. Elliot had a hand over his mouth, his body shaking as the nurses spoke to Olivia in soft voices trying to calm her.

Five minutes had passed before Olivia's gasps had slowed to simply a steady stream of tears and the doctor pulled out what looked like the blunt end of a letter opener.

"Olivia," he said softly as he lifted the blankets from over her feet. "I'm going to touch your feet. Okay? I just want you to tell me if you feel anything at all? Even it's just pressure. Just tell me if you feel anything."

He pulled the opener in a line across the back of her foot while Olivia had arrested her crying in hopes of focusing all senses on any feeling in her feet. Her eyes met the doctor's as he ran the opener across her legs again and when he let out a stifled sigh, her face scrunched as a scream exhaled from her lungs.

Maya ran to her side as she erupted in another fit of tears and pulled her into a tight embrace as they cried together.

“The...the neurologist,” the doctor said in a somber voice barely audible of Olivia and Maya’s cries, “a specialist, will be here in about an hour...on your words Mr. Halloway, but...from just an initial analysis...I think she might be paralyzed from the waist on down.”

Jonathan leaned against the wall and sank to the floor as silent tears fell from his eyes and Elliot, having already shed nearly every tear his body had to give in recent weeks, stood stoic as the sounds of crying and vibrating machines echoed about the small room.

\*\*\*\* stars

The heater that stood paradoxically near the window in Olivia’s hospital room sprung to life just as Elliot suppressed a shiver from the under the blanket on Jonathan’s cot. When Maya had finally been retched from Olivia’s somber form, Jonathan decided to take her home to rest and Elliot had remained in the room as Olivia cried herself to sleep.

He had tried to get some rest while Olivia slept, but his brain was such a flurry of activity that the solace of sleep evaded him. To his amazement, Jonathan had sent an “assistant” to the room bearing Elliot a clean shirt and also breakfast from the cafeteria on the second floor and gesture, along with Olivia’s condition, kept any semblance of sleep at bay.

Once Olivia had settled, he had called Cragen with the news and the captain had rushed to the hospital to see her. He and Elliot spoke in hushed voices, but woke Olivia momentarily nonetheless.

She had stared at Cragen with large eyes and asked repeatedly who he was, before her eyes slid in and out of focus and she claimed to remember, though Elliot was doubtful as she did so with watery eyes that continuously glanced at her legs as if wishing them to move.

The neurologist, a Dr. Joseph Hammond, spoke to Olivia, wearing a casual sweater and the rumpled appearance of someone who had been shaken from sleep upon request of a member of the Halloway family, but left shortly afterward as Olivia grew increasingly irritated by his presence with each passing minute.

“I don’t need a neurologist!” she had shouted. “I need a goddamn therapist to help me get the feeling back in my legs!”

Her animosity continued as Dr. Haddley later tried to explain that there were treatments available for persons in Olivia’s condition. Olivia grew so angry that she threw a cup of water at the doctor for even suggesting the she would never walk again, screaming that “this” was not going to beat her.

Dr. Haddley later pulled the three into the corridor and suggested that the neurologist would have a second look at Olivia later in the week when she had had time to accept what had happened.

“But, she’ll be fine eventually?” Maya had said with wide eyes. “I mean, she’s just kind of numb from not walking for a week, right?”

"I'm sorry," Dr. Haddley had said. "But, I don't want to get your hopes up. The best we can hope for at this point is for her to be able to maybe stand."

"But, she'll never walk again..." Jonathan said deadpan.

"I've seen miracles before and there's nothing that says--"

"But, short of a miracle," Jonathan interrupted. "You're just trying to put it as easy as possible. Olivia's never going to walk again..."

The doctor had gone silent at that point, eliciting a new wave of tears from Maya.

Elliot got up to stretch his legs and spoke to the morning nurses on the floor for a bit, enjoying the diversion because they reminded him of when he and Kathy were still young as she worked as a nurse at a hospital in Queens.

When he returned to the room, Olivia was tossing and turning in her sleep and he held her again as he sat in the chair next to her. She mumbled indiscernible words in her sleep and as he began sit back in the chair to attempt resting his eyes again, her grip increased on his hand and her eyes flew open.

"Don't leave me," she whispered with tears in her eyes. "Please. I can't be alone. He'll come for me again."

"I'm not leaving you, Olivia," he said. "And, I promise you, he's not coming back."

"Elliot...don't leave me."

"I'm not going anywhere, Liv."

She nodded and rested against her pillows again as she fell asleep.

A short while later, Jonathan stepped quietly into the room with a coffee in hand. He sat in the chair opposite Elliot and sipped the drink while he and Elliot avoided each other's eyes.

"Where've you been?" Elliot asked not knowing how else to make conversation with him.

"Making some calls and visiting my church. Jillian will most likely be over here later in the day. She asked if she could bring the boys, but I told her not to... I didn't think Liv would be up to it. Has she woken up at all since we left?"

"Once. I think she might've been having a nightmare."

"A nightmare...great." His sighed as he stared at Olivia, but his expression quickly hardened as he glared across the bed at Elliot. "Is your precinct coming any closer to finding out what happened to her?"

"I haven't left Olivia's side in days."

"And, I'm sure she appreciates that," Jonathan said. "But, eventually she's going to want to know what happened and I'd like to have answers other than 'Elliot's working on it.'"

He glared silently at Jonathan for a moment. "We *are* working on it."

"That's nice, but when are we going to have answers. I don't know if you've met Olivia, but an answer like 'we're working on it' is not going to suffice while she's coping with the fact that she probably won't walk again."

"I'm not taking this from you," Elliot said slightly raising his voice. "I haven't had a good night's sleep in over a month because of all that's happened. *Everything* I've been doing has been focused on Olivia."

“You’re right,” Jonathan said and Elliot’s mouth fell open for a moment as he had been expecting a full argument from him. “You have done...a lot for Liv. You were the first person to know. Not me. Not Maya. You were.”

Jonathan stood and crossed the room to stare out the window. “That said...I still expect results, Detective. I’ve already told you what Olivia means to me and I’ll have to suffer right along with her as she copes with this.”

“We all will have to.”

“But, it’ll be a lot easier if we could have a face and name to prosecute as we do.”

Jonathan turned and glared at him. “Just remember this. While you and I sit here hoping for the best for Liv, whoever it was that took her is still out there.

Whoever snatched her from her apartment, exposed her to something that gives her seizures, starved twenty pounds out of her and then tossed her in the garbage still walks the streets and could be the next person to walk through the door. I... appreciate everything that you and the rest of your squad did while she was missing, but if I’ve understood anything she’s told me about her job, this qualifies as an SVU case and I don’t want to hear about any bull between departments and precincts keeping you from investigating her case. Since you were the first person notified, the first person she saw when she first woke up...the first person on her goddamn speed dial...I expect *you* to be the one to find out what happened to her. Understood?”

“I don’t answer to you,” Elliot said. “Even if the rest of the city does.”

“That may be true, but the time is going to come when you *will* have to answer to her. I intend to be right there when you do and I...we will accept nothing but solid answers in the upcoming weeks.”

Silence fell over them broken only by Olivia’s murmuring in her sleep and they sat in the same silence until a knock at her door signified the approach of Munch and Fin.

“Brought her some chocolate,” Munch said. “If I’d learned anything about women from my failed marriages it’s that chocolate seems to cure all ails.”

“Her diet’s strictly regulated by her doctors,” Jonathan said, arms crossed.

“It’s just chocolate,” Fin said. “If anything, it’ll lift her spirits considering...”

“I said no.”

Elliot rolled his eyes. “Well, considering that the only person who has any *legal* grounds for making decisions in Olivia’s life isn’t here right now, it’s not up to you, is it?”

Jonathan glared at Elliot, before shaking his head and sitting on the cot on the other end of the room.

“How’s she been?” Fin asked.

“It depends,” Elliot said. “Her memory’s still a little shaky and we get a different version of her personality each time she wakes up. You just missed Angry Liv a couple hours ago.”

“Seen her before,” Munch said. “And she’s not to be trifled with.”

“Her doctor’s really don’t think she’ll be able to walk again?” Fin asked, a sad concern Elliot had rarely seen etched across his face.

Elliot opened his mouth to speak when Olivia’s hand gripped his hard.

“Hello?” she said, eyes flashing open.

“Yeah, Liv,” Elliot said. “It’s still just us. Got some visitors for you though.”

Olivia glanced back and forth between Munch and Fin for a moment before shaking her head apprehensively.

"You I know," she said pointing at Fin and then looked at Munch. "But, I've never seen you before."

Munch smiled weakly and stretched out a hand toward her. "John Munch. I'm sure you'll remember later and then be sorry you did."

She returned the smile as she shook his hand and looked at Fin. "Is that chocolate, Fin?"

"Best in the city," he said handing a package to her as Jonathan groaned from his cot.

"I can't open it," she said after struggling with the box with weakened hands for a moment.

"That's okay," Jonathan said crossing the room in two steps and taking the box from her.

"We can open it later. Besides, you don't want any right now, do you Liv?"

"Guess not," she said despondent. Her eyes then brightened. "Fin...and you...have you met my Jonathan?"

They glanced at Jonathan and Fin rolled his eyes. "Yeah. We've met."

"Oh, okay." She shivered for a moment and her eyes rolled back in her head. Jonathan had taken a step toward the door, heading for the nurse's station again, when her eye snapped back open. "John...when'd you get here?"

Munch glanced at Elliot who shrugged slightly. "Not too long ago."

"Who's this?" she said pointing at Fin.

"Fin Tutuola," Fin said.

"What?"

"You just call me Fin. Remember?"

"Oh..." Olivia's eyebrows furrowed at him and she settled into her pillows as she turned toward Jonathan. "Where's Maya?"

"She went home to sleep for a bit. She'll be back soon though."

Olivia nodded and her eyes slowly closed and all present could see that she was unconscious for the time being.

"We'll stop by a little later," Munch said as he and Fin headed for the hall.

"Hang on a sec," Elliot said stepping out of the room with them and closing Olivia's door slightly. "Have you found anything else on her case?"

"Brown's been on it 'round the clock," Fin said. "But, she's not coming up with anything else and she's trying to take on the rest of your open cases at the moment."

"She tried to talking to Mark Landon again," Munch said, "but apparently he just slammed the door in her face and there's not really anything left to go off of. Probably the best thing to do is see if she can remember anything."

Elliot ran a hand over his face. "You saw what just happened in there. She's not any shape to be probed about what happened to her. She can barely remember her name or stay conscious for more than ten minutes." He sighed. "What're we finding out on the Kreider copy cat?"

"Very little," Munch said. "We've been working with the Calbrach boy for days and he still can't give us much on an ID. First, he says the guy was taller than him, then he says the guy was his height. Then, the guy's older, but then he thinks he was closer to his age."

"But," Fin said, "there hasn't been another murder since Zachary was found."

"I guess that's always good news. Thanks for the update. I don't know when I'll be back yet."

"We understand," Munch said and they parted ways as Elliot walked back into the room where Jonathan paced in front of Olivia's bed.

"You know, I don't appreciate being disparaged like that," he said.

"I'm sure you don't, but you weren't such a prick, I don't imagine you would be."

"You don't have the... authority to make decisions about Olivia. You're really not a lot more than a co-worker."

"And, you're not a lot more than a boyfriend," Elliot said. "And, trust me. I've seen them come and go quick in the years I've known Liv, so don't think for a second that just because you've slept with her, that gives you any bearing on her life either."

Jonathan glowered at Elliot, but kept silent. Elliot returned his gaze to Olivia's sleeping face with the thought of the two-carat diamond that still sat on his coffee table ever-present.

As much as it annoyed him, out of all the men Elliot had seen come in and out of Olivia's life, Jonathan was the only one with whom she appeared to be reasonably happy for any length of time and the thought that he might have to deal with him for longer than the two years he had lasted, pained almost as much as the idea that Olivia might never walk again.

The two sat in silence for close to thirty minutes, each staring at Olivia, but shooting one another the occasional scowl, until Olivia began to groan and stir loudly. Her body then convulsed and eyebrows fluttered as Jonathan yelled for a nurse.

"It's another seizure," Dr. Haddley said minutes later.

"When are these going to stop?" Jonathan said, his voice cracking.

Dr. Haddley held Olivia's shoulders against the bed with another nurse, while trying to keep clear of the brace that kept her collarbone in line. Within a few seconds, the seizure had passed and Dr. Haddley left

"*Myshah...*" she mumbled with her eyes half open.

"Liv?" Elliot asked taking hold of her hand again.

"*Myshah,*" she repeated.

"We don't understand Liv," Jonathan said, bringing an annoyed expression to Olivia's face.

"*Kisa jagaha hai, Myshah?*"

Jonathan and Elliot glanced at one another, but Olivia pressed in gibberish.

"*Yaha bāta yaha hōnē vālā idhara. Kisa jagaha hai yaha?*"

"Oh my God..." Jonathan sighed.

"*Myshah!*" Olivia shouted, eyes narrowed.

Jonathan rubbed his temples. "I don't understand what she wants. I'm calling a nurse."

"No, call Maya," Elliot staring at Olivia who had begun crying.

"What? Why? She's probably on her way over here."

"Just call her damn it!"

Within ten minutes, Maya rushed into the room where Olivia lied, eyes closed and crying in large gasps.

"What's happened?" she said, sitting down in the Elliot's seat as he stood.

"She's talking in gibberish!" Jonathan said. "*He* said to call you."

"Livia?" Maya said. "It's Maya."

Olivia's eyes opened and a wet smile spread across her face. "*Myshah...kisa jagaha rakhanā tuma hōnā?*"

"Holy shit! It's not gibberish," Maya shouted grabbing Olivia's hand. "She looked directly at Olivia and spoke very clearly. "*Sakanā tuma samajhanā mujhē*, Livia?" Olivia nodded and Maya shook her head, mouth gaping.

"What the hell's going on?" Elliot said.

"She's speaking Hindi," Maya said her eyes like saucers.

"Wait a minute," Jonathan said. "What do you mean Hindi? Like the language? Like in India...Hindi?"

"Yeah..." She turned to back Olivia whose hand shook from combined confusion and fear and spoke in Hindi. "*How are you feeling?*"

"*I'm fine, but what's wrong with them?*"

"*They don't understand Hindi*, Livia."

"*Neither do I, barely.*"

"*But you're speaking it now. You don't notice?*"

Olivia squinted at Maya who stared back with large, worried eyes.

"What is she saying?" Jonathan said in a high-pitched voice.

"She didn't know she was speaking Hindi," Maya said.

"How could she not know?" Elliot said.

"Look at the look on her face!" Maya said. "She hasn't got a clue. She said she thought she was speaking English. We need to get the neurologist back in here."

Jonathan had pulled out his cell phone and had crossed the room a moment later and Olivia tugged at Maya's arm.

"*This isn't English?*"

"*No, it's not.*"

"*Are you sure?*" Olivia said glancing at Elliot who looked horrified.

"*I'm sure. It's not English.*"

"*Maya, I don't remember any Hindi.*"

"*Apparently, you do.*"

Olivia ran her right hand over her face, slightly scratching her cheek with the cast. Her eyes fell toward her legs and she burst into tears as Maya hugged her insisting that she would be all right.

\*\*\*\* stars

"Circle?" Olivia said, her eyes hopeful.

Jonathan sighed and Elliot ran a hand over his face as Maya placed the white card that held the outline of triangle to the back of the large stack in her hands.

They had been quizzing Olivia with the flash cards for several hours and while she had regained her use of the English language and could recognize most words again, she still confused objects and faces in her head. She had trouble remembering what number came after ten and how to tell time, initially, but got better as the day progressed. At one point, however, she had even called Jonathan "Elliot."

Dr. Hammond had seen Olivia that afternoon and after a series of tests, deduced that she was simply suffering from side effects of the coma. He expected her to make a full mental recovery, yet had much lower expectations for her ability to walk.

Though tears still formed in her eyes each time she attempted to move her legs, Olivia seemed to be coming to terms with her lack of mobility. Dr. Hammond had informed them, after a second MRI, that the swelling in her brain had all but subsided, yet he could not account for what was causing the paralysis.

Maya attributed this as a positive, meaning that since the doctor could not identify what was causing the paralysis, there was no reason that Olivia would not be able to regain use of her legs. Jonathan and Elliot, however, were less optimistic when Olivia began confusing their names and struggled to read a book Maya had brought her.

"We already did that one," Olivia said with an irritated voice. "That's the square."

"We've done them all already," Maya said setting down the cards, but holding out the last for Olivia to see. "If you could just get this last one, we'd let you sleep."

"Just give me five minutes..." Olivia mumbled.

"No," Maya said loudly and Olivia's eyes flew back open. "This one...what is it?"

Elliot stood near the window watching the sunset as Jonathan lied on the cot on other side of the room. They both agreed that Elliot needed a break, but Elliot said he refused to leave, while Olivia still struggled with discerning a circle from a triangle.

In truth, Elliot simply hated the idea of leaving Olivia alone with Jonathan. Their earlier conversation was still fresh in his mind and there was a paranoid shiver that ran through his body any time he imagined them alone.

"My head hurts and so does my arm...guess I should be glad my legs don't hurt considering all that's happened, eh?" she said bitterly.

Maya held out the single card again and Olivia shook her head, but answered.

"Triangle?"

"Are you asking me or telling me?"

"It's a...yeah, it's a triangle."

Maya broke into a smile as Olivia settled against her pillows and closed her eyes.

"Elliot," Maya said with a sigh. "You look like hell. Let me take you out to dinner and you can go home and rest for a bit. That cot looks mildly comfortable, but trust me. It isn't."

After several minutes more of Maya's light nagging, Elliot finally agreed to leave, giving Jonathan a dirty look as he did, and later found himself in a bright restaurant in Midtown.

"I'm surprised they let me in here looking like this," he said from behind a short menu.

Maya shrugged. "That's why I picked it. They're kind of lax on the dress code."

"Thanks." He paused, his mind mulling over the events of the past day. "You know, when you told me your family had taken Liv to India with you, I didn't really take in what that meant. I knew she knew a little of a lot of languages, but I had no idea she even knew that much Hindi."

"Well, she was close to fluent by the time we'd gone over there, but I figured she'd forgotten most of it. I rarely speak it in front of her anymore."

“How’d that happen, though? I mean, I don’t think that’s one of the classes offered at any high school?”

“Not really,” Maya said with a smirk. “I guess she just sort of picked up.”

“When you were kids?”

“Yeah. She was always over for dinner or sleepovers or something when we were little and I guess Ms. Serena mentioned something to my mother because all of sudden my parents started speaking it in front of Livia. I think Ms. Serena just wanted her to learn another language that you wouldn’t readily learn in high school. It’s so strange that she’d randomly speak it like that, though.”

“Guess we never know what lies in the subconscious.”

“Guess not...”

They chatted for a while longer before parting ways and Elliot finally fell into his bed, having not seen in two days. He slept much longer than he wanted and by the time he had showered and dressed again, it was past six in the evening. When he got back to Olivia’s room, he found it empty except for her and mumbled bad words about Jonathan as he took his place next to her sleeping form.

He picked up the old magazine he had read several times already and began his fourth read of the inane articles until Olivia started to stir in her bed. She tossed and turned with her eyes closed at first and then began yelling as her arms flailed about her.

“Liv...” he said softly trying to hold onto her.

Her jerking ceased at the sound of his voice, but she cried against his arm, whispering “Elliot, don’t leave me” for several minutes longer, before falling unconscious once again.

Another hour passed without any sign from Jonathan and Elliot grew increasingly aggravated until Olivia slowly opened her eyes and broke into a smile when she saw him.

“Hey,” she said with a sigh.

“Hey. How are you feeling?”

She thought about it for a moment. “Kind of tired...and a little ashamed.”

“Ashamed?” he asked through furrowed eyebrows. “Ashamed of what?”

“Myself and how I reacted to all this.” She hovered her arm over the lower part of her body and he sat back in his chair, astounded by her sudden shift coherency.

“I’m not the first person to go through this,” she continued. “And, I won’t be the last. This won’t beat me, Elliot.”

“No one thought as much for even a second.”

“Where’re Maya and Jonathan?”

He shrugged. “Maya threw me in a cab hours ago and I thought Halloway would be here when I got back.”

“Hmm...I remember him talking his cell. I don’t remember who he was talking to.

Why’d Maya have to put you in a cab?”

“Cause I hadn’t left here in days.”

“Days? Why not?”

“I was worried about you.”

“Elliot,” she said rolling her eyes with a smirk. “You don’t have to worry about me.”

He stared at her for a very long time before speaking again. "I'm going to worry about you, Olivia. After all this, I'll be *worrying* about you for the rest of your life or at least mine."

"You don't have to though."

"I don't have to do a lot of things, but I do them anyway."

"Didn't your mother ever tell you that if you worried too much you'd get premature wrinkles?"

"No," he laughed. "At this point, wrinkles are probably the least of my worries."

"You've lost weight..."

"Yeah, I have."

"Worrying?"

"Probably. Think I'm working on an ulcer too, but the jury's still out on that one."

"You've had that burn in your stomach for ages," she said. "When are you going to have a doctor look at it?"

"You sound like Kathy?"

She scoffed. "I don't know if I should be happy or angry to hear that."

"I'm just happy to have you talking to me like normal."

"Honestly, Elliot. You're in a hospital. Just grab one of the younger doctors and tell him your symptoms."

Elliot simply shook his head. "I'll worry about me when I'm done worrying about you."

"Which we've just established is probably never going to happen, so you might as well have a doctor look at you now. Seriously, Elliot. You don't look good. You look like you're sick."

"I haven't been eating or sleeping all that well in the past couple weeks, Liv," he said rubbing his forehead.

"Well, what's been going on?" she asked, concerned. "Did you find Kreider?"

"God, Olivia," he said laughing at the absurdity of the scenario. She lay incapacitated and yet, she remained committed to the job.

"Why aren't you at the precinct?"

"Cause I'm here with you."

"But, if Kreider's still out there, Elliot, I'm not nearly as important as getting him off the streets before he hurts another kid."

"We found Kreider."

"Where?"

"It's complicated."

"Donaugh?"

"Kind of, but we got him."

"What about Drover?"

"Found him too."

Her eyes narrowed at him, scrutinizing him in the way that only Olivia could. "Then, what's going on? Why do you have that look in your eyes that says something's off?"

"Look, you need to rest and I-"

"Elliot! Just tell me."

"The murders," he began with a sigh, "they started back up again about two weeks ago. We think it's a copycat."

"Of Kreider?"

"Yeah. Same MO, even down the box and lack of witnesses."

"Who've you been working the case with?"

"A little upstart, Alexa Brown."

"I've met her. She's a good cop, although...I doubt she's really SVU material. She's way too emotional. You can see it in her eyes."

"She's a pain in my ass if she's anything."

"So, why are you here?"

"There's nothing to go on, Liv."

"Well, there's got to be something. There were surveillance cameras from some of the store owners near Tompkins Square after the third boy we found out there. If there's tapes, then maybe there's something..."

Her voice faded as she noticed the look in eyes at the mention of "tape."

"We already checked," he said trying to move along the subject. "But, don't worry about it for now. Just focus on getting healthy."

"What are you keeping from me?"

"Liv...you really need to just--"

"What are you keeping from, Elliot?" she pressed. "I'm going to find out eventually, so you might as well tell me while it's just me and you."

He stared at her, unsure of how to begin.

"Look, Elliot," she said beginning to get agitated. "Whatever it is, just tell me."

"Okay...Do you know a guy named Harry Morse?" She shook her head. "He lives in the building across from yours. Apparently...he's been stalking you...for quite some time."

Olivia blinked at him, searching for further understanding in his eyes. "Stalking how?"

"He's been taking your picture and...videotaping your apartment for the last five years."

Olivia let out her breath and stared at the ceiling. "Oh God. Is he the one who-?"

"No," Elliot said. "We've looked at him every way possible. He's not the guy."

"So, you've got this guy to look and the killer of these new kids and you're still sitting here worrying about me."

"Liv, I'm technically suspended for the time being anyway, so I've got the time."

"What?"

"It's not official, but between IAB and the deputy commissioner, I'm under a...verbal suspension."

She nodded, but snapped her back toward him, unconvinced. "I still don't get it. Does this Morse have something to do with you being suspended? And why the hell were you suspended in the first place? God, please don't tell me you did something rash when you found Drover."

"No," he said. "I wasn't the one to find Drover."

"Then, what happened?"

Elliot focused on the fitted sheet stretching across the mattress under Olivia weight, feeling her gaze boring into him.

"This guy, Morse...He taped your apartment all the time and he was taping that night."

"So? I still don't understand."

"When you disappeared, he came into the precinct with a tape of that night. It showed the whole fight...except for this six-minute gap, right at the end when you cuffed me."

"You were suspended because of our fight?"

"Liv..." he said unsure of how to phrase the words. "You were *gone*. We had no idea what happened to you...we still don't. But then Morse walks in with a tape showing me and you going at it, but doesn't show me leaving your apartment."

"They think you did something to me?"

"If you'd seen the tape, Liv. We've busted people on far less evidence."

"But, Elliot...It's you. I mean Cragen didn't think that you'd done anything?"

"He didn't really have a choice. Everyone saw us arguing that Tuesday and then with the tape, plus what Maya and your friend, Jillian had to say, it was all Cragen, could do but suspend me."

"What did Maya and Jillian have to say that could've matter?"

He sighed. "Maya said you told her you worried about what I might do when I saw you took the Drover file."

"And Jillian? I didn't know the two of you had even met?"

"We hadn't, but she said you'd mentioned my temper to her and it just fueled the fire."

Olivia stared down at her hands and shook her head. "Elliot, I'm so sorry."

He laughed. "Liv, you have absolutely nothing to be sorry about. I'm just sorry that you even have to go through this."

"I don't remember anything else, Elliot. It's frustrating."

"You might later. Just focus on getting better. The other side of my desk is getting lonely."

"Do what you need to do," they heard Jonathan yelling from just outside the door. "I want Brandt and that other German doctor and I want them here by the end of the week...I don't care what it takes. Just make sure it gets done. Liv!"

He had come through the door speaking loudly on his cell phone and flashed a perfect smile when he saw Olivia awake and alert.

"Hey Babel!" Olivia said breaking into a smile just as wide.

"How are you feeling?"

"Good as I can be, I guess."

Jonathan glanced at Elliot and he nodded. "She's been fine. Talking to me like old Liv."

"Old Liv?"

"And by old," Elliot said laughing, "I meant the wonderful Olivia we've all come to know and love."

"Ah, I see. That's better."

Jonathan sat beside her and stared at Elliot until he rose and squeezed Olivia's hand before heading for the door.

"Where are you off to?" Olivia asked.

"I need to, uh...check on the kids. They've been asking about you almost daily and I need to give them a status update. I'll be back later, okay?"

She nodded and turned her attention to Jonathan once the door closed. "Where've you been? Elliot seemed kind of annoyed when I asked where you were."

"Yes, well, Elliot and I haven't been on the best of terms through all this."

"You haven't been arguing, have you?"

"Define arguing."

"Jonathan..."

"Yep, you're definitely the same old Liv."

“So, really. Where were you? I expected to see your pretty face when I woke up.”  
“Yeah, I’m sorry. I had to make some arrangements.”  
“Such as?”  
“Your doctors are saying you can’t walk, Liv.”  
“I know. If anything, I can remember *that* little conversation quite clearly.”  
“I’ve been making arrangements with some specialists to look at your...situation.”  
“What kind of specialists?”  
“The best money and a good name can buy.”  
“You know I don’t want you doing-”  
“Olivia,” he interrupted. “If there was ever a time you needed to just let me dote and attempt to spend every dollar of my inheritance on you, this would be it. Just thinking that you’re hurt like this is too much for me and I’m going to use every avenue I’ve got available.”  
“Spreading around the big bucks?”  
He shrugged. “I’m a Hallows. It’s in the blood, I suppose.”  
She laughed and squeezed his hand.

“You’re really feeling better?” he said staring at her intently.  
“Yeah, I mean...things are starting to make sense. I can’t really remember anything about what happened, but I’m starting to get little flashes of what happened before.”  
“What’s the last thing you remember?”  
“I don’t know. Elliot yelling I think...but he’s not the one who did this to me,” she added quickly.  
“Okay...”  
“You don’t sound convinced.”  
“Well, maybe tomorrow I’ll bring in a laptop and I’ll show you what we’ve all been dealing with these last couple weeks.”  
“Elliot’s already told me. Something about some video?”  
“Some guy...some stalker Olivia, was watching you twenty-four hours a day and he caught you and Elliot having this knock down, drag-out fight on his camera.”  
Olivia shook her head. “That’s just crazy.”  
“You’re telling me you didn’t have a fight with him?”  
“Well...yeah, we fought. That I remember, but he’s not the one who did all *this* to me.”  
She pointed at her legs and Jonathan’s expression grew somber.  
“Olivia...” he said as his eyes turned red. “I am so sorry.”  
“What are you sorry for? You didn’t do this to me either.”  
“But, I...I should’ve called or something.”  
“Jonathan, this isn’t your fault.”  
“But, I was going to...that night. I stared at the phone until two in the morning wanting to call, but I didn’t. If I’d just called you, none of this would’ve happened.”  
“Yeah, but how do you know that?”  
“This guy just came and took you...If I hadn’t been such a jackass, then I’d’ve been there with you and he never would’ve got you.”  
Olivia sighed. “Wow, I’ve done it...”  
“What’s that?”

"I've got a Halloway to admit he's a jackass."

"C'mon Liv. I'm serious."

"You're worse than Elliot, you know? You didn't do this to me and so you shouldn't be worrying so much about what didn't involve you."

"But, I can't help it. I love you so much and I almost lost you."

"Oh, Jonathan," she said in a mock British accent. "I've gone *bright* red."

He started laughing, but then broke into tears and she rubbed his forehead, running her hands through his hair. Jonathan leaned close to her bed, nearly lying with her as his tears fell heartily from his eyes. She hugged him and continuously ran her fingers through black hair, reassuring him that "it was okay" as he wept into her shoulder.

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"So, when can we see her?"

Kathleen pressed the question to her father with large eyes and Elliot set down his fork full of potatoes with a sigh.

"It'll probably still be a while. She's still really sick."

"Will she be okay?" Lizzie asked, eyes as bright and inquisitive as her sister's.

"We'll just have to wait and see," Elliot said.

A sobering silence fell upon the table and Elliot cleared his throat as he attempted to change the subject.

"How are the recital pieces coming...*Elizabeth*?"

She rolled her eyes. "Good. Dickie had people over yesterday even though he knew I had to practice."

"Oo coulda prak-tis 'nee-time," Dickie said with a piece of steak stuck in his cheek.

"Don't talk with food in your mouth," Lizzie said. "It's gross."

He let his mouth gape to display the masticated meat in his mouth.

"Oh, grow up, would you?" Kathleen whined.

Dinner continued for another twenty minutes in the same fashion, and after letting Lizzie win a very long game of chess, Elliot found himself having a glass of wine with Kathy at their kitchen table.

"Another language? Really?"

Kathy stared at him with wide eyes and took a sip from her glass.

"Yeah, it was wild. But, she seems fine now."

"Fine enough to have the kids go see her?"

"No," Elliot said, shaking his head. "Not even close. I'm still not sure if it's really hit her yet."

"It probably won't. I've seen patients before who would start to lose it years after paralysis."

"I think Halloway's pulling out all stops. I heard him on the phone. He's having some doctors brought in from Europe."

"Well, at least there's a hope."

"I just don't want him to get her hopes up. We're just now able to talk to her and I'm not looking forward to starting over if these doctors can't do anything."

"How's that other girl you're working with doing?"

He leaned back in his chair and smirked at Kathy who began laughing.

"Is she still that bad?"

"I guess she's doing okay. I haven't seen her in a couple days."

"Well, I'm glad you stopped by, but you look like hell, Elliot. Are you doing all right?"

He shrugged. "Well enough...considering."

"Have you been eating? Sleeping?"

"Sure. Why not?"

"Elliot..."

"I'm fine," he laughed. "But...I should probably get going."

"Really?"

He suddenly felt very sleepy, but did not want to leave the warmth of the house. "Yeah, let me just use the bathroom."

"Use the one in our...the one upstairs. None of the kids are 'fessing up but something happened to the one down here. I'm having a plumber come out on Friday."

"You should've called me. I can look at it."

"I knew you were busy with everything that's been going on and it's just the toilet."

He nodded. "Give me a minute and I'll have a look."

Upstairs, he heard Kathleen and Lizzie talking softly in their room and crossed his old bedroom to use the bathroom. In the small bathroom's soft light, he got a good look at himself and could finally see what those around him had meant.

He had visibly lost some weight and the circles under his eyes looked like they would never disappear. His hair looked slightly thinner and he could swear he could see sparkles of grey here and there.

As he turned off the light, Elliot stared at his old bed and sighed. It seemed so inviting that before he could stop himself, he had sprawled on his stomach held his face to his comforters.

*Just five minutes, he thought. I just need to lie for here five minutes and then I'll be fine.*

\*\*\* stars

Tuesday February 27, 2007

Woodside, New York

Elliot rolled onto his side, an odd, comfortable feeling coursing through his body.

Squinting against the sunlight that poured against his closed eyelids, his ears perked at the sounds of running water a few meters away from him.

He jerked awake and saw that he was in bed, but not the hard one that sunk slightly in the middle. It was a soft bed with sheets that felt smooth against his skin. Sitting up to rest on his elbows, he realized he was shirtless, but still wore the jeans in which he had eaten dinner.

"Oh, you're up?" Kathy said brightly as she left the bathroom.

"Yeah...did I sleep here?"

She nodded. "I came up here after ten minutes to see what had happened to you and you were out cold. I didn't have the heart to wake you, so I just...shifted you over."

He stared at her embarrassed and missing her terribly and they made small talk for several minutes before Kathy left for the day, leaving him with swirling thoughts. He wondered whether the calm in his chest was from the idea that Olivia seemed to be coming back to herself or the fact that he had slept so soundly in his old bed. Either way, he slept without the slightest vestige of a nightmare for the first time in days.

When he finally arrived at the hospital to check on Olivia, Munch and Fin were already in the room laughing with her. It died down, once he knocked on the door and she beckoned him closer as Munch and Fin left the room.

"Hey you!" Olivia said. "They got my TV working. I think I may have to try one of these Rachael Ray recipes."

"I see they snuck you in more chocolate."

"Of course."

He sat in the chair beside her with a mild smile on his face at change in her appearance.

Her eyes seemed brighter than they had in the past few days and she smiled more, but she still had the appearance of someone recovering from a serious illness. Her face was still rather thin, her eyes had circles to match his own and he guessed she had yet to gain anything to bring her back to a healthy weight.

"How are you feeling overall?"

"Good, but kind of anxious at the same time. Like I'm ready for something, but I don't know what."

"You think you'll be up to some questions later?"

"I don't see why not, but I can't really remember anything right now."

"What's the farthest back you can remember?"

"Being cold."

"That it?"

"Just being cold and then lots of light, followed by a lot of pain and then I woke up and you were staring at me." She sighed. "What if I can't ever remember?"

"Don't worry about it just yet. Maybe it'll be better if you didn't for the time being." He stood. "Suspension or no suspension, I've gotta check in on Brown."

"To make sure she's still holding down the fort?"

"Or make sure it's not burning down. Are you going to be okay if I leave for a bit? I called Maya, but I don't want to leave you by yourself."

Olivia grabbed the remote control and turned on the television that was mounted to the far wall. Bob Barker stood on a stage being hugged repeatedly by a large woman wearing a shirt that read "Team Pierson."

"I'll be fine," Olivia said turning up the volume.

He leaned over and gave her a quick peck on the cheek and left the room as Maya strode down the corridor with a thin book in her hand.

"Hey! How is she?" she asked.

"She's up and doing great. Almost back to normal."

Maya grinned wildly. "Oh, I'm so glad. I'm surprised to see you leaving though."

"I've got to check in on a couple cases, but I'll be back. I'll see you in a bit."

She waved and stepped into Olivia's room as she turned off the television.

"Hey!" Maya said with a beaming smile.

"Hi..." Olivia said curtly. She did not return Maya's smile.

"Elliot just told me you were almost like your old self. How are you feeling?"

"Did you know he's been suspended?"

"Yeah," Maya says, surprised at the sudden anger in Olivia's voice. "He told me a while ago."

"What did you say?"

"Olivia, why are you so angry?"

"What did you say?"

"Wow, I was picturing this going far differently..."

"What did you and Jillian say?"

"Whoa, Liv. I-"

"*What* did you say?"

"I didn't want to say anything!" Maya said her hand shaking from the quick shift in her own mood. "Some guys from *your* precinct pulled me into an office and grilled me, like *I* did something wrong!"

"You didn't do anything wrong."

"You're right. I didn't. But, you had just vanished and from the way they were talking to me...I just told whatever I could in case it could help."

Olivia was quiet for a moment. "Did you really think Elliot had done something to me?"

"Liv, I..." Maya began. "I didn't want to think it was possible. But...before I went down there, someone sent me this stupid video that showed you and Elliot fighting....and I just didn't know what to think."

"So, you told them that Elliot was responsible for what happened to me?"

"No!" Maya yelled tears forming in her eyes. "I just kept saying that he couldn't....*wouldn't*! I just kept saying it because....I figured if I said it enough, I'd really believe it."

Olivia scoffed. "I can't even believe I'm hearing this. I can't believe you would think my partner would....I mean, you've met Elliot-"

"I know!" Maya said. "I know Liv. It's just that with seeing that video and with what you said about him going crazy if find out you took that file...I didn't know what to think."

Olivia's eyes fell to study her blanket as she tried to hold back tears.

"I'm sorry, Liv." Maya said. "But, you were gone and nobody knew what happened to you. I just...I just..."

"It's okay, Maya. I didn't mean to yell at you. It's just that the last thing I remember was Elliot in my apartment and then I wake up and four weeks of my life have passed me by. And, I don't have the pieces to pull together even a blurry memory."

The tears that had welled up in her had spilled down her face generously.

Maya sat down on the side of Olivia's bed and pulled her into a hug. "See, this is I wanted. I would cry, you would cry and then we both watch Lifetime movies and go through our yearbook for the rest of the day."

Olivia laughed and pulled one her boxes of chocolate from the table next to the bed.

"Here. Open this and crack open that book. I'd all but forgotten what a nightmare 1987 was..."

They talked about old times, laughing at each other's yearbook photos from nearly twenty years earlier and were in the middle of watching a movie together when Jillian knocked on the door.

“Oh my God,” Jillian whispered with watery eyes. “You look so much better.”

Olivia sighed. “Well, when I last looked in the mirror in that drawer, I’d thought I looked like I got hit by a truck, but thanks anyways.”

“I’m serious, Olivia,” Jillian said as she lightly padded toward the bed. “The last time I saw you, the doctor’s were debating about whether you’d even wake up. It’s like a miracle.”

“Oh, don’t be so melodramatic, Jill. I can’t remember much, but I know it’s not in your nature to be such a drama queen.”

“Are you...is the p-paralysis real?” she stammered glancing at Maya.

“Yeah, well, seeing as how I’ve been trying to just wiggle my toes here for the past hour and nothing’s happened, I’d say yes.”

Jillian put her hand to her mouth and burst into tears. Olivia outstretched her bandaged arm and pulled Jillian into a hug.

“It’s okay, Jill,” she said. “I’ll be fine.”

“Fine?” Jillian said pulling away from her. “You were gone for weeks. How can you say this is fine?”

“Because, Jillian, I’m trying to be optimistic.”

Jillian shook her head. “I want to be optimistic too, but I can’t. Not when we still don’t know what happened to you.”

“Let’s just talk about something else for a bit,” Maya sighed.

“No,” Jillian snapped. “We’re going to talk about this. Liv, no one knows what’s happened to you. No one. As far as we know, you’re partner could’ve-”

“Absolutely not.”

“Do you remember what happened to you, then?”

“I know Elliot didn’t do anything to me.”

“You don’t understand, Olivia. There’s a vid-”

“I’ve heard. There’s a video of Elliot and I arguing. That doesn’t mean anything.”

“Not arguing,” Jillian pressed. “Attacking. He had you pinned to the floor.”

“I’m telling you. Elliot didn’t do anything to me. I can specifically remember Elliot walking out and slamming my door shut.”

“What else can you remember?”

“Nothing. And believe me, I’ve been trying.”

“So, if you can’t remember anything else, how can you be so sure of what happened that night?”

“You know what?” Olivia said her jaw set. “I think I’d like to just be alone with my thoughts right now.”

“Livia...”

“I am not going to lie here and listen to people accuse Elliot of something I know he didn’t do.”

“We’re just trying to be realistic here, Liv,” Jillian said.

“I don’t care! Okay? I’ve already told you Elliot wasn’t there and I won’t listen to you bitch about him. Go!”

Maya stared at Jillian and shook her head as she picked her coat up from her chair.

“Liv, we just...” Jillian began, but Olivia held up her hand to silence her.

“No. I don’t want to hear it. We can talk again when you come to terms with the fact that Elliot’s a good person and who I *know* would never hurt me.”

Olivia settled into her pillows and flipped through television channels until mildly familiar characters caught her eye. On the screen Sami Brady and Lucas Roberts were setting the plans of their wedding reception when a surly EJ stepped into the room and Olivia flipped off the television as she sighed and stared at the ceiling. Her mind was a blur of colour as memories came in and out of focus like ripples disturbing the reflection of figures staring into water. In all honesty, she could not remember if Elliot had left that night or not and while she was certain there was a figure present throughout her time in the dark, she could not discern a face through the murk. While she would not let her mind to consider the topic, the fact still remained; Jillian had made a valid point. She did not remember much of anything and who was to say what really happened that night if she could not ascertain a clear avowal of the situation.

She closed her eyes and allowed the fatigue that followed her exertions with Maya and Jillian to close on her body, but as she began to fall asleep, for the first time since she became aware of her surroundings, Olivia did not wish for answers and instead, feared what the truth might bring.

\*\*\* stars

“You at least need to finish it, Liv,” Elliot said pushing the plastic plate on the rolling table that hovered over the bed toward Olivia.

She scrunched her face at the dry turkey meat and half-warm, half-raw string beans that lay on the place. “Didn’t you promise to bring me a ruben?”

“Not me.”

“Oh... Might’ve been Munch.”

Elliot sighed with a contented smile on his face as he leaned back in the chair. Maya had called him in close to a panic hours earlier and he worried that Olivia had fallen back into suffering from psychosomatic problems. When he arrived at the hospital, however, he saw that Olivia was alert, though she seemed less happy to see him than she had on previous visits.

Olivia shifted her arm and pulled the series of straws she had jury-rigged into her cast to scratch the skin under her cast. “I can’t eat any more of that stuff. What happened to my chocolate?”

“There’s two empty boxes in the trash over there. I’m sure if Halloway saw that, he’d have a fit.”

“Wh? Has he been trouble recently?”

He opened his mouth to respond, but paused. A part of him wanted to spill the events of the past weeks, detailing every last word Jonathan had spat at him, while another part remembered the look on her face when he last saw she and Jonathan together.

“He’s just been concerned. That’s all.”

“Well, what has been going on since I’ve been... gone?”

He rubbed his face and launched into a story recounting his past month without her, leaving out the more gruesome details where he thought it necessary. Her eyes never left his as he continued and by the end, she was insisting he call some of the newspapers so that she could set the record straight.

“Can you remember though?” he asked.

She sat quietly staring at her feet for a moment. "I know I wasn't alone."

"Yes," he said nodding as he remembered her saying the same words days earlier.

"There were at least...three, maybe four...I can't remember her name...Angie, I think?

Maybe Annie?" She put her hand to her head and squinted as if in sudden pain.

"It's okay," Elliot said. "Take your time."

"Maybe there were more...I just remember it being so dark...I think there were people.

Yeah, there was definitely more than four...like fifteen or twenty...and then they were all-"

Her breath caught and she shivered as her eyes rolled back in her head. Elliot grasped her whole body tight as she seized and convulsed, shaking the bed in the process.

When it was over, Olivia blinked around the room confused about what had happened.

As the realization of what had transpired set in, tears rolled down Olivia's face and Elliot rested against the bed as he held her.

"I can't Elliot..." she said. "I can't move. I can't walk. I can't feel anything."

"I know. It's okay," he whispered into her hair.

"Elliot...God...What am I gonna do? I can't walk...Dear Jesus...What am I gonna do?"

\*\*\* stars

### **Wednesday Feb 28**

Wednesday February 28, 2007

10:26PM

"She's been coherent for a couple days now. I think we can take her at her word."

Cragen's chair was turned away from his office door and he spoke into the phone with a low voice. The idea of even having the conversation annoyed him, but he did not want any of his detectives to see the expressions on his face as he attempted to avoid a full argument with his own superior.

He had gone to see Olivia earlier in the day and while he was delighted by seeing her awake and lucid, he was disheartened by her appearance and the fact that she seemed to have resigned with clear certitude that she was never going to walk again. Only one other officer in his command had seemed so at ease with such a calamity and he was the eighth cop Cragen had buried after he suffered a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

"I'm sure she means it," Deputy Inspector Felton said, "but I'm not ready to take it as the Lord's honest truth. She's been through a lot and I don't want to pull all the heat from Detective Stabler until I know where we stand."

"The words came out of her own mouth," Cragen pressed. "She said he didn't do anything to her and I believe her."

"Well, she's a good detective, but we're keeping our own investigation open until we know for certain what happened."

"How much more do you need? She said it herself."

"Well, you'll forgive my skepticism, Captain, but I don't think that the words from someone who just woke up out of a two-week coma from being beaten nearly to

death and who was having trouble even speaking in her own native language as short as two days ago can be trusted! She's his partner and if anything, I'd assume that she wouldn't *want* to believe that something this violent could happen between them. Let's not forget that that she can't remember what happened to her for the past month, but she's *absolutely* certain that Stabler didn't hurt her. If you take a step back from the situation, Captain, you'd see there are holes all over this.

"Elliot Stabler is a good detective. He didn't do this to her."

"But, there's a video circulating all across the globe of him tackling her and holding her in a headlock just before she disappeared."

"Ask Detective Benson's doctors. She wasn't out in the elements all that long. Elliot's been on her case since the second something looked up. If he was the one hurting her, we would've seen some kind of sign of it."

"That doesn't exempt him from this."

"What do you need?" Cragen yelled, finally exasperated. "A signed affidavit! The *victim* says he's not involved!"

"And the *victim* has a close relationship with Detective Stabler. The *victim* is just coming down from the shock that she may never walk again and *victim* is struggling with the psychological backlash over what's happened to her. Now, I've got witnesses eight people deep, all saying that Stabler and Benson were on pins and needles in the weeks before her disappearance and that tape doesn't help anything. Halloway is pulling out all stops on the situation and because she was the lead detective that helped nail down Kreider, we've got Richardsons and every other old money family with kids in this goddamn city asking me questions about this! We're not taking the heat off Stabler until we have a suspect."

Cragen sighed as he put down the telephone receiver and wondered if he just imagined a new crease in his forehead. For the past month, a light police detail had been ordered on Elliot, only following him and noting his whereabouts from time to time, and Cragen had made a third attempt to get it removed, deeming it unnecessary since Mark Landon and Diana Willex first emerged to clear him.

Felton began the investigation without his knowledge, claiming that it would be easier to discover the "truth" if they investigated without so much public stigma. Cragen knew that the word of two people was not enough to stop the background investigation, but with Olivia insisting that Elliot was not involved, he felt the need to try again.

The deputy inspector remained unconvinced by Olivia's surety of the facts only as they pertained to Elliot and as he ran a hand over his face, Cragen thought about his own skepticism. Rationally, it made sense to keep a case open on Elliot while there was still no one to prosecute, but emotionally, Cragen hated the idea of having any kind of investigation run on his two favorite detectives.

All the good thoughts and prayers notwithstanding, a question still remained: If Elliot did not nearly kill Olivia, who did?

**\*\* Unknown time and Place**

Lost. His precious was lost.

He had read that in a book once, had he not?

Yes, a precious thing being lost. He could now understand how it felt. As soon as she had gone, guilt coursed through him once the anger subsided. She was, of course, his and he should not have given up on her so quickly. In truth, he had *not* had enough; he was simply frustrated by days of effort and nothing to show for it save for a wound on his side, the marks on his wrists and the taste of her skin still on his teeth.

Not once in all his years had one of his possessions escaped. Jumped through a window while running on a broken leg? If that was not the epitome of vigor, he did not know what was.

He had gone to retrieve her that night and found that she was lost. Stolen from him. The room where she had lain, nearly broken, seemed so empty now. She was so unlike the others, though they were now trying to follow her example. The window had to be boarded completely lest one of the others attempt the same thing. He already had to get rid of one of them since her departure. She was ready to raise an all out revolt and it had to be quashed immediately.

He sighed for the first time in years and stared at himself in the mirror. Skin that had not seen sunlight in more than a decade glowed faintly in the dark. Perhaps he should simply retire. Call it “quits” while he was ahead. Obviously, he was getting sloppy as the years passed or else she would never have been able to leave.

Anger surged through him once again as the memory of her standing defiantly before him came to view.

He had never once had an escape. Not once. And he would be damned if he were going to allow his possession, something he had bought and paid for, to wander round free. He passed the room, its stench pleasantly overwhelming and his resolve was set. He had to have her back in his possession. No matter what it took. He needed her back.

## Chapter Twenty-Seven

Sunday March 18, 2007  
Mount Carmel Hospital East

A smile played across Olivia’s face as she stared into the small screen of the digital camera that flashed a shaky video. The music that played from it touched her heart and nearly brought a tear to her eye as it elicited both longing and remembrance for her own youth.

Elliot had taken the video of Lizzie’s piano recital weeks earlier and had brought it to her shortly afterward, but Olivia enjoyed watching frequently and it was simply an experience in itself listening to Lizzie play the works of the old masters and also a piece that she had finessed as a listless college student who doubted what she wanted to do with her life.

Four weeks had passed since she had first become continually conscious of the world around her and she was never for want of gifts or company.

Every day friends, old and new, other cops and neighbors paid visits to her and while they all looked happy to see her, she had to learn to prevent a look of annoyance from crossing her face each time someone would comment on how much weight she had lost or how different her face looked, as not one person had the ability to keep such comments to themselves.

Each day Olivia had struggled to relearn how to do simple tasks, such as sitting upright without aid and doing everything with her left hand as her right remained inside of a cast and each day she realized something new she could or could not do.

She could feed herself with her left hand; she could not lean too far to either side of the bed without the risk of falling completely. She could lean on her elbows for short amounts of time, move every muscle above her belly button and assist in the removal and entrance of her catheter at various times of the day; she could not feel anything from the slightest brush to the hardest pinch from her hip bone to her feet.

Even with the move to the new hospital where Doctors Brandt, Li and Schoene performed various tests to help stimulate the nerves in her legs, Olivia had all but given up hoping for the ability to walk and shifted her focus to making her upper body as limber as possible, much to Jonathan and Elliot's dismay.

Maya had been helpful, noting that the muscles in her stomach and arms had all nearly atrophied, and aided her daily to complete the exercises needed to get back what she used to have, but both Jonathan and Elliot insisted on performing the same stimuli tests on her feet and legs, only to be despondent later for lack of desired results.

All disappointments in regards to her paralysis aside, she remained positive. The seizures, which had initially occurred at least once a day, had slowed to the point that her new primary doctor, a Dr. Jakob Androse, expressed that he thought she might stop having them completely by the time of her pending release from the hospital months down the line.

Olivia turned off the camera and flipped through the television channels, discerning the time from the various day-time television shows for which she and Maya had developed a healthy appreciation.

Maya, like Elliot and Jonathan, visited her every day, for hours at a time and most of the time they simply laughed together like teenagers in high school. They watched their "stories" together, swooned over the young and attractive male nurse who helped change some of Olivia's bandages and teased one another. Maya had even taken to calling Olivia "Stilts" again like she did when Olivia had hit her growth spurt at fourteen and grew nearly four inches in one summer without gaining any weight. Maya had also made sure that when people came to visit that Olivia looked as healthy as possible.

When she caught wind that Adam and one of Olivia's ex-boyfriends were coming to visit, Maya had brought Olivia's "good brush" and make-up, insisting that Olivia could look anyway she wanted when it only she, Elliot and Jonathan were around, yet when "others" came, it was imperative Olivia stray away from what she coined as the "I-have-just-been-whisked-from-the-gates-of-death" look.

An hourglass rotated on an invisible pedestal on the television and Olivia grabbed her remote control again, not wanting to sit through a series of commercials. She gave up eventually and lied against her pillows to stare at the myriad of cards, letters, pictures and balloons that decorated the large new hospital room that was being paid through Halloway family money.

Most of the outpour of gifts and trinkets came from people she had never met who said they had simply prayed for her, while some came from people to whom she had not spoken in years. Her most cherished, by far, was the handwritten letter she received from the little boy who had found her so many weeks earlier, reading:

*Dear Miss Olivia Benson,*

*My name is Deondre Meekham and I am 7 ½ years old. I like to read and I like French fries. I found you in a dumpster with my Uncle Ray and I hope you are ok now cuz you were very white and I was scared. Mom says you were on tv cuz you were gone but now you are okay cuz we found you. I hope you feel better soon.*

*Deondre*

The various visitors had also caught her by surprise. Several nights after being moved to Mt. Carmel, a ten year old girl with a familiar face stopped by with her mother. It was several minutes into the conversation, before Olivia could place the little girl.

“D’you remember how you played for me when I was sick in the hospital?” Amarie

Otom had said as she pulled a shining violin out of its case.

“Yes, I do.”

“Good, ‘cause Momma says you’re sick and I wanted to play for *you* this time.”

That night, she could not stem the flow of tears that had been motivated by Amarie’s rendition of a rasping “Greensleeves,” and though Elliot and Maya had asked repeatedly what was wrong, Olivia still cried herself to sleep.

The next day, her cousin Allison had brought her seven-week-old son, Patrick Kyle, to the hospital so that Olivia could hold him for a short while and after the visit, she found herself wondering if she would rethink the prospect of children, assuming she was still capable of carrying.

Most surprising of all was her visit from Kathy. When she came through the door, Olivia half expected to see the Stabler children following behind her, even though they had visited with their father weeks earlier, and she was embarrassed to be slightly unnerved that Kathy would come see all on her own.

“How are they treating you here?” Kathy had asked.

“Everything’s fine,” Olivia had answered allowing a brief silence to waft over them as she considered her last interaction with Kathy’s daughter.

“Kathy...I, um, never really got a chance to apologize to you about the situation with Kathleen.” Kathy nodded and she continued. “I was able to talk to Elliot about it for a while, but you and I never got a chance to-”

“Don’t worry about,” Kathy said. “There’s no apology necessary. Kathleen trusts and... now at least, I’m glad she knew she could talk to you.”

Olivia smiled weakly at her. *Well, she can’t hurt me anymore than I am now*, she thought.

“Kathy, I need to tell you something.”

Apprehension spread across her eyes like ink and Olivia swallowed hard.

“It’s not really that important since it was so long ago, but I can kind of tell that you’ve been wondering why Kathleen even thought of coming to me with her questions...”

“Well, it hasn’t been keeping me up at night, but I *have* been wondering.”

“Okay. Well, last January, my friend and I were out at a bar opening and we saw Kathleen there. I swore to her that I wouldn’t say anything after she promised she’d clean up her act a little, but I just wanted you to know...Or I just needed to get it off my chest.”

“Was this The Rox?”

Olivia’s jaw fell. “You *know* about it?”

“Yeah, of course, I do,” Kathy laughed. “She blurted it out to me one night not too long afterward. All she really seemed concerned about was whether or not I was going to tell Elliot. I told her I wasn’t grounding her. I was just disappointed, but she stayed in for the few three weeks anyway.”

“That was our end of the bargain. I told her she should help out around the house and that she shouldn’t be going anywhere, as if she were grounded.”

“Disciplining my own kids, now?” Kathy said with an eyebrow arched.

Olivia’s breath caught and she pursed her lips, but Kathy just smiled.

“It’s okay, Olivia. If Kathleen hadn’t looked like she already got in trouble that night, I would’ve done the same. And...she listens to you and I know that’s probably helped a lot.” Kathy sighed. “Anyway, I just wanted to see how you were doing.”

“My doctor says I’m coming right along.”

“Good,” she said smiling. “I need you to get well, because this other girl that’s supposedly watching Elliot’s back doesn’t know her ass from her elbow.”

Olivia’s favorite nurse, Jesse, smiled brightly as he entered her room with her meal, such as it was.

“I’ve got your lunch,” he said approaching with the large tray. “Where’s your entourage today?”

“Gave them the day off,” Olivia said. “I figured they could use it.”

Jesse laughed. “Okay. We’ve got a turkey and Swiss on whole wheat, some baby carrots, a fruit cocktail and a sugar-free drink for you.”

“Oh boy...”

“At least it’s more or less good for you, eh?”

Jesse chatted with her for a short while before he left to continue his rounds and sighed as attempted to make sense of the meal before her. While the food at Mt. Carmel was a far cry better than that of Mercy General East, it was still hospital food, notorious for its lack of taste. Most of her meals, much to Dr. Androse’s dismay, came from things she had coaxed from her visitors.

Cragen had brought a sandwich from her favorite deli when he had last come to visit, though it was more of a way to bring a sort of peace before the proverbial storm. His visit, while it started benign as one friend to another, irritated her as he treated her like a victim and constantly made her repeat herself to make sure she stuck to her story.

Olivia’s memory, rather slowly fall into focus, sprang forth with clear shots of time like random photographs detailing someone’s life in an album. A gaunt, worried face

stared directly at her; darkness and cold overwhelmed every part of her being; piercing eyes glared at her from behind the barrel of a gun.

Though she could not remember much, she made certain to remain clear on aspect of her story; Elliot had not hurt her. She reiterated it to Cragen, his superiors, reports who had infiltrated the hospital, her friends and well-wishers; everyone. Elliot was there, he left and *then* someone else came after her and, yes, she was certain it was not Elliot.

The actual memory was really not much more than a haze of grey, but the parts she remembered most, she kept to herself. Her brain readily retained the feel of Elliot's body nearly lying on top of her, smell of his aftershave or the touch of his skin as he ran his lips across her shoulder. When the memories flashed to mind as Elliot had leaned over to hug her, she had decided then and there not to reveal them.

It was the heat of the moment, she had said to herself.

While she knew the very mention of the near event on the floor of her apartment would most likely reduce the strain of interrogation, she knew there were enough rumours floating around about she and did not want to inflate them further especially when she saw the looks Elliot and Jonathan gave one another when they thought she was not paying attention.

Elliot visited every day for close to an hour in the mornings and then again later in the day until she fell asleep most nights. He made sure to check her visitor's log each time he arrived, arranged to have an officer at her door and quizzed her about the names he did not recognize.

"Honestly, Elliot," she had said. "The guy who attacked me isn't going to march in the hospital to see how I'm doing. Especially when there's a cop at the door."

Elliot just shrugged. "I can't afford to take any chances."

Jonathan welcomed the security measures and it seemed to be the only thing upon which the two men in her life agreed. Elliot and Jonathan had argued heavily everything from her initial move to the new hospital to setting limits on daily visitors. Olivia would pretend to sleep when it appeared that their arguments were heightening and only Maya would venture to step into the fray putting them both in place by noting the final decisions, should Olivia been found unfit to make them herself, rested on her.

"Hey Stilts!" Maya said as she entered the room carrying a large bag. "I brought something for you."

"I hope it's a slice from the Lower East Side," Olivia said pushing away her plate.

"Because I can't eat this."

"Sorry. Dr. Androse actually sat us down individually and talked about not letting you sneak chocolate and other crap."

"And that's fine, but you need to get me something else to eat."

Maya laughed and set her bag on Olivia's bed. "Look, I didn't know if you would've even wanted these, but I thought they'd be good for a laugh."

"What are they?"

"Newspaper articles from a couple months ago. But, the cool thing is, they're all from psychics and stuff commenting on you."

"What do they say?" Olivia asked.

“Well...” Maya said pulling out several cut articles at once. “This one says that you were kidnapped by faeries. And, this one here says you ran off to the island where Elvis, Tupac and Amelia Earhart are.”

“No way!” Olivia laughed and pulled several from Maya’s pile. “That’s crazy.”

“This lady’s great too. She was on The Tessa Show a while back. ‘Olivia Benson’s story is a tragic one, found too commonly in a city such as New York, but what pains me most is that the police do not seem to want her body found, otherwise they would have contacted me in regards to the firsthand information I have on her whereabouts.’”

“Firsthand? Whatever.” Olivia shook her head. “Oh! Look at this one! ‘Ms. Benson’s spirit lies somewhere other than what we know of as heaven and earth. She’s outside of our world and I think, no, I know, she shan’t be returning.’ Good God! The things people print!”

“I know,” Maya said. “And, I found a great one about alien abductions in that crazy newspaper ‘The Threat Among Us.’”

They laughed together for several hours, catching another soap opera, The Maury Show and Oprah before Maya left to speak to another client who had called upon her legal assistance to beat a drunk-driving arrest.

Jonathan and Elliot stepped into her room, one right after the other and she exchanged nervous conversation with them until she grew tired of the tension and proclaimed that she wished to be alone with her thoughts for the night.

As they left, Olivia pulled shifted her covers around her body preparing for a night’s rest, when she felt something odd, as if her body was jerking and itching simultaneously. She moved about the bed unsuccessfully trying to cease the problem, and it was only after a full minute of finagling something with which to scratch that Olivia realized she had been absent-mindedly scratching an itch on her thigh.

\*\*\* stars

Monday March 19, 2007  
7:57PM

Elliot strode down the bright corridor, nodding toward the faces he had come to recognize after weeks of daily visits to the hospital. He had eaten a nice meal with his family and had spoken at length with his daughter who was beginning the last stretch of her time at Hudson University.

Maureen had decided to pursue her Master’s degree at Columbia in the fall and she also announced, to Elliot’s utter consternation, that she and Justin had considered moving in together once they graduated. Elliot and Kathy had sat silent after her announcement while Kathleen and Lizzie beamed at Maureen, neither one of them able to recover immediately from the shock that their first child had truly struck out on her own.

Slowing his step as he approached the nurse’s station near Olivia’s room, he frowned slightly as he noticed a woman he did not recognize signing the pink sheet that had been reserved for all of Olivia’s visitors.

The closer he came, the more he saw of her, noticing that she was a middle aged, brown-skinned woman and the faint memory of Maya mentioning sisters came to mind.

"Hi there," Elliot said as he leaned on the counter next to her while trying to read her name.

"Yes?" the woman said.

He stuck out his hand for her to shake. "I'm Elliot Stabler. Olivia's partner. I don't believe we've met before."

She nodded. "Oh, okay. *You're* Elliot. I'm Priyani Iyengar. You know my baby sister, Maya."

"Yeah, of course. Nice to meet you. Are you coming or going?"

"I was just leaving when the officer down there insisted that I sign the sheet to leave as well."

"We're just trying to keep tabs on everything considering what's happened."

"I guess it's understandable, but when you're here as often as Maya tells me, I don't know just how necessary it is."

He sighed. "Yeah, I've seen a lot of Maya these days."

"You don't sound so upbeat about it."

"Well, she calls a lot and I don't really mind, it's just that we don't really have a lot in common outside of Olivia, but I like hearing stories about when she and Liv were kids."

"Maya does have the tendency to cling. She's probably just latched onto you because Olivia's not out and about, but I wouldn't worry about it. I've watched them both grow up and the only reason that they're both still alive is because when one falls, the other one usually catches. Maya's just lacking her crutch right now."

"So, I guess I'm the closest thing she's got to a substitute, eh?"

Priyani smiled and nodded. "Probably. I have to go, but it was nice to meet you, Elliot."

They parted ways and Elliot ran his finger down the names of Olivia's visitors for the day.

*Maya Shah, yes... Samuel Lauper, yes, the neighbor... Jillian Harfort, yes... Jordan Harfort, Jeremy Harfort, her boys... Kenneth Randall, okay...Jonathan Hallows...Aileen Hallows, might be his mother, and Priyani Iyengar...*

"Hey!" Elliot said a moment later as he stepped into Olivia's room. "I see the cast is off." Olivia happily waved her thin arm that was free of its itching menace. "Yup. They cut me out of it this afternoon."

"Where's Hallows?"

"*Jonathan* is having dinner with his mother and has promised to order an extra meal just to have something decent to bring me. How are the kids?"

"Doing good. Although, Maureen's just told us she and her boyfriend are planning on moving in together after graduation."

"Wow. Big step."

"A wrong step."

Olivia sighed. "He's a good kid, Elliot."

"I'm sure he's an excellent kid, but I still don't like the idea of him shacking up with my daughter. She's too young."

"She's older than you were when you got married."

“And, we had to get married because we were too young, too. I know how this works. She’ll be in school and he’ll be at a firm somewhere and then one thing leads to another. She’ll get pregnant and have to drop out and then she’ll never get to do what she wants with her life.”

“How about thinking the cup is half full once in a while, Elliot?”

“The cup’s not half full, Olivia,” he said. “In fact, when it comes to that situation, the cup’s damn near drained. Change of subject, though. How are *you* doing?”

A sly smirk spread across her face. “I’m well, Elliot. I’m doing well.”

“Just well? How’s your collar feel?”

“Healed.”

“Are you getting your grip back in your hand?”

“A little, but I liked the idea of being ambidextrous for a while.”

He stared at her for a moment. “What are you leaving out?”

“What makes you think I’m leaving something out?”

“Something happened, didn’t it?”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Yeah, okay,” he said. “Halloway proposed, didn’t he?”

Olivia’s grew to twice their size. “What?”

“Okay, I guess was wrong.”

“Yes, very wrong.”

“Then, what’s with you? You’ve got that look on your face like you do when you think you’re hiding something good.”

She shrugged and smirked. “Just happy to be alive, I suppose.”

“Well, good...Cragen wants us all to talk to you again...when you think you’re ready.”

“Bring it. I’ll give you everything I’ve got.”

“Good to hear. You look tired though. Why don’t we save it for another night?”

“I met Aileen Halloway today. Just withstanding her looks that bore through my soul took a lot out of me. It would have been bad enough just having to talk to her as any old person on the street, but she’s my boyfriend’s mother on top of it. She’s giving me that look. The one that says she wouldn’t care if I was the ambassador to another, she still wouldn’t like me.”

“I’m sure she loved you.”

“I’m sure she didn’t, but I never do well with the parents anyway.”

“Still,” Elliot said. “That’s a big step. Meeting his mother. I guess things between the two of you are back on track?”

Olivia sighed and stared at him for a long time. “I don’t really know where we are at the moment. Everything feels like it’s back to normal, but we still haven’t a talk about what happened.”

“I’m sure it’ll all work out.”

“Yeah...”

Olivia’s voice trailed and she quickly changed the subject to Elliot’s most recent case.

While no other murdered boys had been found, there was still no evidence and nowhere to begin looking for answers. Public outcry had waned by the time Zachary Calbrach was out of the hospital and as other cases continued to appear, Ryan Daly and Andrew Shaw were set to the side, waiting for more information.

Elliot discussed some of his caseload, his dislike for Alexa Brown and the differences in the department since Olivia had left for a while longer before he was called out to a new crime scene.

"Hey, could you do me a favor?" Olivia said as Elliot stood to leave.

"Anything."

"Well...I'm going to need you to...how do I put this?"

"What is it?" he asked suddenly apprehensive. "Just tell me."

"Yeah...well, can you pull down my blankets a little more so that they cover my feet?"

Elliot's eyebrows furrowed as he approached the end of the bed. "Okay...Any reason why?"

"Yes, well it's kind of chilly in here and my toes are getting a little cold."

He pulled at her blankets for a moment, but paused when he noticed something moving beneath the blanket. His eyes grew wide when he caught the significance of her statement and all but pulled off her blankets to see Olivia slightly wiggling her toes.

"How long...?" he tried to say, but gasped and laughed at the same time, taking away his breath.

"Since about yesterday," she said beaming at him. "I couldn't figure out what was going on at first. Then I realized what I was feeling and I've spent most of today practicing on just my feet."

"Oh my God, Olivia...I can't believe it."

"See? I told you the cup was half full."

He laughed and tickled her feet. She let out a girlish shriek as her toes quivered.

"Stop! I can only move them so much and that tickles!"

Elliot smiled and felt his chest burn as he tried to hold back tears. In another moment, he had wrapped both arms around her, and he held her like he had weeks earlier, feeling genuinely thankful for the first time in months.

At a knock on the door, he released her slightly and upon noting Olivia tense in his arms, let go completely, knowing that Jonathan most likely stood behind him.

"I'll see you later," he said and quickly headed for the door without looking at Jonathan.

"What was that about?" Elliot heard Jonathan say as he began to close the door.

"Jonathan," Olivia said. "I've got a surprise for you..."

By the next day, news of Olivia's steady recovery had spread through the hospital and doctors specializing in neurology and spinal injury from across the city had come by to see Olivia.

As the day wore on, Elliot could see Olivia's patience wearing thin, but at the same time, her face seemed brighter and she looked healthier than she had in a long while. She had gained some weight and did not look so much like someone who had stepped out of a concentration camp, and even though she had barely spent time outdoors, she had regained some of her natural tan.

Jonathan and Maya were completely elated by the news, though Jonathan was visibly irritated about hearing the news second after Elliot, but all three stood by as she endured a series of tests to see how much progress they could expect for her to make.

Though the team of doctors had been impressed by the fact that Olivia not only had sensation below the waist, but could also make slight movements if she

concentrated, they agreed the most that could optimistically expected was for Olivia to perhaps stand unaided, but that walking or running was no longer a possibility. Only Dr. Androse dissented, saying that he believed Olivia would make a full recovery within a year's time.

Even with the news, the four celebrated and Jonathan would pinch her lightly on the legs just to hear Olivia say "Stop that, damn it" each time.

It was late by the time Olivia's eyes began to droop and Jonathan had offered to drive Maya home when Olivia sat up in her bed.

"Oh, hey," she said as Elliot was leaving. "Someone needs to go check on Evelyn Rivers if you haven't already. I mean, she was already kind of fragile that Monday and I'd told I'd be by to see her that Wednesday. I'd all but forgotten about her considering. She'd probably blown up my cell phone by now."

Elliot sighed as he stared at her. He knew the moment was coming when he would need to tell Olivia what had happened, but he had hoped that he could have saved it for several months more.

"What?" she said.

He shook his head and she squinted at him.

"Is...is she okay?"

Elliot's eyes dropped to the floor. In all his life he never felt like he had failed her as much as he had at that moment.

"Elliot...?" she said, her voice catching. "Is she okay?"

He gave a slight to his head and Olivia could feel her eyes begin to tear.

"What...Diorel? Please don't tell me he hurt her again."

"No," he said. "Diorel's at Rikers."

"Then, what happened?"

He took a deep breath and pursed his lips. "Olivia, she's...Evelyn's dead. She killed herself."

Olivia closed her eyes and a tear escaped her eyes before she could stop it. "How? When?"

"She slit her wrists a few days before you woke up."

Olivia nodded with wet eyes and coughed to cover the sob that had built in her throat.

"Did she leave a note?"

"She...she said that she couldn't let Diorel do to her what she insisted he did to you."

She sniffed back a tear and shook her head. "That's just...I don't even know. I mean did I everything I could...it wasn't enough."

"Olivia," he said. He crossed the room in three steps and was at her side a moment later.

"This wasn't your fault."

"I let her down, Elliot."

"No. It was all me. I saw the signs...she was calling for you everyday...she left message after message, sounding worse and worse. She kept saying that Diorel had to've done something to you and that he was coming for her next. She was going downhill quick. I just didn't see it in time."

Olivia leaned back into her pillows. "I work so hard to get her away from him, Elliot, and he managed to kill her anyway."

"Liv..." he said softly, but she just shook her head and turned away from him.

"Just...just go. I just want to be alone for a bit."

He stared at her for a full minute before leaving. Everything in soul was urging him to stay, but he continued walking and three days had passed before Olivia's mood showed any signs of change.

Friday March 23, 2007  
6:21PM

Olivia sighed as her arm missed the far table again and pouting slightly, she rested back against her pillows.

She had been stretching for the box of chocolate Maya had intentionally set just out of her reach and even after moving the bed as much as she could while still lying on top of it and extending her fingers as far as they would, she could not reach her quarry.

Several days had passed since Elliot had informed her that Evelyn Rivers, despite all her efforts, had died and there had been an outpour of candy and treats sent to her from other officers in her precinct and other friends in attempts to placate her.

A slight depression had overwhelmed Olivia's spirits as she was plagued with thoughts of what must have been going through Evelyn's head in her last living moments. Any time she managed to sleep, she woke after suffering nightmares of Evelyn crying out for Olivia to help her, but Olivia could only get to her just as she slit her wrists.

Though she had pressed him for details, Elliot remained adamant about only offering what he thought Olivia could handle, much to her annoyance and thus left her dealing with her own imagination in combination with the vague memories that constantly plagued her thoughts. Every once in a while she would wake feeling brutally cold though the heat in the hospital room blazed or she would find herself suddenly nauseated to the point where Maya had to hold her hair back as she vomited into a shallow bucket. She knew the problems were caused by memories of a dark place and continually pushed the thoughts aside, yet she had nothing else on which to ponder and when her mind turned to Evelyn's tragic end, depression would settle further into her psyche.

Olivia eventually welcomed the gifts, yet to the point that she had abstained from eating the meals prepared by her nutritionist and doctors. Worried that she might be endangering her health, Maya had insisted that the treats and outside food stop coming, and even threatened to file a legal suit to keep visitors away from Olivia, but somehow unapproved food would appear in the room.

Through a channel of uninformed visitors and orderlies she would reward with a wink and a smile, Olivia received what she wanted on a consistent basis and though her doctors warned that without a proper diet, she might risk further health problems when she was finally strong enough to leave the hospital, Olivia did not care.

The news of Evelyn's death weighed upon her heavily from the fact that she could not do anything to stop to the idea that she never even had the chance to say her last goodbyes. She had asked politely at first, and then later demanded that she be allowed to at least visit Evelyn's grave, but her doctors, and especially Elliot, were against it.

Several small bruises had erupted on Olivia's arms and legs and her doctors feared that she might be reacting poorly to the vancomycin used previously to treat the pneumonia that had seemed to linger in earlier weeks. A mild cough she developed had turned into a new infection and while the drugs that pumped through her IVs appeared to be working well, no one wanted to even risk exposing Olivia to the New York air when her body was still so weak.

Infection was also possible from the wound on her side that had become a dull, continuous ache that would sometimes bleed if she shifted too quickly. All the while, melancholy mixed with anger anytime Olivia realized that everyone around treated her like a fragile victim and if there was one thing she knew she was not, it was a helpless victim.

When Maya had discovered the contraband chocolate behind her pillows, she had snatched it immediately, scolded Olivia for not caring about her well-being while so many others did and set it just out of reach as a constant reminder of the potential damage that could be done if Olivia did not follow her doctors' wishes. Olivia huffed in frustration as she glanced at the perfectly balanced meal that lay to her left. She was hungry, but out of simple determination and stubbornness, she refused to eat it.

Her foot twitched as she intended to kick out in chagrin and a grimace fell over her face as she imagined Maya, Elliot and Jonathan staring at her like she was a sick child who needed to be told "no."

She turned on the television and caught the last bits of a commercial flaunting a fight between two grown men for the next episode of a talk show and Olivia rolled her eyes wondering if the tension between Jonathan and Elliot would erupt into such a fight.

The looks and snide exchanges had increased since Elliot had told her about Evelyn and she heard Jonathan insist on more than one occasion that Elliot had only said something to keep her subdued. The idea of the suggestion annoyed her to no end, yet Elliot's responses toward Jonathan were just as ill-tempered. What infuriated her most was while Jonathan was behaving no different than his smug temperament was apt to show, Elliot no longer even pretended to tolerate Jonathan's company.

They argued like embittered siblings over anything from whether or not the position of the window blinds would eventually shine light into her eyes to who would assist Olivia with her physical therapy each day. Most of the time, Maya kept her opinions to herself, though occasionally she too would snap at Elliot and Olivia felt the need to side with her.

She had seen him become protective of her to the point where it was nearly territorial in the past, but never had Olivia seen an adulterated rage spew from Elliot in regards to one of her beaux. Try as she might to get some kind of information from Maya as to what might have turned their relationship from barely cordial to inflammatory, she insisted there was nothing to tell.

Jillian and Fin had been fairly more forthcoming with information, yet they told two very different stories. While Jillian pressed that it seemed apparent that Elliot had done something to her and was stymieing all efforts to find her, Fin insisted that Jonathan had exploded in the squad room enough times to ignite the place and

turned an already tense situation into a near debacle. She did not know whom to believe, though they both sounded as if they were telling the truth and she had heard snippets of conversation at random points during her hospital stay that shed some dim light on the problem.

When trying to make sense of Evelyn's suicide, the arguing between Elliot and Jonathan aggravated Olivia to the point where she would insist on being alone and threw them both out of the room, where they would continue their boisterous arguments in the halls.

"You just need to make it difficult for her, don't you?" Elliot had once yelled from behind her closed door.

"Me?" Jonathan had shouted in return. "What about you? You're standing over her, telling her 'no' like she's one of your goddamn tribe of kids!"

"Fuck off, Halloway! I've already dealt with enough of your bullshit to last me a lifetime. You don't know Liv, like I know her and I know why she's dealing with all this the way she is."

"You can shove the high and mighty attitude, Copo. I don't give a damn. She's a grown woman who can make her own decisions and she doesn't need you telling her what she can and can't do."

"If you weren't so fucking busy trying to make up with her, you'd realize how goddamn ignorant it is to let someone who's suffering from multiple bronchial infections outside so they can breathe in all the city's pollutions and catch something she can't get rid of."

"And if you weren't so fucking caught up in your trivial problems, none of this would've even happened. She probably got taken because someone was trying to save her from you. Or do think I've forgotten about the tape shows Faithful Detective Stabler throwing my Olivia into a headlock on the goddamn floor!"

"I don't have to explain myself to people who threaten cops in their homes."

"Don't act like you're gonna threaten me with me that."

"I'm not threatening shit. It's a fact. You pulled an unlicensed weapon on me and I have every right to throw your little rich ass in jail for it. Not to mention, Liv was shot with a Smith and Wesson."

"Fuck you for even suggesting it, you bastard! I wasn't the one who half destroyed Olivia's apartment the night she disappeared and I wasn't the one who kept the world in the dark about it until I was faced with the proof that I'd been caught. I should've shot your lying ass when I had the chance!"

"Yeah, you probably should've. Then, you'd be prison and I could be helping Olivia instead of dealing with your bullshit right now!"

Olivia shifted on the bed and wiggled her toes until the familiar pain returned to her left thigh bone that had not yet healed after her injuries. She glanced at the shimmering box of chocolates that lay out of her reach and sighed again. As she lied back into her pillows, her mind whirled and, after a bout of inspiration, she grabbed the fork from the hospital food tray and with it, began reaching out to the box of her desire.

She stretched as far as she could with the fork in hand, but just as the fork tip grazed the edge of the box, she felt a prick at her neck as if she had strained something and dropped the fork as she swore at the pain. Her hands shook as she still leaned out

of the bed and before she knew what was happening, her body seized. As she fell forward, everything momentarily turned dark as a large crack rang through the room in conjunction with a sharp pain shooting through her head. The grey before her eyes slowly formed into the cream colour of the ceiling at which her eyes now stared and the sound of feet running across tile echoed through her head. “Jesus Christ!” someone yelled. “There’s blood everywhere! Get the rest of the staff. Hurry!”

## Chapter Twenty-Eight

Wednesday March 28, 2007  
5:17PM

Elliot quickly stepped off the elevator of the sixth floor of the hospital and walked down the long corridor toward Olivia’s room with an over-sized card that he intended to help bolster her spirits in hand. His stomach burned as he quickened his pace and he was reminded of his doctor’s orders that he try to reduce his stress to keep his small ulcer from increasing. With his partner having fallen into a new level of depression, he knew there would be no relief and he, along with Maya and Jonathan, feared she might not come out of her lull.

When the nurses had found Olivia five days earlier, she had just suffered a severe seizure, but its aftermath was what caused the drama. Olivia had not simply seized, but it appeared that had been leaning out of her bed when it happened, causing her to fall from the bed, cracking her head on the floor and re-fracturing the arm that had just recently healed.

The head injury had seemed severe at first, and following it, Olivia had initially lost the ability to sense anything below the waist again. Her neurologists insisted that it was only a mental phenomenon, but the suggestion irritated Olivia to the point that she had stopped responding to their questions altogether and had taken to staring across her room with a silent scorn set upon her face.

By the next day, she was able to move again, but the reality of her limitations had finally set in and Olivia fell into a psychological spiral. She would not acknowledge visitors to the room and refused to speak as she stared for hours at spot on the far wall. She had not been very accepting of the hospital food prior to the accident and afterward, refused to eat anything even after hours of Maya’s tearful pleading.

For the first time in a long while, Elliot sympathized with Jonathan when he retreated in tears after Olivia’s doctors were forced to pump nutrients into her system via her IV bags. In just several days of only intravenous pumps, Olivia’s face had regained its gaunt, pale appearance and Dr. Androse stressed that unless she came out of her depression, it was likely her health problems would continue.

The depression had become so severe that Olivia did not move a muscle when it was time for her catheter or bedpan to be changed, and she lifelessly allowed the physical therapists to move her body about instead of participating in her recovery.

When it became apparent that Olivia had fallen deep into despondency, Elliot felt ashamed to admit that he pointed fingers at anyone he could find. Maya was first on the list as it was she who had placed the box just out of Olivia's reach, causing her to strain which most likely caused the initial seizure. Maya, in turn, let out her own frustrations by screaming that Elliot's constant bickering with Jonathan was what drove Olivia to seek solace in anything other than meals given to her. Jonathan attempted to jump on the Elliot-bashing bandwagon but was met instead with the full blaze of Maya's fury over Olivia's state as she called him an arrogant bastard who created more problems in Olivia's life than any other beau she had ever had.

The anger and finger-pointing flared sometimes while still inside Olivia's room, which would elicit the few verbal responses Olivia was willing to give; they included the most foul language that Elliot had ever heard her use and she called each of them any name that came to mind, from simple curse words to racial slurs. Her angry tirades would grow so great that she took to telling Jonathan that he was an elitist snob who deserved to die alone, that Elliot was intent on screwing up her life as much as he had his own and that Maya was simply a pathetic basket-case who would probably die from some venereal disease she picked up from sleeping with multiple men at the same time.

Though they knew she never truly meant what she said, her words still stung and created an even tenser atmosphere. In the days that followed, Olivia had been met by several psychiatrists who had no effect. Her state deteriorated rapidly and the fear of an imminent suicide was ever present on Elliot's mind.

He knocked on her door, though he knew she would answer and found Olivia lying on her side and staring at space just below the window.

"Evening, Liv," he said softly as he entered the room. He set up the card beside the window near a plethora of older gifts and cards and sat in the chair beside her. His seat obstructed her view of the space her eyes held, but she did not blink nor did she avert her eyes as Elliot sat beside her.

A tray on wheels hovered just over her bed and on it sat a plate of cold eggs, toast, a fruit cup and green Jell-O and Elliot pulled it closer to her, drawing a grimace and a twitch of her eye.

"You need to start eating, Liv," he said. "This can't continue. Your body can only stay on the IV for so long before... You just need to eat something."

Olivia shifted on the bed to face the ceiling instead and he sighed.

"Come on, Liv," he said grabbing the small bowl of gelatin. "You've got to eat something. Just a little of some crappy Jell-O and then I'll sneak you in something."

Without shifting her gaze or saying a word, Olivia used her cast-ridden arm to brush the bowl and the small plates off the tray in one swoop and let them fall to the floor opposite Elliot with a crash.

"Liv," he said, running a hand through his hair. "If you don't eat anything, they're gonna have to hook you up to another IV and you'll be in here even longer."

She scoffed and it caught his attention immediately.

"Yeah," she said with an unusually deep voice and condescending tone. "I'll be in here longer. Doesn't really make a difference how long I spend in here."

"What are you talking about?" Elliot asked concerned. "It matters. It matters to all of us. We all want you to get better."

She shook her head. "This is such bullshit."

"Liv, if you could just start eating again-"

"I was attacked!" she screamed suddenly. "Weeks...no, *months* ago! And I'm still here, and he's still out there!"

"Olivia..." he said.

"And you know what's even more aggravating, aside from losing my every shred of goddamn independence? You don't even have a fucking clue what happened to me!"

"Liv, we're-"

"You're *working* on it! I got it! That's all I'm hearing Elliot. Everyone's on it. Everyone's working my case. Everybody's so concerned about poor Olivia and everyone's doing their best to help to me."

"Liv...we are..."

"I don't fucking want your best! I don't want you coming in here everyday to cheer me up! I want to the goddamn person who did this to me! I want him dead! I want his fucking balls nailed to my door!"

"Olivia," he said trying to choose his words carefully. "We are doing all that we can to figure out what happened, but there's no evidence and if you don't remember what happened either, there's only so much-"

"So, this is my fault!" she screamed. "I'm minding my own goddamn business and this guy comes after me and now, it's *my* fault that I was attacked? Great job, Detective. Did Cragen send you to a class to learn how to blame the victim so perfectly?"

"Liv, please..."

"This is all just bullshit. I get it now. I understand why people lose faith in the cops. It's been months and you don't have a fucking clue!"

"Olivia! You're a cop and you know we're doing everything we can."

"No, Elliot! Clearly, we must be the most incompetent group of assholes in the world. I mean, even if I get out of here-"

"Liv, you're gonna be fine. You've just gotta start eating something! You're bones will heal. You're-"

"It's all bullshit and you know it!" she screamed. "Someone...attacked me, gave me something that's going to cause seizures whenever God feels like having a laugh at me! And what's worst is he's still out there! I fell out of a goddamn window and still had to be found by some assholes going dumpster diving!"

Her every word cut through his skin and he just wanted to melt down in front of her.

"If I hadn't taken a fall, you probably would've never found me! I'd've been....there....in some warehouse, never to be seen or heard from again! This....this is bullshit!"

"Liv...what matters is that you're here now and you're gonna be-"

"Be what, Elliot! Fine? I'm gonna be fine! Is that what you were about to say? 'Liv, you're gonna be fine.'" She sat up slightly in the bed. "I can't *fucking* walk, Elliot! Even if I get to the point where I can stand, I'll never be the same. I'll never take another goddamn step! Never! I'll never be able to do the job I love

ever again! My life is over and this...monster is still out there! How can you sit there and tell me I'll be fine!"

Elliot sighed and sat silent as her words echoed in the room.

"You know what?" Olivia said after a minute's silence. "I don't want anything from any of you people anymore."

"Liv..."

"You can take all these bullshit gifts from people who didn't give two flying fucks about me after my name stopped being on the news...Take all the cards, balloons and all that shit and take it the fuck out of here. And, then you can just dump me in whatever rat hole hospital the department's willing to pay for and you can all just fuck off."

"Please...Olivia..."

She shook her head at him, a scowl set on her face and tears brimming in her eyes. Her words reverberated in the air for a moment, before she shifted on her side, turning away from him and pulled her blanket around her as she spoke slowly.

"All of you...and you especially...can just go fuck yourselves and leave me to die in peace."

Sensing that Olivia had said her fill, Elliot rose from the chair and left the room, dialing his brother's number in his phone as he walked.

"I don't know what to do," Elliot said a half an hour later at Debbs' bar with his brother across from him in the booth. "I'm just starting to wonder how deep she'll go before all this is over."

"She'll come out of this," Bryce said. "She's just depressed because it all seems so unfair, because it is. I mean, she's probably asking herself, out of eight million people, why'd this guy have to come after her."

Elliot shook his head. "It was worse than when Colleen was fighting her cancer. I mean...she's just losing it."

"Well, can you blame her? After everything that's happened, she's probably never gonna walk again and she's right to be angry. This guy is still out there and he could be anywhere. On the street, on the train...in the damn hospital just waiting for her to be alone. I'd probably be acting the same way."

"We're doing everything we can, but warrants for the area keep getting denied, the evidence on her clothes lead to nowhere and we've nothing else to go on. There's no leads, no new suspects, nothing. It's almost as bad as when she disappeared."

Bryce took a sip of his drink. "As bad as the case looks, you owe it to her find out what happened. If she disappeared right after you left her apartment, something had to've happened that night to set this guy off. Either it was you two rolling around on the floor or maybe just a case of the crazies, but after all that's happened, you owe her this. *You* need to find out what happened."

"I know, Bryce. I've already resigned to that."

"Well, if you know, then do something about it. Go with your gut. There's gotta be something that you overlooked. Maybe even something you set aside once she was found. Now's the time track back and piece together what happened, otherwise...even though it's not your fault, she'll never forgive you for not finding the guy."

That night, Elliot found himself alone in the small room where Morse's videos had been kept, watching and re-watching the night that Olivia had disappeared. When he and Munch had gone to find Morse's uncut tapes, he was so certain there would be something significant on them, but so far they had given them nothing.

The version of himself on the television screamed red faced at Olivia and he sighed as she screamed in return. The look on her face was reminiscent of the expression she held that day. He knew the depression and anger would eventually subside, but he could not be sure of how long it would take. He had not seen her so angry since the day that Kreider first disappeared and while he was able to stem some of the rage with an apology, he deemed no apologetic words capable of diffusing Olivia. Just the same, he was still glad to simply have around screaming at him, than he still searching aimlessly for her.

The Elliot on the video came through Olivia's door again and Elliot watched as the Olivia on the screen threw a set of dingy golden keys tied together by a black string and briefly caught the corridor lights, down her cami shirt.

He paused the video and stared at the screen. A clear memory of finding one of those keys on the floor of Olivia's apartment sprang to mind and he pictured it in his head. She had snatched two keys together, but he had found only one separated from its brother on her floor.

Allowing the video to play, he tried to remember every move that he and Olivia had made that night, but could not get past brushing against her shoulder. He had, however, been certain that he had not seen the keys again that night. If he had, with his quarry found, the fight would have ended and would have had Drover's information.

Morse's video turned into a spray of snow and then eventually a blue screen and Elliot sat staring at the screen for several minutes before turning off the monitor. At his desk, he saw the open case files and felt a familiar burn in his stomach at thought of telling other victims that he had made no progress on their cases either. He had done little outside of worry about Olivia in the past few days and he could see from the condition of his desk that Alexa was struggling to stay afloat.

He snatched his keys off his desk with a sigh and walked toward the elevators. They jingled in his coat pocket and Elliot could not stop a bemused smirk from spreading across his face as a play-on-words crossed his mind.

*The keys, he thought as the elevator doors closed, are the key.*

\*\*\* stars

Tuesday April 3, 2007  
10:06AM

"We can't start going through financial records like that, Elliot. You know that."

Casey leaned back in the chair behind her desk and sighed. Though it was still early in the day, her eyes had the appearance of a civil servant who had worked a twelve-hour day. She and McCoy were in the midst of Owen Kreider's trial and the stress from the case was pressing on her. Elliot knew Casey would soon be calling on he, Munch and Fin as to testify in the case and she pressed on each of them the

importance of their testimony. Olivia was the only detective to interview Kreider on more than one occasion and with her current health problems, she was no longer a viable witness.

Elliot had entered her office asking for a warrant on financial records even though it was a long shot. In the past week, he and Alexa had combed through the records for chemical distributors they had received early, this time searching for anomalies. They had found seven individuals, all male, in the Tri-State Area who had ordered nearly a gallon of the chemicals that made up components of the chemical found on Ryan Daly, Andrew Shaw and also on Olivia's apartment floor and clothes. Of the seven, three only listed PO Boxes as addresses and no further information could be found, hence the decision to retrieve their financial records.

"There's gotta be something you can get us," he said to. "I'm desperate. Anything at all." "If we're going to get anything, I would need something specific to go off of. We can't go traipsing through these people lives based off nothing."

"Other than a hunch?" Elliot said shaking his head and paced the office for a moment before stopping short. "How about just general public safety? I mean how many gallons of this stuff could any individual need?"

Casey's eyebrows shot toward her hairline. "That's an excellent question...a specific one I'm sure a well-worded warrant my help answer."

She pulled a blue draft from her files as Elliot grinned and an hour later, he and Alexa were reviewing the financial records for Marvin Guildenhall, Roman Landanorak and Gregg Sharpe. They sat next to one another for hours, silently pouring through pages of paper, when Elliot glanced at Alexa over the stack in his hand.

"What?" He said noting her furrowed eyebrows.

"This guy..." she said and showed him a name she had circled on her sheets. "This Roman Landanorak...his stuff is a little screwy."

"How so?"

"Well, apart from being one of our main guys on the chemical list, he lives a very small life. All I see here is a single bank account and there's five thousand dollars just sort of sitting there. He's got a credit card, but it's got a zero balance and there haven't been any charges on it in years."

"What about rent or utilities?"

"Nothing. All he's got is that five thousand that just appeared from a PayPal transaction a couple months ago."

"Well, he paid for the chemicals somehow," Elliot said. "He's got to have more than just that."

Alexa flipped through a few sheets and frowned. "Okay...So, there was about a thousand in that checking accounting a couple months ago...Well, this is interesting."

"What is it?"

"The only other money in that account was received through a PayPal transaction, *and* it was for only the exact amount that was paid for the chemicals."

"Really?"

"Yeah...sounds like somebody trying to run something fraudulent."

"What's the e-mail address? Maybe we can start tracking it send it off to computer crimes."

"It's one of those free, untraceable accounts."

Elliot's eyes narrowed. "What's this guy's address?"

"There's just a PO Box."

"In the city?"

"Yup."

"Let's pay them a visit."

\*\*\* stars

"So, let's get this straight," Cragen said as Elliot and Alexa stood in front of his desk.

"This guy is buying these chemicals for 'Personal Use' as it says on those statements, he's got a checking account and a credit card that don't get used and sends in the payments for his post office box by faulty money order."

"And, he hasn't been by to check his box in months," Alexa added, crossing her arms.

"Sounds like a thorough alias to me."

"What about these other people?"

Elliot shook his head. "They were a little harder to find, but we found them. The one lives on 130th. He says the stuff he buys works on the roaches that keep creeping into his apartment and the other is in the village and looks like he might be using them to aid in his drug problem, but is more or less clean. This guy we can't find anything on."

"What's his significance to your cases, though?" Cragen asked.

"Well," Alexa said. "The compound that Melinda told us about was found in both Olivia's apartment and on the two boys. It's shaky, but it's a link between the two and I'm willing to bet this Roman Landanorak is involved. There's just too many coincidences here for him not to be."

Cragen glanced at Elliot. "You agree?"

"I do, but this guy just creates more questions than he solves. I mean, he's made himself just about as untraceable as somebody could get. How are we supposed to find him?"

"Same way we track down any other pedophile. He's left a trail somewhere. You just need to find it."

An hour later, Elliot stood leaning against his desk while Alexa, Munch and Fin threw out what ever ideas about the Roman Landanorak came to mind. Munch, to Elliot great annoyance, had taken to repeating the name.

"It just sounds like a made up name too, doesn't it? Roman Landanorak. What the hell kind of name is that?"

Elliot shrugged. "All I know is it's not Irish."

"It's not anything. It's the perfect alias. I just like saying it. Roman Landanorak. *Roman Landanorak.*"

"We got it, John," Elliot said rubbing the bridge of his nose.

"Roman, Roman, Roman," Munch repeated. "It's a crazy name. Isn't it an anagram for moron or something."

"Moron's got an O," Alexa said rolling her eyes. "Moron..."

"Hey, it's close though, right?"

"All right, let's just focus for a second," Fin said. "Maybe the name has some kind of significance?"

"Yeah," Alexa said. "I wonder what kind of significance could *Roman* have..."

"I'm talking about the last name," Fin said glaring at her. "Maybe it's a city. Somebody's hometown."

Elliot scoffed. "In this city? It could be anyone's hometown."

"But, that's got to be Polish or something, right?"

"I think we're screwed on this name thing," Elliot said. "We need to get the surveillance tapes from the post office. Maybe we can see who's been by that box in the past couple of months."

"Great." Alexa said sardonically. "More video tape."

"Roman Landanorak." Munch repeated. "Landanorak...Landanorak...Kind of reminds you of your old buddy Landon, doesn't it? Landon...Landanorak."

"You're reaching," Alexa said.

"It's what we morons do, right?"

Elliot rolled his eyes, but the smirk on Munch's face faded quickly and Elliot's eyebrows shot upward as he noticed.

"John? What?"

"Nothing...don't worry about it."

"Fine," Elliot said, grabbing his coat.

"Where are you off to?" Alexa said. "The post office?"

"No, that's your job. I'm paying Morse a visit."

"Again?" she whined. "Elliot, how many times are you willing to torture him?"

"Until he's willing to give me the answers that I want."

\*\*\*\* stars

Striding behind the familiar orderly, Elliot approached Morse's cell, with his mind turning. While the idea of some unknown person running around the city calling himself Roman Landanorak was still intriguing and ever-present in his mind, Elliot's thoughts surrounded only an offhanded comment Morse had made months earlier that was jarred by Alexa's snide comments toward Munch.

Morse was standing at the window with his hands crossed behind his back. Even standing several feet away, Elliot could see that Morse had deteriorated further since he had last seen him. There were pink blotches on his scalp where his hair had continued to fall out and he was so pale that he seemed brighter than the light coming from the window.

"Morse," the orderly said. "You know what's up."

Morse turned on the spot and Elliot saw that his eyes had even lost their sharp hue and looked almost grey in appearance.

"You're back again?" he said.

"Yes," Elliot said.

"Needing more information, I suppose? Perhaps another name?"

"No, I've got a name, but I do need more information."

Morse laughed, flashing grey teeth. "You're a machine, Detective. That much I'll say."

"And, I say you look like hell."

“And, so do you. I trust things aren’t going well with Olivia.”

“No, they’re not.”

Morse simply shook his head and Elliot could see that he had lost more weight. Between his height and weight, he barely looked older than Dickie.

“How are your doctors treating you?” Elliot said.

“I don’t need a doctor,” Morse said. “I’m not crazy. When they come, I usually tell them to kiss off. They stopped coming about three weeks ago, so I figure they’ll just leave me in here until the money runs out...which we know will never happen. But anyway, you’re standing there glaring at me...”

“I need you to elaborate on something from a couple months ago.”

“Why is it always what *you* need? What about what I need?”

“Fine. What do you need, keeping in mind, there’s nothing I can do to get you out of here?”

Morse paced in front of Elliot, his eyes never leaving him. “What’s she look like now?”

“Look, we can do that later. Right now, I-”

“No! We can do it now. What does she look like? I haven’t seen her in months. It’s half the reason I’m wasting away in front of you. I need to know.”

Elliot sighed. “Fine...She’s, um...pale ‘cause she’s been sick lately. Not as pale as you, but getting close...Her hair is...long. It’s halfway down her back and it’s her dark brown, natural colour.”

“Good, good. What else?”

“She’s very thin. From everything she’s been through and the fact that she hasn’t been eating now, I think she’s lost close to thirty pounds overall.”

“Why hasn’t she been eating?”

“She just hasn’t been up to it because...she can’t walk and she’s frustrated. And, she’s very, very bitter.”

“Well, what did you do to her?”

“I didn’t do anything.”

“Of course you did. There’s always something with you. And if there’s something wrong with her, I must have been because of something you said or did.”

Elliot thought silently for a moment then narrowed his eyes at Morse. “Are you going to help me out or not?”

“What did you do to her?”

“Nothing. She fell,” Elliot said crossing his arms.

“And where were you when she fell? Why weren’t you there to catch her fall?”

“I was...busy.”

“Busy...I see. Busy doing what? Probably readying yourself to duke it out with Halloway, right?”

Elliot froze, but Morse laughed.

“Look,” Elliot said nearly shouting. “I need you to clarify something for me.”

“Fine. What?”

“That night, when you first came into the precinct, you said something.”

“I said a lot of things that night.”

“But something you said stuck with me and I’ve only now really given it any thought.”

“Okay...”

“When you were talking about how you...watched Olivia, you said you watched her, but that you weren’t the only one. What’d you mean by that?”

Morse shrugged. “I wasn’t the only person watching her.”

They stared at one another for a minute before Elliot rolled his eyes.

“Care to elaborate on that at all?”

“When I was working for the super over there, I grabbed her keys, made a set for myself and went to work. But, when I went in there to install the cameras, there were already some installed. Someone else was watching her besides me.”

“And, you didn’t think to move them or unhook them?”

“Why would I? They were obviously smitten as well. Who was I to intrude?”

\*\*\*\* stars

Elliot turned on the light in the evidence locker on SVU’s floor and headed straight for the cabinets that held Morse’s catalogued cameras. He brought them out to the floor several minutes later, and began to set up each of them on a table.

“What are you up to, Stabler?” Munch said.

Elliot shook his head and continued to take out each camera out of the box.

“Elliot?” Fin said approaching the scene. “What’s going on?”

Alexa had also stepped toward them, noting the expression on Elliot’s face.

“Fifteen...” he mumbled.

“What?”

“Fifteen! We took fifteen cameras from Olivia’s apartment.”

“And?” Munch said.

“And, the answer’s been in front of us this whole time. Morse told us he set up twelve. Not about ten or twelve. Not around a dozen. He specifically told us twelve.”

"So, maybe he miscounted," Fin said. "Maybe he lied."

"C'mon Fin. You were there. He looked us in there and said twelve. Why lie about the number of cameras? He told us everything. Every single thing. As much as I hate the bastard, he's been honest with us from the start, so why lie about something small like this?"

"Maybe he figured that we wouldn't find them," Munch said. "I'm willing to bet he wanted to continue his little peep show."

Elliot shook his head.

"Twelve of these are Canons. These other three are Minoltas. And look at the map they made of where each one was found." He laid the map flat on the table. "We found three double sets of cameras. Two in her living room, two in the kitchen and two in her bedroom. What's the point in setting up two cameras in the same place?"

Fin and Munch were silent allowing Elliot's mind to fly.

"Morse said that he wasn't the only one who was watching Olivia...that first night we had him in here. Someone else had the same idea. Someone *else* was watching her."

"But who?" Munch asked. "The videos Morse took only go back five years like he said."

"But if these cameras were there before Morse set up shop, there's no telling how long they've been there."

"That's right," Munch said. "They could've been there for decades."

Elliot scoffed. "John, look at them. These are digital cameras. That means they're newer. Liv's been in her apartment for close to ten years and they haven't been up there that entire time."

"So, there's our problem," Munch argued. "These are new cameras in her apartment, but we've got video surveillance of her place going back five years and nowhere in those five years do we see somebody stepping in there to replace anything."

"But there's nothing that says if he had the balls to break into her place and put these up once, that he couldn't break in and replace them when they needed to. If someone else has been watching her like Morse was, they would know when she left for the day and when she got back home. They could've done it at any point."

"But that still doesn't solve the problem of what's not on Morse's tapes."

He slammed his hands on the table. "Why has this got to be so goddamn hard for everyone else to get! There's something *here* that needs to be s"

"It's not on Morse's videos," Munch said. "Cut or uncut. If someone broke into Olivia's apartment, we should've seen it on Morse's tapes."

He threw each of the cameras back in the box in a haphazard fashion and took the lot a floor down to the technology guru that worked with SVU. There Morales confirmed that the out of place Minoltas were expensive and less than two years old.

"But, each of them have these transmitters to tape from a distance," Morales said as he looked over the cameras.

"Is there anything special about them?" Elliot asked.

Morales shrugged. "Give me a bit and I'll see what I can do."

Elliot returned to squad room, angry and disheartened; angry that no one else seemed to see eye-to-eye with him, disheartened to know that the age of the second set of cameras meant that Munch was right. If they were installed separately, Morse's videos would have caught something.

"Alexa," he said storming toward her desk. "Give me your notes on Morse's videos. I want to see everything you marked down as an extra visitor."

"Um..." Alexa said shifting through several items on her desk.

"Now!" he said. "I need I need those files now."

His heart was pounding and he felt ready to put his fist through a wall out of utter frustration. Alexa's hands were shaking by the time she managed to pull disorganized stack of papers bound by a paper clip, from her bottom desk drawer. Elliot snatched it from her and leaned against her desk as he leaved through it with narrowed eyes.

*There has to be reason why the guy didn't show on the tapes*, he thought as he passed though another page marked "Odd Visitors."

"No," he said tossing down the stack. "There's got to be more. What about the unedited videos? Where's your notes on them?"

Alexa shifted in her seat slightly. "I...I don't have them. Andrea has all of that."

"Set up everything again in that room. I want to be able to go through the unedited tapes again."

Alexa nodded furiously as he stormed from her desk and across the floor looking for Andrea Cooke's desk.

“Andrea,” he said once he found her desk. “I need you to get me all your data from Morse’s unedited tapes.”

Andrea continued typing at her monitor, pausing briefly to raise her index finger.

“I don’t have a minute. I want them. I need them now.”

“One *minute*, Elliot,” she said her eyes never leaving her monitor.

“I told you,” he continued. “I don’t have time to wait on this. I want your notes.”

“And people in hell want ice water. You’ll have to *wait*.”

He slammed a hand on her desk. “Andrea! I need those files!”

A framed photo of Andrea, two young boys and a large black man slid backwards and lied facing the ceiling and reflecting the overhead lights to the point that the image under the Plexiglas could not be seen.

Andrea glared at him for a long time, his heavy breathing the only noise between them and he suddenly remembered a time not too long ago where Andrea needed to tell him something, yet he had been too brash and careless to ask what she had wanted. His breathing slowed as his anger subsided, though his last shout into her face still hung over the air above and the glare in Andrea’s eyes bore through his soul.

“I understand that, *Detective*,” she said in a low voice as she began to sift through papers on her desk. “But, you will speak to *me* in a civil tone. Now, I am *not* Alexa Brown. I don’t report to you and I won’t drop every single thing in my lap like some dutiful underling just because you think it’s more urgent than anything else on my plate. I am also not Olivia Benson. I will *not* take verbal abuse from you, just because you’re in a hurry or don’t feel like giving the common courtesy of allowing me finish typing my damn thought. And also unlike Benson or Brown, I am not the least bit afraid of you. You can stomp your feet and slam your hands on my desk like a petulant child all you want. I grew up with four older brothers, so some slight threat of violent anger isn’t going to motivate me at all.

“Now, if you want something from me, and I tell you just one minute, believe me, I am true to my word. In just one minute, I will get you anything that you want as long as you speak to me like a normal human being. So...do you care to try this again?”

Elliot sighed as he digested her words as his anger subsided. Half the reason the ulcer in his stomach had worsened was because of the stress of Olivia’s disappearance and Kreider’s case, yet in both situations, his impatience and anger had thrown all objectivity to the side and opportunities were missed. He shuddered to think what other oversights had been made through a haze of recreant rage.

He pursed his lips and took a step toward her to speak in a low, soft voice. “If you have a minute, Andrea, I really need those files...please.”

She shook her head at him and pulled a set of bound paperwork from under the shortest stack of papers. “I guess that’s an improvement, but you still may think about those anger management classes they offer here.”

“Thank you,” he said as she handed him her paperwork.

“Anytime,” she said with a smirk. “By the way, what were you looking for?”

He explained his theory about the discrepancy with the cameras and the lack of evidence to support his claim.

“Well, why didn’t you say so, Oh Impatient One?” She took the stack from him and flipped through several pages. “I remember...It would have been about two years ago on the tape. There was some kind of blip or something in the video...”

“You remember that out of all those videos?”

“Well, I wouldn’t have,” Andrea said running her finger across her notes, “but I thought it was just so weird that she had to reset all her clocks and everything when she got home after the blip. When I rewound it, I saw that there was a ten-minute gap in the tape. Here it is.”

“And this was in the unedited video?” he asked taking the notes from her.

“Yes, I’m sure of it. I meant to tell you a month ago, but you were too busy being rude to hear me so I just filed it away. The hard drive number and time stamp on the video are listed right there. Watch it for yourself.”

He read over the notes, written in Andrea’s words that were so clear and concise, he could imagine the scene before his eyes as he stood.

Elliot glanced at her. “I could hug you right now, you know?”

“Please don’t. Just remember to be a little more polite in the future...at least to me.”

He couldn’t repress the momentary smile on his face as he raced for the video room.

Within the hour, he had found the clip and had watched it several times, noting it played precisely as Andrea had written.

“That means,” he explained loudly to Fin, Alexa and anyone else who could not block out the sound of his voice, “that whoever set up those new cameras must have known that there was a possibility he might be taped on Morse’s. I betting he cut Liv’s power. Morse’s cameras ran off the wiring in the apartment and if the power went out, they’d stop taping.”

“This took some planning,” Fin said, arms crossed. “For him to have thought all this through? I mean who would think to cut her power just to keep from being seen?”

“The same kind of person who would think to kidnap a cop and hold her captive for two weeks,” Alexa said.

Elliot’s phone rang from his pocket and the other two dispersed as he answered it.

“Stabler.”

“Elliot. It’s Morales. I finished comparing your two sets of cameras and I found something that might help the case. The twelve Canons are set up for long distance manipulation.”

“Meaning?”

“Meaning somebody as far as a half-mile away could still control them without any problems. Very expensive stuff.”

“Well, those are Morse’s. I’d expect nothing less. What about the others?”

“They’re different. They’re still high end, but their transmitters are much weaker, intended for distances that are something along the lines of two thousand square feet.”

Elliot pursed his lips as he boggled the information for a moment. “All right. Thanks.”

“Hey,” Munch said as Elliot approached his desk heading for the coat rack that was close to the coffee stand. “Where’re you off to?”

“Landon’s. Morales just told that the three extra cameras were set up for short distances, and as the woman who lives next door doesn’t seem like the stalking type, he’s our first target.”

“You have a minute first?”

Elliot opened his mouth to insist that he could not wait on Mark, but the image of the frame on Andrea’s desk reflecting the ceiling popped to mind and he nodded instead.

“I found something you should see. I was thinking about how the name Landanorak sounded so made up. So, I ran it through an anagram website to see what I could come up with.

“What’d you find?”

Nothing at first. Most of the results produced garbage, but then I took a good look at the last of the hundred results it gave: Ark La-An-Don.”

“La-An-Don?” Fin said. “Kinda sounds like Landon, don’t it?”

Munch nodded. “That’s what I was thinking. So, I put the little guy’s name in the search, but couldn’t get anything akin to Landanorak.”

“That’s ‘cause it’s probably just a coincidence,” Alexa said drawing narrowed eyes from Munch.

“But, I was determined,” he continued as if Alexa had not said anything. “I looked up Landon’s parents, his schools, whatever. It just bothered me that the name sounded so similar.”

“Did you end up finding anything?” Elliot asked.

“Actually...” Munch handed Elliot a sheet paper with Mark’s information. “I find out a lot about ole Marky boy, but I looked over the most interesting thing. Look at the full name at the top.”

“Mark Aaron Landon,” Elliot read.

“Yep. And I’ll give just one guess what kind of name the anagram search pulled out of ‘Mark Aaron Landon.’”

\*\*\* stars

Alone, Elliot stepped off the eighth floor in the Village apartment and walked steadily down the corridor that led toward Olivia’s vacant apartment.

Alexa insisted that they could not base their investigation off of an anagram and refused to go, noting that she did not want to be involved if Elliot was going to behave the way he had the last time they visited Landon and Munch and Fin were called out on a new case just as they were about to leave. He had half a mind to ask Andrea, but vaguely feared another glare from her and struck out on his own.

“Come on, Landon,” Elliot said after pounding on Mark’s door for several minutes.

“Open the door.”

“Leave me alone!”

“I just want to talk.”

“You can talk through my attorney! Go away!”

“Landon,” Elliot said. “I’m not trying to pin something on you. You’re Liv’s neighbor and I just need some information. If you wanted to help her, you’d let me in.”

Elliot waited silently for a reaction and started to give up, when a full minute passed before there was even the slightest sound from behind the door. Mark cracked the door just so he was able to glare a small eye at Elliot.

“What could you possibly need from me?” Mark hissed.

“Just...can I come in for a second?”

“No. I don’t want you going crazy when there’s no one here to help me. The last time I let you in here, you damn near tore my apartment apart. I’ve only now got most of it straightened away.”

Elliot sighed. “Look, I need to talk to you and I can’t do it like this. Can you just let me in for a second so we can talk like men?”

Mark slammed the door shut, but as Elliot began to walk away, he heard the door chain sliding and the door across from Olivia’s empty apartment cracked slightly.

“Thanks,” Elliot said once inside the apartment.

“Don’t get comfortable,” Mark said as he stood with his arms cross in the middle of the living room. “You’re not staying long.”

“You’re right,” Elliot said. “I won’t be staying long. I’ve only got a couple questions for you.”

“Like what? What else could you possible have to ask me?”

“Well, we were looking through some records and found-”

“And, before you get started, I’ll just say it now. I didn’t do anything to Olivia.”

“Yes,” Elliot said. “I’ve heard you say it before.”

“Well, it’s as true now as it was then.”

“I got it. You can drop the hostilities. Anyways, we’ve already got our sights on somebody, so I know you’re clean.”

“That’s right. I am.” His expression softened as Elliot padded slowly about the apartment.

“So, if you’re looking at a suspect, why are you really here?”

Elliot shrugged. “Basic information.”

“Like what?”

“Does the name Landanorak mean anything to you?”

Mark squinted at him. “Landanorak? Oh, so now I’m supposed to pull random information like that out of my ass? How the hell should I know what Landano-whatever is?”

“No need to get testy. I was just asking a question.”

“You’re always just asking a question and that’s how you begin. If I’m not careful or *testy*, I’ll end up cleaning up everything in my apartment again.”

“Look, I’m sorry, all right?”

“*You’re* apologizing to me? What the hell are you up to?”

“Nothing,” Elliot lied softly, just above a whisper. “I just came here to make amends and ask for a little bit of information. That’s all.”

Eyeing him suspiciously, Mark crossed the room and stood near his door. “Well, thanks just the same, but you can go now. I’m not sure how in the mood I am to take on one of your apologies, such as they are.”

“Just give me a second, Landon. Now, does the name ring a bell or not?”

“In what capacity?”

“Any. A city. A last name. A friend of yours?”

“I knew it. You’re looking at somebody named Landanorak and before I know what’s happening, you’re going to cost me thousands in legal fees when you drag me back down to your precinct for no reason.”

“Look, I just want to know if the name has any meaning for you.”

Mark shook his head. "No. That name has no meaning for me. Are we done now?"

Elliot stared at the floor for a moment when an idea popped to mind.

"Are you at all interested in how Liv's doing?"

Mark's eyes grew wide. "Yes. Yes, I am. How is she?"

"Not doing too good, Landon. She's very sick and in the throws of a depression none of us can seem to bring her out of."

"I see," Mark said nodding. "What's been happening? Why's she been in the hospital this whole time?"

"She's been having some problems with her legs. We're not sure how bad the paralysis--"

"Paralysis?" Mark said. "She's paralyzed?"

"Well, she's getting some feeling back in her legs, but her doctors don't know if she'll ever be able to walk again."

He let out a long sigh and an imperceptible expression spread across his face.

"You know," Elliot said as he slowly paced across the room, "you're the only person who's relatively close to Olivia who hasn't been by to see her yet."

Mark shifted on his feet. "Yeah...I've been, uh...meaning to. I just...I've been trying to work myself up to seeing her...I just don't think I'll be able to handle seeing her like that."

"I'm sure she'd like to see you though," Elliot continued. "Especially right now. She's... she's been so down lately and I'm sure a friendly face might cheer her up."

"Yeah," Mark said nodding. "I just...you know...I've been thinking about it...Has she asked for me at all?"

"No," Elliot said quickly taking a look around the apartment that looked similar to Olivia's only inverted.

"Oh," Mark said softly. "Well...I mean, I guess I am *just* a neighbor. She probably just forgot about since she hasn't seen me in so long."

"And like I said...I'm sure she'd like to see you."

"I just wish there was something that I could do," Mark said crossing his arms. "I mean, I just feel so helpless, you know? I'm really starting to feel it...the emptiness that's coming from her side of the aisle way. It's kind of like the way it was when her mother moved out of that apartment all that time ago."

Elliot nodded and as he did, light from the window across the room caught a glimmer of something near the door. He moved his head again as Mark prattled on, but could not see the glimmer again.

"Well, thanks," he said absentmindedly.

"If I can be of any help," Mark said extending a hand as if offering Elliot the door, "please just let me know. But, don't start accusing me for anything anymore."

Elliot walked toward the door as Mark opened it for him. "I'll keep you posted."

As he turned to walk down the hall, the glimmer of light caught his eye again. He glanced at the spot on the floor from which it came, and felt his heart jump into his throat.

"Please be sure you do," Mark said and closed the door.

Elliot stood staring at the closed door for a moment, stunned and unsure what step to take next. His first thoughts were to immediately speak to Olivia, but he quickly shook the thought away from mind. She would not be able to help with this. Cragen would need to need know and his next stop would surely be at Casey's office.

Elliot let out the breath he was unaware that he was holding and began walking toward the elevator. When the doors opened after what seemed like an eternity, he felt the urge to grab his gun and go running back down the hall, but let the elevators close once he was inside instead. His own glossy visage reflected back to him in the elevators distorted metal, but instead of seeing himself in the hazy mirror, the only image in Elliot's mind was one of a small, smudged and dirty, golden desk key stuck in the lower corner door frame of Mark Landon's old apartment door.

Wednesday April 4, 2007  
7:12AM

Elliot paced back in forth in Cragen's office rubbing his forehead as a shooting pain coursed through his temples. Mark Landon's face floated before his eyes and each time he blinked, Elliot felt ready to throw things across the room.

He and Cragen had been arguing for twenty minutes already over Mark and Cragen stood steadfast, refusing to pull out all stops in arresting him.

"I know what I saw, Cap," he said.

"But, there's no way we can go barging into Landon's apartment and expect to hold him just on that."

"Don!" Elliot shouted. "We've got to get him and we need to do it now! How many coincidences do we need to stack up against him before we're willing to grab him?"

"There are more problems with Landon than those coincidences account for."

Elliot shook his head. "Don... The second set of cameras we found are for short range and Landon's right across the hall. Every single person we've talked to about Landon describes him as a crazy little man who seems possessive of Olivia. We see it on the tapes. He's always dropping by and always shows up with things for her right when she needs them. How would he know if he wasn't watching her from right across the hall? Those newer cameras are his. There's no question in my mind. And, I know Olivia and she's never even set foot in Landon's apartment, but we found her hair and her prints in his place, not to mention the goddamn key!"

"Elliot..."

"No. Look I know what I saw that night. The reason I even went for Liv was because I wanted the damn keys she'd thrown down her shirt. I just wanted the keys. The two of them were together and then all of a sudden, one of them is stuffed under Landon's doorframe. We need to arrest him."

"I would love to arrest Mark Landon, but we don't have anything to keep him and *if* we arrest, I'm certain he'll run, as soon as he's released on bail. Here are the problems as they stand. Landon is her neighbor and has been for years. Anything we find in regards to hair, prints...keys can be attributed to that. Anything could have floated, fallen or rolled six feet across the hall and into Landon's apartment over the years. Problem number two: We started looking at Landon *before* Olivia was found. Which means that we were searching him up and down at the same time Olivia was being held captive. Don't forget, that when Olivia was missing

for just two days, you were in that apartment, twice and didn't see or hear anything.

"Now, from the canvasses we've done in the surrounding buildings where we found Olivia, nothing's been found and Landon's not associated with any of them. The closest thing that has any relation is some guy's warehouse of probably pirated movies. For all intents and purposes, Landon hasn't been East of Broad or North of 14<sup>th</sup> in years and Liv was found on 90<sup>th</sup> and that creates a problem. Now, Liv's not cooperating any longer, but before she fell she had pieced together some guy who doesn't look anything like Landon, which means that the victim...the *witness* has already discounted Landon. Also, we still can't connect Landon with the mystery chemical purchaser. And don't give me that garbage about the anagram. If we send Casey to a judge with that, they'll laugh us all out of the unit. Until we can definitely link him to the chemicals or East 90<sup>th</sup>, we've still got nothing."

"Not nothing," Munch said as he and Fin entered Cragen's office. "We got a call this morning from Zachary Calbrach's mother. He'd had a nightmare last night and said he knew what his attacker looked like. Look at what the sketch artist came up with."

He handed the sketch to Cragen whose eyes went wide. "Holy shit...It looks like Landon."

"We took it around Zachary's school," Fin said as Elliot snatched the sketch and glared at it was just visibly shaking hands. "The neighbor who said she'd seen someone hanging around the school before Zachary was attacked. She ID'd him instantly."

They each stood silent for a moment as Cragen shook his head.

"Bring him in."

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Four detectives and their captain stood silently in a semi-circle each pondering the same question as Mark Landon was held in an interrogation room down the corridor. Having waived his right to council in writing, Fin made sure of it, Mark had been sitting in the interrogation room for close to five hours staring stoic at the far wall.

Calmly suppressing his rage, Elliot had arrested Mark, read him his rights and threw him into an interrogation room while he and the rest of the unit ransacked Mark's apartment, taking anything they thought might have potential in the pending case. They took his computer, bank records, Olivia's desk key and a key to her apartment as well as accessories from his wardrobe.

Inside the apartment, Elliot had an epiphany, remembering Olivia mentioning that she remembered being under something, but also unable to call out when she heard his voice. Under his guise, they flipped Mark's bed and found a disturbance in the dust bunnies that was about Olivia's size. Elliot tore through the apartment for the second time and had CSU swab the bathroom sink that glowed faintly under a black light.

Melinda compared the swab to her previous samples and ruled that the substance in Mark's bathroom was not only identical to that found on the boys and Olivia's clothes, but it was the precise concentration and mixture. She then compared fibers from Mark's clothes and found one of his belts a perfect fit to the object that had been used to kill Ryan Daly and Andrew Shaw, yet not for the previous murders. To make matters worse, she also deduced that of the two sets of male hair found on Olivia's clothes, Mark's was present.

Mark's computers were given to Morales, who discovered that a large number of files had recently been wiped from his hard drive. As Mark had performed multiple recoveries on his system, it took the better part of the day, but eventually Morales was able to see the last files Mark had deleted. The largest file was a lengthy video clip that showed a very different play of the night Olivia disappeared.

Instead of turning to snow as Elliot pinned Olivia to the floor, Olivia struggled against him and hit him in the groin, enabling herself to wriggle free. Elliot came after her again and she slapped once across the cheek, and then hit him on the eye. His face grew red as he grabbed both of her arms and for a moment, Olivia flew through the air as Elliot launched her forward and she crashed against her wall, causing all of her pictures to collapse to the ground.

As Olivia slid toward the floor, Elliot's breathing slowed and he put a hand to his head as if realizing what he had done and stepped away from her with a disquieted frown set on his face. Olivia however, snapped her head up and launched from the floor in his direction. She hit him twice on either side of the face and screamed as she kicked him in the stomach; Elliot cowered slightly, trying in vain to fend off her blows.

He whirled around her and managed to pin her to the floor for a moment before she elbowed him in the stomach, hit him across the face and was able to flip him onto his stomach where she pulled a set of handcuffs from her desk, cuffed his arms behind his back and stood several feet away from him, leaving him on the floor as she gasped for air.

Olivia crossed the room, poured herself a scotch and in between sips breathed "That...is why...you can't...have...Dro...ver's...file..." She then unlocked him and he sprang from the floor to glare at her, his own breathing ragged. "Just...give me the file," Elliot had said on the screen, but Olivia, arms crossed, shook her head and pointed towards her door. He stepped toward the door and quickly left, but not before announcing, "I can't fucking stand you." eliciting a single tear from Olivia's eyes. She stared at the door that was opened just a crack for a moment and then turned to stare at the trashed apartment as she burst into tears.

She wept for a moment and then jumped at the sound of knocking at her door. Olivia crossed the room, reached for the doorknob, and then Mark, clear as day jumped at her, holding a white cloth. She struggled for just a second before she collapsed and in less than thirty seconds, Mark was attempting to throw her over his shoulder, but he could not lift her properly with his short stature and resigned to dragging her across the floor. He stopped just once when it appeared that she had

caught on something. He pulled at her shoulders and something gold flew back into her apartment as he continued dragging her into his own.

Cragen had mildly reprimanded Elliot and informed him that he would have to be docked a week's pay for his actions just to keep the deputy commissioner happy, but also mentioned that nothing would be entered into Elliot's record.

"You just got your ass kicked so well by Olivia," Cragen had said, "it seems cruel and unusual to do anymore to you."

Yet, all humour had been laid aside as the severity of the situation emerged. Based on the accuracy of the previous sketch, Zachary Calbrack had been brought into the precinct to view a line-up and he identified Mark as soon as he stepped through the door. With Zachary's proclamations of "That's him! That's him! That's the guy!" the detectives were left trying to piece together a motive. Mark Landon had killed Ryan Daly and Andrew Shaw and attacked Zachary and Olivia and the question of motive hung in the air.

"Why both?" Elliot said, breaking the silence. He spoke more to himself than anyone else.

"He's a nut," Fin said.

"Even they have reasons."

"Yeah, but the real question is how would he have done it?" Munch said. "The murders, I mean. How could he have known the intricate details of the case?"

Silence befell them momentarily.

"Her desk," Cragen said. "When we first went in there with CSU, you noticed it, Elliot. You said it looked like something was missing from her desk and she had one of Jacob Lewendale's files with her."

"But, when would he've taken it?" Alexa asked. "He's not on the tapes."

"Probably the same time he took her," Munch said.

"Why though?" Fin argued. "If I'm looking at this right, he killed Ryan Daly and Andrew Shaw to take the heat off of us looking too closely at him for taking Olivia. But, if he killed them as an after thought, why would he take the files up front? That's saying like he knew what else he would've had to do before he did it and I'm not willing to give Landon that kinda credit."

"You don't have to," Elliot said, crossing his arms. "Morse's tape cuts out before Landon grabbed Olivia and starts again that same night. But, he stops taping completely that Saturday. Morse thought he knew what happened and figured Olivia wouldn't be coming home. The last of his videos ends about an hour before he came in to see us and Landon would've had all the time in the world after that to duck under the police tape and snatch Jacob Lewendale's file."

"This is unbelievable," Alexa whispered.

"For real," Fin said. "I mean...how crazy do you have to be to start killing little kids just to cover something you did?"

"I just wish we had a motive," she said.

"He killed the kids to cover for Liv," Munch said. "He an extra special breed of crazy. I'm not surprised he took a page from Kreider."

“Yeah, but...I mean Kreider was simply certifiable. So, was the stalker Morse for that matter. But, Landon...what could’ve possibly driven him to do this?”

Elliot began walking towards Mark’s interrogation room. “Let’s find out. All the extra special crazies at least have a good story to tell.”

Mark bolted upright as Elliot barged through the interrogation room door and quickly sat in the chair across from him. He glared at Mark and took in every part of his small stature, from his doleful, beady eyes, to his terracotta-coloured hair. Mark returned the stare, but the fire had gone from his eyes and he showed signs of fatigue and resignation.

“We’ve been doing some investigating,” Elliot said. “As it turns out, you’ve been up to some stuff, haven’t you?”

“The boys weren’t my idea,” Mark said quickly.

“Of course not,” Elliot snapped. “You only stalked them, raped them and strangled them all by yourself. Why wouldn’t all of that have been your idea?”

“There was a man. I can tell you where he is. He calls himself a kind of art dealer, but it’s really just strange porn. Anyway, he’s the one who suggested the boys.”

“Why do you know this man? And why would you just sublimely follow when he asked you to do something? Are you a sheep too? You can’t come up with your own thoughts, so you follow everyone else.”

“That’s not true. There was man.”

“Right. Right. This fictitious man who had Olivia.”

“He’s not fictitious. He’s the one who took her later and if she’s hurt at all, it’s all because of him.”

Elliot’s eye twitched as he stared at Mark. “Why did you take her?”

“I didn’t have a choice.”

“Of course you did. You had two choices: to go about your business or jump at her with some stuff you bought and mixed specifically for this purpose and hold her hostage for days and days. Why’d you choose the latter?”

“*She* wanted me to look after her.”

“She who? You’re not making any sense.”

Mark sighed and stared at the table for a moment. “I’ve lived in that apartment since I was eighteen. The woman who lived there before...Serena...she was so nice to me after my mother had died. She would say that she’d always wanted a son, but wasn’t about to have any other children.”

“So, what happened Landon?”

“I...I don’t know. It started out fine at first. I just wanted to see her all the time and so I visited her a lot. Then I met this daughter she had been talking about all that time and she would say to me that she would marry Olivia off to me. She kind of joked about it, but I kind of liked the idea and I wanted to know more about her.”

“Is that when you started video taping that apartment?”

He nodded slowly. “I just wanted to know what they were talking about it. Serena was the closest thing I’d had to a mother in a long time and I just wanted to know what she was like with her own kid. And, then she went uptown and Olivia moved in and...she wasn’t like her mother. Olivia was always gone and she really didn’t do much but say hi or goodbye to me when she was coming and going.”

“But, you kept taping her anyway?”

"I had to," Mark said his momentarily wide. "That was the last thing Serena had said to me when she left. To keep a look out for her baby girl because she worried about her all the time. She said Olivia worked a job that wasn't good for her and she was alone a lot. She said Olivia could be self-destructive which I found kind of ironic since she was drunk herself quite often, but she always so good to me even when she was. And then...and then Serena died...and I didn't know about it. The only reason I even knew was because I'd seen Olivia crying in the apartment and I knew I had to see what was wrong, because that was what Serena had asked me to do."

Elliot shifted uncomfortably in his seat, not allowing the expression on his face to soften.

"And then what happened? Were you angry because Olivia didn't tell you something? Is that why you took her all these years later?"

"N-no...I was just...I just made up my mind to keep looking after her because that was the last thing Serena had told me to do. So, I did. But..." Mark sighed and closed his eyes. Elliot could see the slightest vestige of a tear forming on his eyelashes, but Mark quickly brushed it away with his hand. "Like I said, Olivia wasn't Serena. She wasn't as nice to me and she just sort of looked at me like this little man who she had to put up with because she wanted to keep her rent control. And then there were the men. Not a lot of them, but enough for me to know what Serena had been talking about when she said that Olivia was self-destructive."

"If it wasn't just some tall guy she'd met and wanted out the door the next morning, it was some arrogant bastard who made her feel bad about herself. And, then of course, there was you." He glared at Elliot. "When I first saw the two of you argue in her apartment, I wanted to come after you right then, but I didn't. I should've but I didn't."

"I didn't do anything."

"But, you'd argue with her. Even way back then. And, then when I saw her letting herself being bullied by these others, I just didn't know what to do. She kept letting it happen, too. There was even one who'd hit her and she still kept him around. And all that time, I was always doing everything I could to be a good friend. If I thought for an instant that she needed something, I made sure to get it for her. I was always good to her."

"By stalking her?"

Mark shook his head. "By just helping her out when she needed it. I figured if I just kept offering myself as somebody she could lean on, other than you, she'd come around."

"But she never did, did she?"

"She said I was nobody to her. *Nobody*. I...I would do anything for her if she asked me to, but I nobody to her. I was the only person in the world who wouldn't have hurt her and yet...I was nobody. Halloway was the one who didn't want her to have a life outside of him and yet I was nobody. You were the one who burst into her apartment like goddamn madman and left her in tears when you did, but I was the one who was nobody. After I saw what happened that Tuesday, I knew something had to be done."

"For her own good..."

“Right. Between you and these destructive people in her life, I knew it was only a matter of time before she was going to get killed by somebody and I’d’ve let Serena down.”

Elliot stood and leaned on the table right next to Mark.

“That’s a great story, Landon. Touching, really. You attacked Olivia to save her from herself because it was what her mother would’ve wanted. Yeah. A really good story. If it was a movie, I’d go see it.”

“It’s not just a story. It’s the truth.”

Elliot laughed. “You are a piece of work. You’ve been looking me, my co-workers, my boss... anyone and everyone. You looked all of us in the eye and swore up and down that you hadn’t done anything to Olivia. You got your attorney in here, insisted that we were harassing you, and swore that all this was ridiculous. And yet... here we are. Two boys are dead, one will never be the same and then there’s Olivia. For what?”

“I already told you that the boys weren’t my idea.”

“Yes, of course. This guy. This art dealer you’ve made up.”

“I didn’t make up anything about him,” Mark said the fire returning.

“And I’m supposed to take that you at your word on that one?”

“I’m telling the truth.”

“I’m sure you are.”

“I don’t see why you’re being so difficult about this-”

Elliot snatched Mark by the shirt and pulled him off the ground so that his feet barely grazed the floor tiles.

“I am being... difficult because you assaulted my partner and killed two kids to cover it up.”

Mark shook himself loose from Elliot’s grip. “I didn’t assault Olivia. Okay? You’re the one who threw her against a wall.”

“Don’t even try that with me. You’re the reason she can’t walk.”

“But, I’ve already told you that that wasn’t me. Are you really that thick? I mean you ransacked my apartment while she was still gone and you didn’t find her. I sold her, okay? I sold her to this guy and he did all this other stuff to her, not me.”

“And you and your midget lawyer are free to argue that when you’re on trial for your life.”

“When I gave her to the guy, she was perfectly healthy.”

“Except,” Elliot said taking a step toward him. “For that little chemical you mixed in your bathroom. It’s giving her seizures and it’s probably half the reason why she can’t walk right now. You call that perfectly healthy?”

“Well, I find that absolutely laughable coming from you. Didn’t you insist that Olivia was ‘perfectly fine’ when you had left her? We both know what happened that night and there’s no way you can say with a straight face that she was fine. I took her to keep her from being attacked by you again. I knew that next time you were going to kill her.”

“So, why the break down?” Elliot asked as he rolled his eyes. “Why sell her off if you were supposed to be her great protector? Do you think you did Serena Benson proud by doing it?”

Mark stared at spot on the wall just beyond Elliot and narrowed his already small eyes.

“She...she didn’t want me. She’d always bat me away from her. There were the lowest forms of life going in and out of that apartment, but she wouldn’t let me touch her. You she’d let rub your mouth all over her. Halloway...God, she’d let him do anything at all, but when I tried to...”

“But, even through a haze of drugs, she still fought you off.”

“Olivia thought that she was too good for me. It was only when I had her in my place that I started to piece together the past years. She would never just knock on my door to see how I was like I would do for her. She pretended that I never even knew her mother...She would never even give me my mail. Instead, she’d just leave it in a lump next to my door. I realized she wasn’t a good person and I didn’t see the reason in keeping her around anymore. I knew that he was wanting someone to use in his new work and I just gave her up.”

“For five thousand dollars.”

“Willingly. I would’ve honestly done it for less, but I didn’t want him to get cold feet about taking her if I was too low on the price.”

Elliot stepped toward Mark as he backed across the room and leaned very close as Mark stood pressed against the wall.

“You literally sold her into slavery to be dejected and starved until this *guy* was done with her. Who are you to say Olivia wasn’t a good person? The reason she didn’t like you was because she saw you for the person you were. She saw that you were nothing more than short, small-minded, bigot and she had better things to do with her time than associate.” Elliot shook his head. “You’re a sad little man and if there’s any justice in this world, hopefully you’ll be dead before your sentencing.”

“I’ve made some mistakes,” Mark said. “But, I-”

“Mistakes! You strangled three boys for absolutely nothing!”

Mark flattened himself against the wall, trying to back away from Elliot’s berating tone. Elliot paused and an image played before his eyes as he stared at Mark. At first he had Mark’s throat in his bare hands, squeezing and squeezing as he turned colours. Then he saw himself drawing his weapon and simply squeezing the trigger into Mark’s head until the clip was emptied. He had half a mind to drag Olivia from her bed and let her pummel the life out of him as well. Vision after vision crossed his mind, but after a full minute he shook his head and walked toward the door.

“Hey,” Mark said. “What’s going to happen to me?”

“You’ll die a horrible death at a young age.”

“But, I’m not the one who threw her out of a window. That other guy is. And he’s the one who told me to do all that to those boys?”

“Did he tell how to stalk them?” Elliot seethed. “Did he tell you exactly how to sodomize and beat them? How about strangling them? Did he tell you that?”

“You don’t understand...”

“I understand. You’re full of shit. You killed those boys and whatever this other person you’ve made up did to Olivia, you’re the one who sold her to him. Does that even register to you? You *sold* another person. You *murdered* two young boys. You’re an absolute horror of a human being.”

Elliot turned to walk again, but just before he got to the door, he sighed. He stepped toward Mark, drew his fist and used every bit of force in his arm and threw Mark across the room from the force of the hit. When he left the room, he drew concerned stares from the Munch, Fin and Cragen, but he did not care. *It had to be done*, he thought as he left the squad room for Olivia's hospital. *He's just lucky I didn't do more.*

## Chapter Twenty-Nine

Monday May 7, 2007  
Mount Carmel East

Olivia smiled at the newest letter that had been delivered with her morning mail. It was another handwritten letter from the boy who had found her, Deondre Meekham, and she read it twice before she set it upright on the side table.

When Mark Landon had been arrested, she broke into her first smile in weeks and upon reviewing all the other cards and letters of encouragement she had received, she decided to return a letter to the young boy. Jillian had asked her repeatedly why she did, and while she could not find the words to express her concern with Jillian, Olivia felt obligated to make sure the boy who had found a body in the trash was still mentally healthy, and it was also a nice exercise for her own mind. She corrected his grammar much like her mother had when she was his age, and with each new letter he wrote in turn, his fundamentals increased and sounded much better than he had in his first letter.

The sudden urge to use the bathroom hit her pelvis and she pulled the covers off the bed and shifted slowly as she eased herself into the black, cushioned wheelchair that sat next to the bed.

Her recovery over the past month had been slow; much slower than she would have liked. Physical therapy began as soon as she had re-trained her body to accept food once again and Olivia had held a vision of herself defying all odds by standing and nearly walking on her first day. Instead, the day had been spent training her back and stomach muscles to work in conjunction and keep her upright once again. The entire circumstance had the type of otiosity that kept Olivia's active soul awake at night. Though she willed her mind to improve and pushed her body as far as it would go, it took several days before she could move her legs enough to simply shift off the bed and another full week until she was able to pull herself to a wobbling and aided standing position.

Elliot constantly reminded her that being able to move at all was miraculous by itself as her doctors had been quite sure that she would remain paralyzed from the waist down for the rest of her days.

Using her arms, that had gained twice their strength in recent weeks, she pushed on the chair's wheels and through a number of gymnastic maneuvers she managed to use the toilet and rolled herself out of the room and down the hall to visit the nurse's station.

Olivia hated the wheelchair when it was first brought out to her, thinking that it was some kind of black swathe that would be used to keep her technically disabled for life.

Its cushions were plump and it had pockets at its sides for carrying objects for various sizes. The chair was not one of the simple wheelchairs used temporarily for hospital patients; it was meant for long-term use. However, once she was able to get herself in and out of it without help, she felt a freedom she had not sensed since she first left her mother's house at eighteen.

At first, a foreboding gloom perused her thoughts as she considered the idea of being confined to the contraption. The urge to strike out at anyone around her and grow angry again was great as she realized how much she had taken the ability to stand or walk for granted. A palpable helplessness overwhelmed her mind and she struggled for many days to keep from drowning in depression once more. What incensed her most was that there was no recourse. She could not talk her way out of it; she could not fight her way out of it. As said by the recent amputee that had resided down the corridor, she would simply have to live through the experience. She grew to love the mobility afforded through the chair since her legs still did not respond properly and made the best of the situation. When there were the fewest amounts of people on the floor, she and Maya would laugh themselves into hysterics as Maya would give Olivia a running push and then hop onto the back of the chair as they both careened down the corridors reminding them both of the shenanigans of their youth. Olivia would goad other wheelchair bound residents into races and eventually was able to perform tricks in her chair as well as discover new nuances such as how to bounce down sets of shallow steps and turning around hairpin corners at accelerated speeds.

Maya, Elliot and Jonathan visited her at regular intervals collectively pleased to see her up and about considering her demeanor in the previous month and Olivia eventually apologized to each of them individually for what she had said. Even remembering her coarse words caused her to wince in shame, but all anyone responded was "I understand."

"Hey," Olivia said as she applied pressure to her wheel handles and came to a stop just in front of the station. "When you have a minute, can you have someone look at that bathroom again? I just want to make sure it's clean."

"It's no problem," the bright-eyed nurse said. "We'll have someone there in just a bit."

Olivia smiled at her, nodded at the cop posted near her door and headed back to her room. She had always had an aversion to public restrooms and as she had been recently moved to a different room that allowed for more physical therapy to be performed any time of day, the new bathroom had the feel of a public toilet on Broadway even though it was cleaned thoroughly before she was moved.

As much as she hated it, she was beginning to grow accustomed to the benefits having Halloway money behind her requests and though she refused to acknowledge it on principle, she enjoyed having the hospital staff treat her like she was plated in gold. The slightest little thing was hers upon request; from a larger television in the room to curtain that let in slightly more light. Jonathan ensured that her every wish was granted on her extended stay in the hospital.

Olivia had spent a total of eleven weeks in various hospitals and while there did appear to be light at the end of the tunnel, she was still irritated by having lost close to three months of her life in hospitals and her status in the current one.

Pulmonary problems still erupted at least once a day and the seizures, which had ironically stopped altogether while she was in the throws of depression, occurred at least once every 48-hours. Her newest primary physician, Dr. Weiss, insisted that the issues in her lungs stemmed from the severe pneumonia that nearly conquered her at one point, even through her positivism, and still threatened to wreak havoc on her body. Her femur bone was still not fully healed, needing another month of mending, and she had also suffered two bouts of infection from the gunshot wound that refused to heal. All of her ailments notwithstanding, Dr. Weiss promised that she would most likely be out of the hospital in another week. With the knowledge that she would eventually be allowed to leave and also Mark Landon sitting in a prison cell, Olivia had put a new vigor into her therapy and had in the past few days, worked her body to the point where she could do tens of pull-ups without pause and could hand walk across a set of parallel bars as she attempted to pull her legs behind her.

The idea that Mark had been the one to attack her was still quite baffling. She had been certain, for instance, that her attacker had been tall and blond, but through her fuliginous memory, she had remembered that there had been more than one party at some point. Elliot, through her tirade of unflappable nagging, had shown her the video Mark had taken and it was only after she saw Mark coming after that she acknowledged that “little Mark” had actually attacked her.

Olivia flipped herself onto her bed, leaving the blankets in a bunch at her feet and turned on the television as she noted the time. It was nearly time for her soap opera and that meant that Maya would be coming shortly.

The number of daily visitors had dwindled by a significant amount, but she was not upset by it as most of her time was spent with Maya, Elliot or both together. She enjoyed those times most. Together they would just talk like old friends and she Maya would end up swapping old embarrassing stories just to make Elliot laugh.

“Hey! You can’t hold that against me,” Olivia had said. “Remember, *you* were the one who nearly burnt down the whole school!”

Elliot had turned to Maya with a bright smile. “You burnt down your school?”

“No,” Maya said slowly and rolled her eyes. “See, this is how the stupid rumours get started. We didn’t burn down the school. There was just a little fire-”

“Which *you* started!” Olivia laughed.

“I did not! It was that other girl...Tiffany or Megan or some shit. She’s the one who threw her cigarette in the trash can instead of the toilet. *She’s* the one who started the fire.”

“But, it was still a fire,” Elliot said.

“Just a little first and honestly it wasn’t even that bad. They had it out in like five minutes and we just got a slap on the wrist. ‘Course Livia here didn’t get anything because she was too good-goody to participate.”

“I wasn’t getting suspended because you wanted to smoke,” Olivia said.

“But, you could’ve said something! Honestly, Elliot. She ran out of the damn bathroom and I know she had to’ve seen the vice principal coming, but did she yell for us to put out stuff or even run for cover? No way! She just kept running.”

“Damn straight, I kept running. By the time the fire alarms were going off, I was already out of the building. I remember because all the freshmen I had passed were just looking at me like I was some kind of psychic since I knew we’d have to evacuate. It was great. My finest hour and I never even got to take credit for it.”

Olivia’s cell phone chimed from the stand and she sighed when she saw that Jonathan had left her text message announcing that he would be at the hospital later in the day.

Unlike her visits with Maya and Elliot, Jonathan’s were far more subdued. Many of her memories on the days before she had been attacked were fuzzy, except for the one where Jonathan had alluded to her being a whore. That, she remembered like it was just happening in front of her.

They had had several long discussions about “them” and what “they” were going to do, but she still had not made up her mind. She had been told what kind of terror Jonathan had been throughout her disappearance and while she more or less deemphasized the comments, the reality of the situation surfaced as he and Elliot argued in front of her.

Somewhere along the way, Jonathan had developed a sublime hatred for Elliot and she found it difficult to sympathize. They had had long talks about his jealousy and the fact that it was unnecessary, but he never seemed to accept her promises and she wondered whether or not she should end the relationship in its entirety.

She had not allowed Jonathan to kiss her on the lips throughout her stay in the hospital, whereas she had increasingly allowed Elliot to kiss her cheek goodbye and hold her hand for extended periods of time. Maya had teased her for years that she might be falling for her partner and never paid the thought any mind, but in recent weeks, Elliot had been the one who refused to leave her side under any circumstance and she found herself pondering that upon many other thoughts that berated her consciousness.

His was the first face she saw when she first awakened from the horrific darkness and while most memories were a blur, she could remember calling out for just one person; not Maya, not Jonathan, not Jesus, just Elliot. He was her rock and after several conversations, she found herself longing to simply be near him.

“What do you really see in him?” Elliot had finally asked one day through frustrated eyes.

“What?” she had said.

“Halloway. What is it about him that keeps you with him?”

She shrugged. “We have a lot of fun together and...I don’t know. I love him. Why do you ask?”

“I just...Don’t take this the wrong way, Liv, but of all the guys I’ve seen you with, I like him the least.”

“That’s because of that little rich boy smugness he’s got, but it really fades when we’re alone.”

“Yeah, that might be it,” Elliot said, though he sounded as if he had not believed his own words. “But, I wouldn’t want you being with this guy if he didn’t really make you happy.”

She let her eyes drop to the hospital blanket. "When did you decide to go into this older brother, protective mode?"

"I wouldn't bring it up, but...you've kept him around for a while."

"Which should be evidence that he's a stand up guy."

"I never said he wasn't and it's probably not my place to say it, but I don't think he's the right person for you."

"Well, we never know until we put some effort into the relationship. And, no. It's not your place to say that."

"Olivia, I care about you. Who you're with and what you're going through eventually impacts me and from what I saw in Halloway these past couple weeks raises all kinds of red flags."

"Why? What's he done that's so bad?"

Elliot sighed and rubbed a hand over his face. "I just wish that you and him had a long talk before you go any further."

"Elliot...I love Jonathan. We're just going through some things right now because of what's happened to me."

"Liv, there was a guy, Morse, who'd been taping your apartment. We watched those videos, Olivia and we've seen some things."

The concern in her eyes melted into an angry glare. "Things like what?"

"Do you really need me to elaborate?"

"Yes. I do. I can't really figure out what you're talking about when you say *things*. Like that's supposed to mean something to me."

"Olivia, almost three years ago, you were walking around with stars in your eyes over Matthew Williard...and I saw what he did to you. Not once. Not twice. Three different times and I remember you saying, as clear as day that you were in love with the guy. That he was so perfect he seemed too good to be true."

"And, he was. In the end, I got rid of him."

"But, not after he'd hurt you."

"You know, Elliot," she began, her voice cracking as she forced tears to remain at the brims of her eyes. "I don't need you telling me all the mistakes I've made in relationships over the years. I remember every single one. Matthew...was a mistake and he caught me at a weak moment when I was lonelier than usual and was more prone to forgive him. But, I realized what I was doing and I ended it. Jonathan is not Matthew."

"Fine, not now, but what about tomorrow or three years from now?"

"You can't say how any of us will be in three years. Hell, at New Year's I was planning on getting to know my cousin a little better and training for the marathon. Allison's stopped by a few times, but it doesn't look like I'll be making the latter. But, I've been with Jonathan for two years. Yes, he has his problems, but who doesn't? I mean, look at us. You are insistent that you are always right, even to your detriment, you push people away the moment they try to help you and even if you were drowning, you wouldn't call for help. And, me...Honestly, where do I start? Jonathan is a good person and I know that he loves me."

“You can love someone Olivia without being in a relationship. Look at me and Kathy. Do you think I stopped loving her just because she threw me out? Jonathan Halloway is not the one. He’s not good for you.”

“Based on what?”

“Based on gut feeling.”

“The same gut feeling that insisted Jeffrey Drover had murdered those kids?”

“No. The same gut feeling that *knew* Drover was a child molester and knew that Mark Landon had done something to you. I don’t like Halloway. Something about him rubs me wrong.”

“Why are you so against him? Why do you hate him so much?”

He shook his head and left the hospital, but as he did, Olivia saw a glimmer of something in his eye that she had never seen previously. There was something in the way he had looked at her that said he would never be able to honestly answer her questions. However, though Elliot would not answer her, Allison took a stab at the situation when she came with her son to visit and Olivia had blurted out the problem before she could stop herself.

Well,” Allison had said as Olivia cradled PK in her arms. “I don’t know how close you two are, but it sounds like he knows he’s about to lose you.

“What? No, not Elliot. We’re not like that.”

“Okay...If you say so.”

“No, Allison. I’m telling you. Elliot doesn’t really think of me like that.”

Allison sighed and tipped her finger into PK’s hand so that he grasped it firmly. “Olivia, I may be a bit younger, but I know men and I know how they act when they’re jealous.”

“Elliot’s not jealous of Jonathan. He’s never been jealous of any of my boyfriends, so why would he start now.”

“That just proves my point. None of the ones had ever been this good a match for you as this and he knows it. Now, all of sudden, he’s starting to realize that he might have to give you up since Jonathan’s around you’ll probably end up marrying him.”

“Well, that’s a nice little theory, but what’s he giving up? He’s my partner, not my ex.”

“But, I’m sure there’ve been moments-”

“Up ‘til the last two years he’s been married. There haven’t been any moments.”

“So, you’ve been dating Jonathan for two years and he’s been out of his marriage for two years?”

“Yes, but there’s still a possibility his wife might take him back.”

“Okay, so in all the time you’ve been partners, he’s been married and you’ve been in sucky relationships. At the same time something happens that more or less frees him up, you get caught up with someone else. Someone who, unlike all the others, is perfect for you and it’s like, now that he’s free to have you, you’re with someone else. The reason it’s probably coming out now most of all is because it’s really, really easy to see when you and Jonathan together. You look like you’ve already been married for a year. Elliot has got to see this and he’s angry about it, but he doesn’t know why he’s angry and is just venting his frustration. When he

argues with Jonathan, it's probably on some subconscious level. He wants him out, but he just doesn't know why."

Olivia shook her head and held up PK. At three and a half months, his light brown hair was beginning to come in and his blue eyes could focus on her face. She broke into a wide smile and he exchanged a toothless grin in return.

"PK...", Olivia said in high, but soothing baby-voice. "You're mommy is messed in the head, d'you know that? She doesn't make any sense at all. S'ok though. Aunt Liv will be here for you when you want a voice of reason."

Allison laughed and Olivia changed the subject to PK's absent father, but her mind was welded to thoughts of Elliot even days later.

She had not been fully honest with her cousin in stating that there had not been any moments between her and Elliot. There was one incident when Elliot had kissed her neck while embracing her after coming to terms with his wife's departure and following the incident that ended quickly, Olivia suffered weeks of dreams that included she and Elliot in various positions in his bedroom. She had the fantasies all the time and was even caught voicing one of them while she was coming out of a slight concussion during her stint in Oregon.

As much as she hated to admit it, at some during her partnership with Elliot she was no longer accustomed to his company, but craved it. She enjoyed every moment they spent together, even when they were arguing, and rather guilty relished in the fact that he spent more time at the precinct following his separation.

Taking up the knitting she had begun recently to regain function in her hands, Olivia shifted on the bed to make room for Maya's impending visit. She had nearly finished a piece of her lengthy creation when she heard a knock at her door. As if her thoughts had magically summoned him, Elliot stepped into her room a moment later.

"Hey, Liv," he said with a smile. His tie was undone signifying that he was ending his day early and he carried a bright green aloe plant in small pot. "I talked to your doctor and he says that flowers are still out, so I picked this up for you. I thought it might brighten the place a bit."

They hugged briefly as she took the pot from him and admired it.

"It's adorable," she said.

"I thought you'd like it. And, they're hard to kill so I figured it would be right up your alley."

She laughed and gave him a playful nudge. "How's your case going?"

"Done. Alexa and I collared the guy this morning. I'm just taking the rest of the day to play catch up on some paperwork."

"Has she been doing better lately?"

"I thought so for a while there, but this last girl...I mean she was about Lizzie age and after we talked to her, I found Alexa crying in the crib."

"She might get over it. We all had it rough those first few cases."

Elliot shook his head. "She's on the ropes. If the vics get any younger, she'll be done."

"I wish you'd let me help you out with something."

"It's out of my hands."

“Not if you really tried. I’m getting brain rot here Elliot. The only stimulation I’m getting is day-time TV.”

“It’s out of my hands,” he repeated and she rolled her eyes.

“Any news on Kreider?”

“McCoy wanted you to testify about a week ago.”

“Why didn’t anyone tell me?”

“Because you were running a hundred and six fever, Liv. Like it or not, you were in no shape to testify.”

“Won’t that hurt the case, though? I don’t want to be the reason he walks.”

“He’s not going to walk. The trial at this point is really not much more than a formality. We’ve all testified, Drover testified, Lucas Roy testified and so did the Lewendales. Casey says that his lawyer may try to buy a little sympathy with a shrink or two, but he’s done.”

“How about Drover? What’s he getting?”

“Serving six to nine. It was twelve to fifteen, but his legal aid dropped it down some since his testimony is arguably beneficial to Kreider’s case.”

Olivia nodded her head, deep in thought. “And Mark?”

“The jury let out this morning, but I don’t suppose they’ll have a hard time coming back with a guilty verdict against his affirmative defense. I mean it could have some effect on your case, but not for the boys.”

“I still don’t see why I couldn’t testify.”

“Casey said his lawyer had you quashed as a witness, but that it didn’t matter anyway.”

“Why? He attacked me.”

“But, he’s insisting he did it to protect you from yourself and there was no reason to put you on the stand so that his attorney could goad you into saying something that could sway the jury.”

“I’ve testified before, Elliot. That wouldn’t happen.”

“I’m just passing the message. Besides...you were sick. But, you’ll be nice and healthy by the time the sentencing comes around and I think you should be there for that if you’re up to it.”

“Of course I will. He stole a month...No, he stole *months* of my life away from me. I want him to see me just like this when he gets sentenced.”

Elliot squeezed her hand. “We got him, Liv. It’ll be all right.”

“What about that guy he was talking about?”

“Well, Landon isn’t being too forthcoming with the details anymore, but as far as we know there is no one else.”

“Elliot, I remember somebody being there. He wasn’t Landon. He was strong.”

“And, if he surfaces we’ll get him. If there is somebody else, maybe Landon will be ready to talk once he’s staring down several life sentences. I don’t want you to worry about it for now.”

They were silent for a moment as he held her hand and Olivia searched his eyes for some window into his thoughts.

“You know,” she began, “I’m not sure if I ever said it, but I really appreciate everything you’ve done for me.”

“No thanks necessary, Liv. I just wish I could’ve done more.”

She smiled at him and repressed a sigh. There was so much she wanted to say to him, yet apprehension held back her words. As the words “we’re not *really* partners anymore” stormed her thoughts, Olivia felt her chest tense and Elliot’s eyes bore into her own with concern.

*It’s now or never*, she thought.

“Elliot, I...”

As she took a breath, there was a knock at the door and Jonathan poked a smiling face into her room.

*Must be fate...*

“How you doing, Liv?” Jonathan glanced at Elliot. “Detective Stabler.”

“Halloway,” Elliot said with a nod.

“Can I visit for a moment,” Jonathan asked. “Or should I come back?”

“No, it’s fine,” Elliot said as he stood. “I was just about to leave.”

“You were?” Olivia said unable avoid a deflated tone to her voice.

“Yeah, I missed Sunday dinner yesterday, so maybe I can make it up to the kids and meet them when they get home. I’ll see you later.”

He was gone a moment later and Jonathan replaced him in the chair next to Olivia’s bed.

“How’ve you been feeling?” he asked

*Like God sees my life as one long, unfunny tale of irony.* “Good.”

“Good...good.”

She raised her eyebrows at him. “You’re here much earlier than usual. Maya hasn’t even come by for Days yet.”

“I needed an emergency Olivia fix,” he said with a mild grin that did not reach his eyes.

“Okay...Well, I’m glad you needed it. I hope I do you justice.”

“You always do.”

“Are you going to stay and watch? Shawn got shot on Friday and Maya screamed so loud that the nurses came running into here.”

“I may just need to stay for the aftermath of that,” Jonathan said.

“Did you come for something else?”

“Actually...I did.” He paused for a moment and sighed. “Olivia, I need to say something.

Part of this is my father who calls me every night to tell me that I’m just being used, but I need to say it. We’ve never really talked about us since that last night.

I said some things...some really bad things that I didn’t mean and I can understand if you don’t want to start a second round with me, but...I just feel like I’ve got to ask...”

“What?”

“You’re not just keeping me around to keep you in this hospital, are you?” Her eyes narrowed as her mouth opened, but he interrupted with a stammer before she could speak. “B-Because that wouldn’t matter to me. I feel that all this is partly my fault and I would take care of you even if you said you never wanted to see me again.”

It was her turn to sigh. “I’m not keeping you around because of the money, Jonathan. I don’t need you to take care of me.”

“I know, I know, I know.”

“Well, if you know, why even ask?”

“Because we’re not all as strong as you Olivia. Sometimes it’s just nice to hear things said every once in a while, for my own peace of mind.”

“Is that why you’ve made this emergency visit today? You squeezed me in to confirm what you already knew?”

“No. I didn’t squeeze you in for anything. In fact, I’ve cleared my whole calendar this week because I figured I would spend today through Wednesday worrying about it before I actually came in here and said this.”

“Said what?”

He tensed and stared her directly in the eye. “All this time has passed, but I don’t think we’ve gone anywhere. I still feel like the last conversation we’d had before all this happened is still hovering over us and I need to know if you’re ready to move forward with me.

“Jonathan...”

“Look, Olivia...I know I’ve been a tool and I know that the only reason I know I’ve been one is because you’ve been the only person who matters to me who has stepped and told me so. Everyone else I know would just let me run myself into the ground, but you’re the only person who would at least tell me I’m wrong. I need you Olivia. I need you in my life and I don’t think I can survive not having you as my rock. I want to be a better person and you’re the only person in this world who can help me get there.”

“Jonathan, I-”

“D-Don’t say anything yet. Just...digest what I say... I love you, Olivia. I’ve been an ass, a bastard, a jerk, a moron and any other name you can think to call me. I deserve them all. But, as trite as it sounds, every day has been brighter and every moment happier since I’ve met you and I want to make a fresh start with you.”

She smirked at him. “You’re right...that is trite.”

He laughed. “I’m pouring my heart out here and unfortunately that’s the best I can do. Which is why I need you so badly. Without you, I’m just lonely trite man lying on a sack of money.”

“That one was better.”

He leaned over the bed and kissed and hugged her as a wide smile spread across her thoughtful face. Elliot had been so ready to leave her; almost as if he was not interested in what she had had to say.

With Maya’s entrance, Olivia tried to focus her thoughts on her boyfriend and best friend, but could only set forth benign façade. Perhaps she had lost her chance with Elliot. He had said himself that he was still in love with his wife and he still had his four children over whom to worry. Maybe she never even had one.

She glanced at Jonathan, who rolled his eyes an actor bluffed his way through a gunshot wound, and broke into a wide grin.

*He’s no Elliot Stabler, but a close second isn’t that bad.*

\*\*\*\* stars

Thursday May 10th  
3:57PM

Jonathan sighed as Olivia ran her fingers through his soft hair. He lied with his head on her thigh, though the rest of his body was in a chair, and together, they watched the plot grow thicker in *Primal Fear* on the television mounted to the far wall. He had only left her alone for brief periods in the past few days, removing himself to return to his apartment, shower and then get new clothes. He had called his extended visit the closest thing to a Caribbean getaway that either of them would get in the following months and in the past three days, after having the nurses bring in an inflatable palm tree, they had watched *Swiss Family Robinson*, *Muppet Treasure Island*, the first two *Pirates of the Caribbean* films and the third one on bootleg.

Olivia sighed as she leaned against her pillows and elicited a snort from Jonathan.

“You’re not sighing about Richard Gere again, are you?”

“It was only that one time. You should’ve been here when Maya and I were watching *Pretty Woman*.”

He snickered against her leg and she smiled, but repressed another sigh. Jonathan had also slept beside her in the bed over the past three nights. She was not sure it was going to work at first, as the bed was slightly narrow and they had to maneuver to ensure Olivia’s IV lines did not get tangled, but Jonathan was determined and she was glad he was. She had forgotten what it felt like to sleep next to him and for the first time since their very first night together, she enjoyed the fact that he slept comfortably with his arms wrapped around her. Since the day she became aware of her surroundings, Olivia had not slept through an entire night without waking from either a loose nightmare or the feeling that someone was coming for her in the dark. Sleeping against Jonathan’s chest made for the soundest sleep she had ever experienced and while she initially worried that her doctor would say something, it passed quickly when she remembered that she loved a Hallowsay.

In the past several days, she also found herself feeling a familiar itch that had not been even close to mind in the recent months, but had returned in full heat since Jonathan had been spending every moment with her.

On the screen, Edward Norton professed his innocence to Richard Gere, and a sly grin spread across Olivia’s face.

“Jonathan...” she said in a sultry, sing-song voice.

He turned his head so that his chin rested on her thigh. “Yes?”

She reached for the remote control, turned up the volume on the television, but leaned very close to him to whisper.

“How would you like to do something incredibly naughty?”

\*\*\*\*\* stars

Elliot strode down the bright corridor with a small smile on his face as he carried good news for Olivia. Mark Landon was convicted of two counts of first degree murder, two counts of sexual assault, one count each of kidnapping, stalking and assault and battery by a jury of his peers. It was already a good day.

Every cop associated with SVU had been in the court room to see him convicted. Elliot had expected that Jonathan would be amongst the throng vehemently glaring at

Mark from across the aisle, but would not allow his absence to dissipate his mood. A sentencing date had been set for May 17<sup>th</sup> and he nearly skipped down the hall in a hurry to inform Olivia.

He approached the door toward the end of the corridor where a uniformed officer sat reading a newspaper and turned the door handle, but nearly bounced off the door as he tried to step inside the room.

“Why’s this door locked?” he asked quickly.

The officer glanced at him, but returned to his paper. “I would give them another ten minutes or so.”

“But why’s the door locked?”

“Elliot. *Halloway’s* in there with her. So, I’d give them another ten minutes to do what they have to do. You get my drift?”

“This door shouldn’t be locked.”

The officer rolls his eyes. “A nurse already walked in on a little something, so I told him to lock the door.” They could hear a woman’s voice sigh loudly and Elliot stepped away from the door.

“Like I said,” the officer. “I’d give them another ten minutes or so.”

Elliot sat in the chair across from the door, staring at it was a frown now displayed on his face. “She’s still got that thing on her side, you know?”

The officer shook his head. “I’m sure they can be careful. Besides, she’s getting out of here on Monday anyway, right?”

Elliot suppressed a sigh and made small talk with the officer for several minutes before leaving to talk to Olivia’s doctor and the nurses on the floor. Twenty minutes later he approached the door again as Jonathan came out looking flush, but smiling.

“She’s asleep right now,” he said sheepishly. “But, she should be up a little later.”

Jonathan walked down the corridor with an arrogant bounce to his step and Elliot envisioned himself tackling him and pummeling on the floor. He waited another five minutes and then knocked on Olivia’s door.

“Yes?” he heard Olivia call.

“It’s me,” he said. “Can I come in?”

“Of course. When have you ever asked?”

He stepped into the room, his previous smile greatly diminished and found Olivia upright in her bed with a glowing face.

“I have some good news for you,” he said trying to keep the disheartenment out of his voice. “Landon was convicted for today. His sentencing date is May 17<sup>th</sup>.”

Olivia closed her eyes and sighed deeply. “On all counts?”

“Every last one of them.”

“Good. With any luck he’ll never have another breath of free air.”

“With any luck he’ll be shanked in the shower on the first day and the taxpayers won’t have to pay to keep his ass alive.”

She laughed and beamed at him.

“I trust you and Halloway have made up,” Elliot said. He noticed her grow tense and continued after her cheeks went slightly pink. “I just noticed he’s here all the time now. He’s here when I come and he’s here when I go. In fact, today’s the first time I’ve seen him leave in at least a couple days.”

“Yes. He has been sleeping here and yes, we have made up. Jonathan’s asked me to live with him.”

“What’d you say?”

“I said yes. I can’t very well stay in that apartment, can I? Even with Mark in prison.

Jonathan’s moving my things this Saturday.”

“You trust him to move all your stuff.”

“I should hope so since I trust him enough to live with.”

“Yeah...yeah, of course.”

“I’m glad you two have stopped...arguing. It’s bad for the soul.”

*There’s no use in arguing with a bona fide bastard.* “Yeah, no problem. You want me to at least take you down there when he’s moving the things out of your apartment? I mean I know you trust him, but it would be better to make sure the movers don’t leave or take things he doesn’t notice.”

“Why don’t you go for me? You can be my liaison to the scene and if you have any questions, you can give me a ring. Besides my doctor doesn’t want any mishaps before my *scheduled* departure.”

Elliot nodded. “You’ve got a birthday coming up. Any plans yet?”

“Nope,” she shrugged.

“Is there anything you want?”

“A long, healthy life.”

“Anything that’s feasible for me to get you?”

“You ask me this question every year and how do I always answer.”

Elliot spoke in his best impression of her. ““Oh you don’t have to get me anything, Elliot.””

“That’s right,” she said slapping him playfully.

“Okay. I suppose as long as you and Halloway have a nice, quiet evening together, you’ll be all right.”

“I’ll be happy either way.”

They chatted for a while longer before Olivia yawned mid-sentence and Elliot announced that he had to leave. As he drove back to the precinct, he made a mental note.

*Note to self: Don’t pick a fight with the bastard on Saturday.*

Saturday May 12, 2007

10:05AM

Elliot parked his car down the street from Olivia’s apartment and was stunned to see Jonathan already barking orders to a myriad of hired movers. They seemed to be working quickly, but not to Jonathan’s satisfaction and Jonathan looked like he was ready to jump out of his skin as one of the movers set Olivia’s cello and case on the ground hard enough to clink on the sidewalk.

“Easy!” he yelled. “If you expect to be paid, that thing had better not have the slightest scratch! Oh, hello, Detective.”

“Halloway,” Elliot said curtly as he approached. “How’s this going?”

“Good, good. I’m trying to get this all done before two.”

“I see. Need any help?”

"No, it looks like they've got it about covered."

"Mind if I supervise anyway?"

"Sounds fine to me. Maybe they'll get a move on if you flash a badge. I'm pretty sure a couple of them have done some time. Hey! Be careful with that! I bought that for her myself! Get two people on it! C'mon! I thought you were professionals!"

Elliot rolled his eyes and stepped aside while Jonathan continued his accost of the movers. As they day worn on, Elliot oversaw the movers, occasionally turning into Jonathan when he noticed one of them sitting on her hope chest, carrying a box that read "Music" too loosely.

At ten minutest to two o'clock, Elliot turned around to see Jonathan staring at him. It was far different from previous occasions; no burning hatred or rage. Jonathan headed towards Elliot and while he wanted to pretend to look into something else to avoid Jonathan, Elliot stood his ground.

"Look," Jonathan said as he approached. "I, uh...I want to apologize to you...about the gun thing..."

Elliot shook his head. "Don't worry about it."

"No," Jonathan said. "I need to say this. I...I know myself and I know that I'm at a point in my life where I'm not likely to make any big changes in my personality. I also know that I'm never going to like you. We're never going to be golfing partners or bowling buddies. I don't see myself ever inviting you over to watch a basketball game outside of Olivia's presence either. However...I think I am big enough to admit, that while I'll never feel comfortable with you, you're still, uh... a good person, and I need to apologize about pulling that...on you."

"Seriously," Elliot said. "*Don't* worry about it. I probably would've reacted the same way."

Jonathan nodded that he understand and they fell silent for a moment, allowing the grunts from the movers to replace their voices.

"It's just..." Jonathan began again and Elliot suppressed a roll of his eyes. "That's just the kind of thing I'm sure Liv doesn't need to hear about right now, so if you could just..."

Elliot held up his hand. "I won't say anything. It'll just be our secret."

"Okay." Jonathan turned toward the movers who appeared to be dawdling on the truck.

"C'mon guys. I'd like to get this done, while I'm still *young*."

As the movers put the last of Olivia's belongings on the truck, Elliot stared at Jonathan for a while. Blue eyes, as intense as his own and made sharper by his jet-black hair, were inquisitive in every step the movers made, as everything they held was a part of Olivia. There was something else in his eyes. Something he saw mirrored in them when he saw Jonathan holding Olivia.

"Halloway," he said a few minutes later as Jonathan was sarcastically applauding the movers for "finally" getting their job done. "I thought you might want this back."

He tossed him the ring Jonathan had thrown across his coffee table nearly three months earlier. Jonathan looked at it for a moment as if trying to recollect its purpose.

"Yeah, well..." Jonathan said as he began to roll the ring in his hand. "I've been thinking about this whole thing...including the ring. So, I don't think I'll need it."

Elliot nodded wondering briefly what it would be like to have something worth several thousands of dollars fall out of existence and not having to care about it.

“You wanna keep it?” Jonathan said. “A little reminder of everything.”

“I’d rather not. Maybe give it as a Christmas present or something, eh?”

Jonathan smirked at him, gave a little wave and walked down the street to his car to guide the moving truck to his residence.

Elliot sat in his car for a moment before he rubbed a hand over his face and started his engine.

“I still say he’s a bastard,” he muttered aloud as he began his trek across the river.

\*\*\*\*\* stars

Woodside, New York

8:28PM

Elliot traced the base of his wine glass as Kathy took a sip from her own glass. They had been chatting lightly after dinner and a dark silence had fallen over the table.

Their children were each spending the evening with their respective friends and when he and Kathy had run out of things to say, Elliot prepared himself for the conversation they needed to have, but had tap danced around for two years.

“So, Katherine,” he began, catching her attention having not called her by her full name since they were in their twenties. “What’s it going to take to get you to tell me why I have to leave my family every night?”

Kathy pursed her lips and stared at the table.

“You never even gave me a reason, Kath,” he continued. “You just left. And we never talked about it.”

“We talked about it...”

“No, you said you were tired of me being angry all the time, but you never gave me a legitimate reason for leaving. You never even gave me the chance to change.”

“I-” Kathy began, but paused, wringing her hands on the table.

“Yes?”

“Elliot...I don’t know.”

“You don’t know? You don’t know why you walked out on twenty years of marriage? You don’t know why you took my children away from me? You don’t know why you served me with *divorce* papers?”

He was trying not to get angry, but her lack of a valid answer felt like impudence more than simple uncertainty.

“What did I do, Kathy? What could I have possibly done to drive you away like this?”

Kathy shook her head as her eyes grew wet. “I was alone, Elliot. I just felt so alone even though we were together.”

“That doesn’t make any sense to me.”

“Elliot, I’m forty-two years old and I don’t feel like I’ve lived a day. We got married so soon and then, everything was all about the kids. It’s like I never even had time to think, let alone figure out who I am.”

Elliot sighed and crossed his arms as she continued.

“And, then...when I took a second to look at my life...I saw that I was all alone.”

“Kath-”

“The kids are growing up...Maureen’s about to graduate from college, Kathleen’s...well she’s clearly left us and Lizzie and Dickie are following behind right the door. My whole life has been about the kids and now they’re all about to leave and I’m alone.”

“What do you mean you’re alone? We had each other.”

“Did we?” she asked, tears now welling on the brims of her eyes. “Elliot, I saw you for probably a total of two hours on any given day; when you kissed me goodbye, when you left for work and when you slipped back in the bed at three in the morning. My children were off living their own lives, my husband was at work all the time and I was all alone.”

“And this is the resolution you came up with?” Elliot said, his voice rising slightly. “To cure your loneliness, you just up and leave?”

Kathy sighed and put her head in her hands, but Elliot shook his head.

“This is not a reason to take everything from me. You and the kids were the only reason I could do my job; to put food on the damn table and keep a roof over our heads!”

“Oh, don’t give me that bullshit!” she yelled. “Nothing made you stay in that unit! You could’ve done anything with the NYPD, but no. You had to stay with the one unit that kept you up night every single night; that kept you away from your family for every holiday, every birthday, every special event in their lives. You made a decision long ago about what was more important to you and you chose the job. So, don’t you dare tell me that you worked so hard for me and the kids! I don’t need you to lie to me.”

“Then why don’t you tell me the truth! You’re giving me all this garbage about being lonely, but *you* left *me*. You brought this loneliness on yourself!”

She ran her fingers through her hair as an errant tear ran down her face. “I left,” she began softly, “because I needed time to think...away from you.”

Elliot shook his head and stood from his chair. He had had enough for one night. As he began to walk out of the kitchen, Kathy called back to him.

“There was someone else!”

He stopped mid step and tried to breathe, yet it felt like someone had knocked the wind out of him. He closed his eyes as his heart wretched and he slowly turned around to face her. Tears were now streaming down her face, but impassiveness waved through him instead of attrition for his wife’s pain.

“It was just once and I just kissed him, but I knew...I knew if I had gone so far to allow another man to kiss me, our marriage had deteriorated more than either of us really knew.”

With his legs growing weak and bile gathering at the back of his throat, Elliot slumped back into the chair at the table.

“Elliot,” she continued. “Do you remember when we met?”

Despondent, Elliot shook his head slightly as he stared at the table.

“I remember like it was yesterday. You were walking across the park in that uniform, that dark blue uniform...and one of my girlfriends pointed you out as you were coming toward us. You looked so good. Everything about you, from the way every curve of your body moved under that uniform to the curves of your face. God, Elliot. You smiled at me and your eyes were just...it seemed like we were the only two people in the world.”

Elliot closed his eyes and rubbed his temples unable to see the moment of which Kathy spoke, his ears still deafened by the words "someone else."

"When he...when he leaned over to kiss me and I didn't back away, I was expecting that moment again. I wanted him to be you, looking at me the way you did that day. I wanted us to be back where we were, but when he kissed me, I knew that was never going to happen. What we had was just gone. Instead of the beautiful person who tipped his white hat to me as he passed, you had become this cold shell of human being who had seen too much in too short a time...and I couldn't live with *him* anymore."

Elliot ran a hand over his face, utterly astounded by what she had said. A full minute's silence passed over them, though it felt like an eternity.

"So," he finally said. "What do I do to fix this?"

"*I* need to work through this."

"No, you said, *I've* turned into someone that you can't live with. What can *I* do to fix this?"

She stared at him for a long time. "Come to dinner tomorrow night. Just like you've been doing. I want us to just get back to where you used to be."

Elliot nodded his head and stood, his eyes fixed on hers. Their soft blue-green depths were blurred by her own tears and the image of how she appeared the day he first saw her floated to mind.

He sighed, grabbed his jacket from the couch and left.

"Elliot?" Kathy called, but he refused to stop.

Once in his car, his hand reached for the key in the ignition, but he paused not knowing where he could go. The first person who came to mind was Olivia, but he crossed her out of mind as he pictured her snuggled against Jonathan Holloway in her hospital room. He could not want to face his brother; Bryce suddenly seemed to be the least sympathetic person in the world and as he ran down a short list of co-workers and acquaintances and sighed.

*She's right. We really are alone.*

He opted for spending the evening drowning his thoughts in scotch and headed home.

When he approached his building, he spotted a familiar face waiting on the stoop.

"I thought you were done with me," he said.

Diana shook her head. "I was...am...I don't know. I've been hearing things on the news and a lot of times they mention you. I thought I'd be able to just shake you off, but I...as it turns out, I end up thinking about you more often than not. And lately, I can't seem to figure out why the only person I want is chasing after two people who don't seem to want him."

She focused her gaze on the black sky and he could see that her eyes were wet like the last time he had seen her.

"How long have you been here?"

"A while," she said nodding her head. "It only occurred to me in the last ten minutes that I didn't know what the hell you did on your Saturdays since we'd never spent one together."

He took a seat next to her on the stoop. "Well...I'm normally working a case. So, I couldn't tell you what I do on Saturdays either."

"What *have* you been doing?"

“Having dinner with my kids before they all went rushing out to live their own lives.”

“Don’t I know how that feels...”

“Also had a nice long talk with my ex.”

“And how did that go?”

“Could’ve gone better. A lot better.”

“Well, I’m sorry about that. I really am.”

He shrugged. “What do you have to be sorry for, Diana? It’s like you said. She doesn’t seem to want me.”

“What did she have to say?”

“Other than that she left me because she was about to start seeing someone else...she wants to basically take it slow.”

“How slow is slow?”

“That’s a good question. We’re already going so slow, we’re going backwards. Honestly, I don’t know what else she wants from me. At this rate, I’m gonna end up dying alone.”

Diana turned toward him putting her hand on his knee. “Elliot...don’t say things like that. You don’t...you know you don’t have to be alone.”

Elliot stared into her shining eyes for a moment and five minutes later, they were in his bedroom. He took hold of her and made love to her like he had wanted to make love to a woman for months, allowing his every frustration to melt away with every kiss, every touch and every sigh.

His eyes slowly opened several hours later at the feel of something moving in his bed and sudden cold.

“Hey,” he said sitting up in the bed. “Where are you going?”

Diana was dressed and was preparing to walk out the door.

“This way, *I* get to leave *you*.”

He played the events of the past week through his head and stifled the urge to reach out for her. “What if I don’t want you to go?”

She sighed. “You can’t have it both ways, Elliot. You can’t tell me that I was just something to ease the pain and then tell me that you want me. It doesn’t work like that.”

“Why not? People can have a change of heart.”

“Not you. As corny as it might sound, your heart belongs to someone else.”

“What about you?”

“Me? As for me...I just needed closure.”

She walked to the bedroom door, but paused. “I would’ve been good to you, Elliot. No drama. No bullshit. Just love. You remember that if things don’t work out.”

As she left, he laid back in his bed with his mind wiped of thought. A vision of Olivia floated to mind after several minutes of staring at his ceiling and he remembered what she looked right after she had hugged him in the locker so many months earlier. For just a brief moment, she was his.

*I’m the one who was there through it all and she’s with Holloway.*

He let out a long sigh as the vision changed and he saw Olivia the way she appeared the night he found out Kathleen’s secret. She had looked so scared of him and Andrea’s words, “I am not afraid of you,” suddenly took on new meaning. Olivia’s face melted into Kathleen’s on the same who turned into Dickie.

Kathleen and Dickie were so much alike and so much alike him that it hurt. Both were headstrong and stubborn, but easily susceptible to let downs, just like their father. Dickie turned into Lizzie who, in turn, became Maureen who eventually became Kathy.

When she left him, he had no one and when he was ready to reach out to Olivia, she had someone else in her life. They had had four children together and he could remember no other life before he had her with him. The idea of becoming angry over the slightest brush of infidelity seemed laughable as he considered the number of times when he had been more or less prepared to rip off Olivia's clothes not four months earlier. One small jingle was all that kept him from stepping into the depths of an affair.

Elliot shifted as the moonlight poured through his blinds. He had Olivia had never had a conversation akin to the one he had had with Kathy regarding their relationship and with each minute that passed, it looked less likely it was going to happen. A choice needed to be made; one would make half a dozen people happy for years to come while the other left those same people in a state shock, hurt, anger and regret.

Reaching across the bed, he set his alarm clock earlier enough to take a morning run, but also have to time to make it to church.

*Well*, he thought. *Halloway's a good enough guy most...some...a part of the time...*

## Chapter Thirty

Monday May 14, 2007

East 72<sup>nd</sup> Street and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue

Huffing slightly as she pushed her hands against her wheels, Olivia slowly made her way up the ramp that led toward the doors that consisted of a lattice of glass and wood. Jonathan stepped patiently behind her in case her arms grew weak too quickly, though she had told repeatedly that she was "fine." The ramp had been forced on the building when one of the tenants had complained years earlier, but even after the Americans with Disabilities Act had been passed. Olivia was glad the ramp had already been installed before she arrived. The last thing she wanted was to draw more attention to herself.

At first it was simply the points and stares of those who had either seen her picture in the paper or on the news that caught her off guard. One twenty-something girl actually came up to Olivia and asked for her autograph, calling Olivia her hero. Many of the passing tenants in Jonathan's co-op seemed very interested to at least see "the woman who saved herself from her kidnapper," also known as "the cop that the youngest of the Halloways is seeing."

Then, came the reporters who wished to know how she was doing and constantly pressed for her to give a statement regarding Mark, and then on the boys, and then on Kreider and then on Morse, and then on Elliot and Morse's tape. She had been open to the idea the previous day, but the longer the questions came, the more she realized what a toll the last four months had had on her body. Within a few hours,

she tired and irritable and pushed away the very mention of speaking to the press. Later that night, she ran a high fever and was delirious from the exertion. Dr. Weiss feared that she would have need to stay another few nights to ensure she did not catch pneumonia again, but Olivia, intent on not spending another week in the hospital, faked her way through several tests saying parts did not hurt when they ached and that she did not feel cold when she was nearly shivering even though temperature in the room was causing the others to break into a sweat. Maya, feeling that chocolate was some magic panacea, had spent the better part of the evening handing Olivia piece after piece until she had regained some colour to her face.

She had planned on spending the day preparing herself to testify at Mark's sentencing trial, but between her health and the fact that Mark's lawyer won his motion to preclude her as a witness since she had not seen anything and could not be sworn as a verifiable witness, Olivia spent most of the day trying to keep her body from non-stop shivering.

Her hand pressed against the wheel of her chair, but she lacked the strength to push the chair forward on the elevated ramp. Her body's vigor had been spent trying to keep from coughing up her lungs throughout the morning and with a final sigh, Olivia resigned to allow Jonathan to push her for the rest of the journey into the building.

Several minutes and ten floors later, the elevator doors opened on the eleventh floor and, as her arms had regained some vivacity during her short rest, Olivia pushed herself down the hall toward the last of the four apartments on the floor. Her nerves prickled at the thought of not only being in the building, but the aspect of living within. She had visited Jonathan's apartment sparingly throughout their relationship, and as he unlocked the door, she wondered if she had rushed into living with him.

"Okay," he said standing in the doorway. "I wanted to really wait until tomorrow, but I suppose one day won't hurt."

She narrowed her eyes at him, but with a curious smirk on her face. "What have you done now?"

"Just got you a little something."

She wheeled into the apartment and down the foyer, and then grabbed her wheels to come to sliding halt. The sitting room had a large Oriental rug that stretched from the fireplace to the opening of the room and touched every piece of furniture except for something large that stood in the corner.

When Olivia had first noticed it, the object appeared to be nothing more than an expanse of black, but her skin tingled as her focused on the baby grand piano and she rolled toward it with her mouth gaping. The rich ebony of the forty-thousand-dollar instrument glinted across the room as sunlight spread through the large windows on the far wall of the sitting room and she gasped as she ran a hand across it; the cool polished wood of the Bösendorfer feeling akin to soft skin beneath her finger tips.

"I'd searched through some of my grandfather's houses," Jonathan said, "looking through all his instruments hoping to find something that would be perfect for you, but nothing seemed right. Then a friend of a friend of a friend told me about this one

and...well, I just imagined the look on your face when you saw and I knew this was it.”

Olivia clapped a hand to her mouth as a single tear made a daring escape from her eye and she smiled at him trying to keep its brothers at bay. It was the single most exquisite gift she had ever received in her life.

“Happy Birthday, Olivia,” he said and was forced to bend down as Olivia had thrown both of her arms around his neck.

A moment later, she had shifted out of her chair and onto the piano bench and took a deep breath as she lifted the key cover to take in the odor of the wood. It felt like it had a life of its own.

“You’ll have to learn to play now,” she said as Jonathan sat beside her.

He rubbed a hand over her back as she brushed her fingers over the pristine ivory keys.

“Well, I’ve already got such a good teacher, I suppose I’ll get the hang of it by the time I’m sixty.”

They laughed together and Olivia threw her arms around him as they shared a long kiss.

The next day, Jonathan showed that he had pulled out all stops for her birthday. At first she protested, but Maya, having come to join the festivities early on in the morning, insisted that they needed to throw her a party since they had worried if she would even live to see her next birthday. Maya helped Olivia into the beautiful black dress she had bought for her, proclaiming that it was “simply fabulous” the entire time.

Jonathan had arranged a grandiose birthday dinner for her at a classy restaurant in Midtown and almost every person she knew in the city was in attendance. She nearly burst into tears as Jonathan made a toast for her and she could see the many faces of all the people who cared about her, smiling and toasting her health in unison.

When she and Jonathan returned home, Olivia changed clothes and they prepared to settle into the rest of a quiet evening.

“Okay, Liv,” Jonathan said, handing her a wine glass. “Which are we going to have? I think 1989 was a good year for the Sauternes, but I’ve been kind of slacking in my wine connoisseur-ship, so I’m not entirely sure.”

“How about something lighter? I’d really just enjoy a glass of some sparkling white grape juice if you had any.”

Jonathan gave an exaggerated roll of his eyes in false exasperation. “The *one* thing I haven’t got a drop in the whole apartment.”

“It’s okay,” she said laughing.

“Nay, I say! You sit tight and comfortable, it’s your birthday after all, and I’ll run out and to grab some.”

“You really don’t have to.”

“Nope. For your birthday, you get every single thing you want.” He bent and kissed her hand, erupting a fit of giggles from her. “I’ll be back in a bit.”

Olivia turned on the television once he had gone, fumbling with the remote control for a bit as it was so different from her own that now lived in their bedroom. She turned on *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* and had coursed through some of the extra items on the DVD, when the telephone near her rang.

"Benson," she said automatically.

"Yes. Hello Miss Benson," a high-strung woman's voice echoed through the phone.

"There is a Detective Elliot Stabler here demanding that he be let up."

"Oh, absolutely," she said. "Can I add him to a list or something?"

"That won't be a problem, ma'am. Thank you."

She hoisted herself onto her arms and into her chair and was showing Elliot her new piano minutes later after he had hugged her in the hall.

She hoisted herself onto her arms and into her chair and greeted Elliot at the door minutes.

"You just can't get enough of me, can you?" she said as she hugged him.

"You're right. I can't, but I needed to bring you something."

"No...I'm too old for gifts."

"Yeah, whatever," he said and pulled a long, thin package wrapped in "Happy Birthday" wrapping paper from out in the corridor to hand to her.

"What's this?"

"Well, why don't you open it and see."

She flashed him a suspicious smirk and tore the wrappings of the package to reveal a plain brown box. Opening one end, she allowed the inside package to slide into her lap and gasped.

The Alfred Knoll case caught the light of the hallway and shined as she slowly picked it up to admire it.

"Are you even going to take it out of its case?" Elliot said.

"I will, I just...It's a new bow...I haven't played in months."

"I know and I remembered that your last one kind of snapped in two because of me and I figured you had this coming."

She opened the case and smiled. The bow had a twinkle to it and she felt a spark in the room as her heart longed to play the instrument that stood on the other side of the sitting room.

"I just hope Holloway hadn't bought you one yet."

"No, he hasn't. I don't think he might've known it was broken, but even if he did he wouldn't have...known exactly which one to get. How did you know?"

He shrugged and grinned. "I went to a music store, told the owner what you were like and we sifted through them for a bit before I found something we thought would suit."

"Oh, Elliot..." She opened her arms, beckoning him and he bent to hug her again.

"What did Holloway get you because I know he had to've gotten you something big."

"Yeah, that is his style, isn't it? Follow me a second."

He did as told, passed the living room with her and stopped short at the opening to living room as he gazed at the massive piano that gleamed in the far corner.

Elliot let out a breath. "Wow...Ten grand?"

"He won't tell me, but I know it's a least forty."

"Wow, Liv." He broke into a smile. "You're a Holloway now."

She gave him a playful nudge and moved onto the bench. "Sit down. How long has it been since you last played?"

"I played a week ago actually."

"Well, good. So, you can play with me. What are we playing?"

"I've got nothing," he said as he sat on the bench next to her. "Besides, you're the musician here. You pick something."

"All right then. How much do you remember Chopin?"

"Who? Chop-in?"

She nudged him again and smiled. "The...tenth opus, 'kay? Number one. That's in C."

"No, that's in A."

"Number twenty-five is in A. We're doing ten."

"Ah, gotcha, but I can't play that. Never could."

"Well, you play the low parts and I'll play the rest and we'll make a duet out of it."

He nodded and set his left hand on the piano keys. Olivia winked at him and they both began to play. It seemed slightly ridiculous at first as Olivia's fingers flew over the keys in the song, while he played the lower tones that were held for two or four counts each and eventually he broke the tune into one of Chopin's first nocturnes in the seventy-second opus, causing Olivia to smile at the new minor key in E.

"You're gonna bring me down, Elliot and it's my birthday," she said as she slowed her hands and played the soprano notes of the song.

"All right. Well, I'll switch up. How's Debussy?"

"Only Chopin."

"Debussy, it is."

Elliot moved closer to her to play the beginning notes to Clare de Lune and moved closer as she joined the piece. At one point, he had to reach an arm around her to play the harmony as Olivia, but never retreated to regain the distance once the part had finished. As the song fell from its climax and reached its harmonious end, Elliot and Olivia were nearly sitting on top of one another.

She turned toward him in the silence and they simply stared; each staring into the other's eyes as if searching for the slightest glimmer or hint of what the other was thinking. For a moment, Olivia imagined her hands moving toward him and though neither knew it, Elliot thought the same. Olivia parted her lips to speak to him, but Elliot broke the contact and rose from the bench.

"It's getting late," he said. "I should probably go. Besides, I'm sure if Halloway catches me playing on your new birthday present, he'll shit a brick."

"Jonathan," she corrected.

"Yes, of course. Jonathan." He smiled at her for a moment, before bending down to hug her. "Goodnight, Liv."

"G'night."

As he left the apartment, he heard Olivia begin the nocturne in E minor again and had half a mind to step back into the apartment and finished what he had started when the elevator doors opened to present Jonathan staring intently at the label of a large glass bottle.

"Halloway," Elliot said quickly, shutting the door behind him. "I was just leaving."

Hey," Jonathan said not at all surprised to see him. "She said she wanted white grape juice instead of champagne or wine, but I didn't know which one to get. Which one of these do you think she'll like?"

He held up three bottles and Elliot picked the one in the middle.

“Thanks,” Jonathan said. “Here. You want these other two? I’m going have a time pretending I nonchalantly chose the right one if I’ve got two others stuffed in my pockets.”

“Yeah, I’ll take them off your hands.”

Elliot stepped onto the elevator a moment later and as the doors began to close he heard Jonathan yell out an obviously false, but witty “Honey, I’m home!” causing him to shake his head as he mumbled to himself.

“Still a bastard...”

\*\*\*\* stars

Thursday May 17, 2007

McGhenty’s Bar and Grill

West 49<sup>th</sup> Street and 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue

“Hey! What do we have to do to get another round over here!”

Alexa had stood on her bar stool at the table and shouted toward the scattering servers in the bar. The atmosphere in the bar was nothing, but light-hearted and the elation was steadily growing as the drinks kept pouring into the night.

Mark Aaron Landon had that morning been sentenced to three life sentences and also one hundred and twelve years, yet the majority of the crowd would not have minded if it was only one life sentence. Imprisonment for the rest of his life, toward many of the officers in the bar, seemed more than what Mark Landon deserved, but as the death penalty had been recently deemed “cruel and unusual punishment” it was the best sentence possible.

A tall server approached the long table carrying several pitchers on a tray and struggled to set the pitchers on the table without dropping the whole lot. As soon as the pitchers hit the table, they were dispersed by a tangle of hands.

“Drink up, everybody!” Jonathan said as he stood next to Olivia’s chair. “I’m buying for everybody. Anybody who’s wearing a badge, and you too Maya and Jill.”

“That’s the least you could do,” Fin said shaking his head, but smirking. “After the way you were to us.”

Jonathan grinned wildly. “Hey! I’m an ass. I know it. Let me fill up your mug.”

Olivia rolled her eyes as Jonathan reached to re-fill Fin and Munch’s beers and caught sight of Elliot sitting at the other end of the table talking to Andrea. She had wanted to say something to the jury at Mark’s sentencing, but that morning she had awakened feeling less than healthy and by the time they arrived at the courthouse, she could barely sit upright in her chair without Jonathan’s help. Thankfully, Elliot had been able to speak to the jury before they left to deliberate on Mark’s sentence and he nearly brought her to tears with his speech.

\*\*\* stars

“I work in Manhattan’s Special Victims Unit,” he said staring at each of the twelve, stoic jury members. “And, in all my time with the unit, I’ve seen some horrifying things. Children hurt, men and woman raped, people attacked to the point that

they'll never lead normal lives again. Mark Landon is probably the most depraved, amoral person in this room, but it's a fact that he's not the worst of the lot and there's probably more where he came from. So, I'm not going to stand here in front of you all and tell you that he's the worst criminal who's committed the worst crimes I've ever seen. He's not. That's just the way the city is. But, I *am* here to paint a picture of his crimes to you so that when you think about how long he should spend behind bars, you'll know exactly what kind of monster is sitting in that chair across the room."

He paused and pointed toward Olivia.

"The woman in the wheelchair over there is my partner. She hasn't been back to work in months and you all know why. Years ago, her mother lived in an apartment in the village across from Mark Landon and he became obsessed with her because, as he says, he didn't have a mother and he naturally latched onto her. When my partner, Detective Olivia Benson, moved into that same apartment, Landon just shifted his focus onto her instead. He watched on her video tapes he installed after breaking into her apartment and then he stalked her. He obsessed over her and when the obsession grew too great, he kidnapped her, an officer, tried to assault her and when she fought back, he *sold* her to someone who then hurt her for days and days. Because of Mark Landon, my partner, my *friend*, Olivia Benson gets around the city in a wheelchair while she's re-learning how to walk and that's when she's not too sick to do so.

"She takes medications daily just to get her body back to a tenth of where she used to be, not to mention the ones she takes for seizures now. She didn't have them before Landon burst through her apartment door and took her down with some concoction he brewed in his sink for the sole purpose of attacking someone he knew could kick his ass if she was healthy. Together Olivia and I have chased down murderers, rapists and child molesters and look at her now. Look at her. Today, she's too sick to push her own wheelchair."

Elliot picked up the three glossy images that he had set on the railing that encased the entranced jury.

"See these three boys? Ryan Daly, Andrew Shaw and Zachary Calbrach. Ryan Daly was walking home one night, minding his business, when Mark Landon attacked him. Landon beat him, raped him, strangled him to death and then left him in a box for some curious runner to find. The same thing happened to Andrew Shaw, but as I'm sure you've seen throughout the trial, Landon is nothing short of a bigot and he took out the rage he has against blacks and Jews and anyone else he thinks has corrupted his world in some way and he attacked Andrew Shaw to the point that he was nearly unrecognizable to his family. Andrew Shaw, like Ryan Daly, was just going home one night and Landon took it upon himself to attack. Same thing happened to Zachary Calbrach as well, but he survived. Landon was a little too hasty to finish what he was doing and Zachary lived to point out exactly who had snatched him off the street, poisoned him with the same substance used on Olivia Benson, raped him repeatedly and tried to strangle him to death.

"Now, you've listened to hours of testimony and you came back with a guilty verdict for Landon and for that I'm thankful, but I know what's going through your minds right now as you consider an appropriate sentence for him. Each of you is

probably wondering “why.” Why would someone do something like this? Why are there two boys dead and two people scarred for life because of Mark Landon? I know what you’re thinking because I stood in my precinct and asked the same question and was...horrificed when I learned the truth.”

He sighed and let silence fall over the room as every eye in the courtroom was fixed on him.

“Mark Aaron Landon kidnapped a cop and when he couldn’t handle her, he sold her to somebody he expected to kill her. He cleaned up most of the evidence and wiped away any trace that he had been focused on her, but what he didn’t count on is how much cops look after their own. Detective Benson is a seasoned officer of the NYPD and myself, along with every other cop available, pulled out all stops to find her. And, when he realized this...When he saw that we were bearing down on him, about to find out what he had done, he took note of one of the cases Detective Benson was working on and murdered a young boy just to take the heat off of himself. You have to admit, it worked. For weeks, we thought that we were dealing with a copycat of a killer that Olivia had helped put away and just like he wanted, most of the focus shifted off of her and onto Ryan Daly and then Andrew Shaw. But, he screwed up. Olivia Benson saved herself from the guy he sold her to and he knew it was only a matter of time before we all knew what he had done. He sat in our interrogation room and spilled his whole story because he knew. He knew exactly what he had done and he knew exactly where he was going.

“Today, we all know just what kind of sociopath Mark Landon is. He attacked a cop, beat a twelve-year-old boy to within an inch of his life and murdered two others all because his neighbor across the way didn’t like him the way he thought she should.

“I don’t want any of you to feel sorry for Landon when you go back to deliberate. I know he’s fed all of you a bunch of bull about his upbringings and how he was trying to save people from themselves. Don’t buy into it. Mark Aaron Landon willfully and purposefully murdered two young boys. Twelve-year-olds! Just babies...He killed them and destroyed the lives of two other people. If there was ever someone who deserved to spend every minute of his life in a cell, Landon is it and I trust all of you to make the right decision.”

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“You ready for a re-fill?” Jillian asked brightly.

Olivia broke out of her reverie and smiled at her friend. “Sure, why not? It’s not like you’ll have to worry about trying to carry me home tonight.”

“Well,” Jillian said. “At this rate, we might all be piling onto the chair just to get into a cab.”

Olivia laughed and allowed the refreshing liquid to splash down her throat. The celebration went on for hours and the owner even kept the bar open for another hour as mumbled sayings of “Get home safe” and “You better not call out sick tomorrow!” wafted through the air near three o’clock in the morning.

As Jonathan paid the hefty tab with his platinum American Express card, Olivia laughed in a half drunken, half sober state of consciousness while Maya tried to find a cab for her and Amit. The festivities had been long and kept an effervescent beat throughout the night that made Olivia glow when she thought about how far she had come through the entire ordeal with Mark. He was convicted and would never spend another moment outside of a jail.

In comparison with jury deliberations that went on for hours or sometimes days, the jury in Mark Landon's case came back with their sentence in just forty-seven minutes.

\*\*\*\* stars

Friday June 1, 2007  
6:38PM

Elliot stepped down the hall in a light-hearted mood that seemed odd considering the new case he had caught the previous night. In the past month, he had watched his eldest child walk across the stage with her Hudson University diploma in hand, had spent nearly every evening having dinner with his family, though he and Kathy had reprised their former dialogue, and was very surprised to hear that he had gotten his wish in regards to Mark Landon.

"It went down on the bus to Sing Sing," Fin had said.

"Really? What happened?" he had asked.

"They're still piecing it together, but apparently people were messing with Landon because of his size, some words were exchanged and a racial was said and the next thing anybody knew, Landon was dead and nobody knew how it happened.

"More rats in the woodpile," he said and the thought of it seemed to bolster his steps more as he approached the large door at the end of the corridor.

When Maya answered the door of Jonathan, and now Olivia's apartment, both he and Maya seemed caught off guard to see one another.

"Hey there," she said.

"Hi. Is Liv in?"

"Course she is. Do you think I'd just be hanging out with Jonathan if she wasn't?"

"No, I guess not," Elliot said as he stepped through the doorway.

He and Maya stared at one another for a moment, somewhat awkward, though Elliot could not understand why. Her eyes darted toward the large envelope he carried in his left hand and she appeared inquisitive, yet she did not question it.

"Son of bitch!" Olivia's voice rang, floating into the hallway and causing them both to break into smiles.

"Maya, this is crap," she called again. "Who's at the door?"

Maya walked down the hall and stared at Olivia, who sat in the living room, with her hand on her hip. "What am I, your doorman?"

"Yep," Olivia said, "and you're the maid too since she's gone for the day. Could you make me a tea? Please?"

Maya rolled her eyes, but left in the direction of the kitchen. Elliot quietly walked into the large living room to see Olivia playing a fishing game on a Wii. She flung the controller outward and moved it about for a moment before coming up empty handed.

"Just crap," she mumbled.

Elliot snickered. "Hard at work, I see."

She whipped her head around and smiled at him. "Well, I start back with Computer Crimes on the twenty-fifth and I'm just resting up before then. It's hard being a lady of leisure."

"Why don't you get your own tea then?"

"Meh. She hasn't done anything all day anyway."

"I heard that!" Maya called from the kitchen and they both laughed.

"What brings you this way?" Olivia asked.

He shrugged. "Nothing specific. Just wanting to see how you were doing."

"I'm fine," she said as she turned off the game. "What have you got with you?"

"Case file for my most recent case."

"Just *my* case? What happened to Alexa?"

"She's gone."

"Is that so?"

"Yeah, Andrea won the pot. It was up to almost a grand."

"What happened? Was it a case or did she just push back from her desk and leave?"

"The little girl we found on Monday, I suppose. She looked just like Alexa. Same red hair, brown eyes, freckles and everything. She took one look at the girl and she was done. I found her crying in the crib and by the end of the day Wednesday, Cragen said she was gone."

"Wow. Well, we all knew it was going to happen."

"I just wish I'd've gotten in on that pot. Andrea's been gloating non-stop for the past two days."

Olivia smirked at the thought, but then stared at him. "When's Cragen going to approve my coming back?"

"He says his hands are tied by the deputy inspector."

"I'm not asking to go out on assignment in the damn chair."

"Liv, he says his hands are tied."

"I could just answer phones. Do some grunt work."

"You're preaching to the choir, Olivia. I'd like you back. I'd *love* you back. First thing I'd have you do is write up some of this stuff up for me, but the Cap says his hands are tied and it's all up to Felton."

"Well, it's crap. My mind is turning into mush as we speak."

"Probably because you're playing video games all day."

"Hey! I'm playing video games *now*. Maya and I just had a harrowing game of Scrabble a little while ago, didn't we Maya?"

"Sure did!" she called from the kitchen. "Livia cheats!"

"I do not!"

"Whatever," Maya said popping her head out from around the corner. "Since when do people spell out 'consanguineous' and land on the damn Triple Word Score."

"She's just mad 'cause she can't spell."

"I heard that too," Maya called, having stepped back into the kitchen. Elliot laughed as he shook his head. "How's the therapy been coming?" "Good!"

She shifted on the couch and set on feet on the floor. Over the course of a minute, Olivia pushed herself upward using the back of the couch and her chair that sat next to the sofa. Elliot could barely hold back the genial laughter that was brewing in his throat as Olivia pushed and pulled herself into a standing position and then allowed herself to flop back onto the couch.

"That's not good," he said. "That's amazing."

Olivia grinned on the sofa, proud of her accomplishment. "Finally got myself up yesterday. Dr. Weiss is very confident. He thinks I'll be shuffling along on braces by the end of the month."

"God, Liv... That is so great. I couldn't be happier."

"Me either. 'Cept I wish I had something else to do right now aside from think about it. Let me see the case you're working on and don't feed me that 'hands are tried' bull."

He sat beside her and pulled several items out of the large envelope.

"There was a woman found by the East River not too far from where Andrew Shaw was found. She showed signs of severe sexual trauma and we're thinking she might be a struggling model or on the pipe because she extremely thin."

"Any word on a name yet?"

"No. Melinda's running her prints to see if she can come up with something and--"

Elliot stopped as he noticed the immediate change in Olivia's demeanor. She had clapped a hand to her mouth, her body was shaking and tears were streaming down her face.

"Liv...?"

"Oh my God," she whispered and the tears fell harder.

"Olivia, what's wrong?"

The images of the crime scene that lay in her lap vibrated as her whole body shook and she put her other hand to her forehead. Tears were coming out of her eyes so quickly they looked like rushing water.

Elliot pulled her into a hug and rubbed her back.

"It's too soon, Liv. I know. I'm sorry."

"No," she said sniffing and pushing away from him. "It's her...it's her...I can't believe... Oh God, it's her..."

Maya came running into the room and knelt in front of Olivia who quickly collapsed onto her shoulders. Maya glared at him with a look that read "What did you do to her?"

"I can't believe it's her," Olivia repeated as tears fell from her eyes and onto Maya's shirt.

"Who, Livia? Who did you see?"

Olivia let go of Maya and stared at Elliot with large wet eyes. "I need to see her. I need to see her right now."

Within thirty minutes, Elliot stood just behind Olivia as she slowly rolled closer to the window beyond which was Melinda who, standing with a grim expression on her face, was prepared to pull away the sheet that lay across a long thin body. Olivia

tried twice to come to a stand, but when she struggled, Elliot stepped around the chair and held her upright.

She pressed a hand to the glass to steady herself and nodded. Melinda nodded in return and quickly pulled the sheet away from the victim's face.

Olivia turned and crumpled into her chair as Elliot wrapped his arms around her and Melinda covered the woman's face again.

"It's okay, Liv," Elliot said. Olivia cried into his chest and Melinda came around the corner several minutes later, shaking her head.

"Do you know her, Liv?" he asked softly and Olivia nodded as she untangled herself from him.

"Amy..." she gasped. "Her name is Amy. Amy Kettering."

"How do you know her?"

"She was...there. She was in the place with the other three...and him. Oh my God! I can't believe she's dead." She fell back into Elliot's arms again. "I couldn't save her Elliot. I tried so hard, but I couldn't save her. She wouldn't come with me! I tried so hard...It's like Evelyn all over again."

Elliot allowed her to weep openly for the next twenty minutes and then pushed her into Melinda's office where she was able to recount every detail of her immuration.

She could clearly remember the darkness that overwhelmed every room, the other women "he" had been using and how they reacted to her, the room with all the dead faces and how Amy looked when she showed Olivia that she had broken through her chains. She could also remember him in great detail; a man, tall and pale with floppy blond hair. Elliot's thoughts made an immediate jump to the DVDs that had been handed to him months earlier and the woman's face melted into the old image of a healthy Amy Kettering.

Memories flooded back to Olivia as she cried and she spoke more about how "he" had come at her with a cheap gun, how she was able to later defend herself with it and continuously reiterated that there were three others that she could not help.

Elliot eventually brought Olivia home where she cried on his shoulder for the rest of the night as Jonathan hovered in the hallway peeking his head into the room every once in a while. By the time he left the East Side, it was nearly morning and stopped at the precinct to tell Cragen would Olivia remembered.

"I'm sure we could get her talk to a sketch artist a little later," Elliot said. "We should have face for him by the end of the day."

"Yeah," Cragen said. "Now, it's just a matter of figuring out who he is."

"Well, between the DVDs and Liv's description..."

"But, if what she's saying is true, this guy has been murdering women for years and he could be anywhere."

"With a face though?"

"We had most of his face with just the DVDs." Cragen shook his head and sighed. "A face isn't going to help us find him."

"But, he's got to be in the city."

"Where, though?"

"Liv was found on East 90<sup>th</sup>."

"But we searched the area. Two of the surrounding buildings have been locked and boarded up from the outside and the rest of them were completely empty."

“She had to fallen out of a window somewhere. You know how badly she was hurt.”  
“But, we still have a problem with where, Elliot. I agree that she fell, but we can’t say she fell on 90<sup>th</sup>. We can even say she fell in the city. From what it sounds like, she was kept in some kind of warehouse, fell and was *put* in that dumpster.”  
“CSU found glass all around there.”  
“But, they didn’t find any other evidence, did they?”  
Elliot ran a hand over his head and sighed.  
“Look,” Cragen said. “I want to find the guy, too. How’s Olivia doing? Do you think she’ll be ready to give an actual statement later today?”  
“Maybe, but she was still in bad shape when I left.”  
“Well, we need to question her. As bad as it sounds, we need to treat her like a vic and get as much out of her possible.”  
“You know she’s not gonna like being treated like a victim, Cap.”  
“It doesn’t matter, Elliot. She’ll get over it. She’ll understand, just like you need to. There’s a killer on the loose. Now, Liv got out. She escaped, but this girl, Amy Kettering, didn’t and from what I’m hearing, there are three others out there somewhere that are in the same amount of danger. We just need to find out who this guy is. We need to find him.”

\*\*\*\* stars

### Unknown Time and Place

It was all falling apart; every single thing.  
She had started it. Of that he was sure. None of these problems had ever happened previously and it still stunned him that she had gotten away from him. Like some kind of bad dream.  
He had not done any work in weeks because of the constant disruptions. The others, instead of lying still and allowing him to do what was needed, had taken to assaulting him when he approached. The first had gone and the second had to be disposed, but remaining three were becoming far more trouble to keep than they were worth.  
Pacing in front of the door, he stopped for a moment, listening to whispers coming from within the room where he kept them. Never before had there been whispers; only the sounds of crying and screams.  
It was the redhead this time. He knew it. Ever since his old favorite had been scrapped, the red-haired one had taken up her place and had been enticing the other two into more rambunctious antics.  
The last time he had approached the room, they had tried to jump on him at the same time, but he quelled the rebellion with re-emergence of his silver gun that glowed even through the darkness. Everything fell back onto the primordial escapee. If he could just have her back, the rest would stop pestering him so.  
The whispers stopped and he heard a series of shifting behind the door. Fearing the worst, he unlocked the door and stepped into the black room, his eyes searching for the three.  
“Now!”

The sound came from the redhead and at once, all three ran to him from separate directions. They scratched and bit at him, each trying to pull him toward the ground, but he had learned one thing from his lesson with the officer. He grabbed the black one by the hair and twisted and turned until he gained enough centrifugal force to propel her into the wall. The white one immediately withdrew to the far corner of the room and rolled herself into a tearful ball.

“C’mon!” the redhead yelled. “We can do it just like she did!”

He shook his head and clenched one hand around her throat as he dragged her to the darkened corridor. Cars honked and tires rolled across the pavement outside the building and the redhead’s eyes widened in terror as he pulled out his weapon of choice and aimed it directly at her head.

Her mouth formed the beginning of the word “no” as he pulled the trigger repeatedly into her face. The bullets formed a gaping hole in what used to be her face and the body fell into a quivering mass on the floor with a ray of dark blood stretching out from where she had once stood.

He glanced toward the other two that sat crying with one another in the far corner and even pointed the Smith and Wesson at the pair, yet did not pull the trigger. Perhaps the smell of gun powder commingled with coagulating blood and various innards would keep them in line until he acquired others. Then, he would get rid of them as well.

There was still the matter of the cop. The one who was much more a woman than a young girl who could be shaped and manipulated. Therein lay his original problem. Instead of taking a moment to consider what was proposed in getting her, he simply took her. His eyes were, proverbially, larger than his stomach.

Everything fell upon that first one however; and he had to find her. It was imperative. Once he found her, everything would fall into place once more.

## Chapter Thirty-One

Tuesday June 26, 2007  
1:17PM

Everything about the inside of Rikers Island was abhorrent to Olivia. The colour of the walls and floors, the sounds of clanking metal bars or hooting inmates who yelled obscenities to her as she passed and especially the sound of “Woman on the block” that was shouted by each new officer that escorted her down the dim corridors.

She had not expected to visit a jail so quickly after beginning with the force again and had weighed the idea of even going, but the message had sounded so dire and there was a part of her that needed real closure on the situation. She also knew that a side of her brain wanted to aid at least one person throughout the messes created in the past six months.

It had taken several days for her stop mourning for Amy and also for Evelyn again as it seemed that no matter how hard she tried, victims kept slipping through her fingers. Elliot and Maya had been supportive of her, allowing her to cry when she

needed, but Jonathan had a sort of melancholy about him that she could not comprehend nor did she try. Instead of spending every waking moment with her, Jonathan, still troubled by some unknown problem, returned to his own work, leaving Olivia to battle with her thoughts. Eventually, she was able to push the thoughts of Evelyn, Amy and the darkened room where dozens of faces had stared out at her, into the depths of her subconscious as she prepared for returning to the force.

The past several weeks had gone by in a blur of special moments and miles of paperwork. Computer Crimes had been just like she remembered it and she learned a lot even though she was permitted only the easiest desk work at first. When she grew tired of sending faxes and creating spreadsheet after spreadsheet of IP addresses, she latched onto a Detective Donnie Nelson and nudged him until he opened up several new cases for her. By the end of the Monday, she had forwarded three cases to Elliot that had the appearance of the special victims unit and an arrest was made Monday night on a fourth case she had traced to an original source who had been working with individuals with credit card companies to obtain account numbers of unsuspecting civilians.

Maya had finally closed her case with Luis Cordoval, obtaining four years incarceration for his crimes instead of nine with the help of exchanging the location of his weapon so it could be destroyed and also testifying in two other drug-related cases. Olivia was torn at first by the idea that a criminal was getting such a light sentence, but brushed off the incident, knowing that there would come a time when Maya defended a client who would test the strength of their friendship.

With her apartment laying empty and the rent control on it about to expire with no other tenant, Olivia had considered giving the apartment to her cousin, but later thought better of it when Allison went into the details of her sordid relationship with PK's father. She decided instead to give Allison a thousand dollars of her own money to help get her back on her feet and continued to pay for the apartment, still hoping that she could keep the lease in her grandmother's name.

The greatest of all the events in June was when she was able to surprise Elliot with a new "trick" she had learned a week earlier.

\*\*\*\* stars

"Just stand there," she had said.

"Liv... what are you doing?"

"Just stay there and I'll show you."

"Olivia," Elliot had said, an irritated notch to his voice. "You called me all the way over.

What did you need?"

"I need to show you something."

"Well, can I at least come inside the apartment?"

"Fine, step into the living room."

Elliot did as commanded and stood in the middle of the room feeling very foolish.

"All right. What have you got to show me?"

Olivia grinned at the annoyed expression on his face and lifted herself from her chair. She had become quite good at bringing herself into a stand, though she could only

stand for minutes at a time, and proceeded to stand, unaided, several feet away from Elliot.

“Neat trick,” Elliot said sardonically. “Was that it?”

“Hold on a second.”

Olivia concentrated all thought onto her legs and hips to ensure that they would not buckle as she attempted to move. She shifted her left hip toward Elliot and her leg came with the move. Over the course of two minutes, she slowly closed the gap between them and fell into Elliot’s arms as her legs finally gave way at the other end of the room.

Elliot held back tears as she wrapped her hands around him to keep herself from falling to the floor, steadied her with his own hands and smiled so wide his face hurt from pure elation. He held onto her for a moment longer than he supposed he should have because after a minute, he felt her pull away slightly, but he held fast. As he embraced her, he opened his eyes to view some of her effects hinted throughout Jonathan’s apartment. There was a very real possibility that he would never again get the chance to just hold her and relished in the moment with each second that passed. His reverie, however, was quickly broken when Jonathan stepped into the living room wearing a hapless scorn on his face.

He helped Olivia back into her chair and paused at the door as Jonathan ushered him out of the apartment.

“I didn’t really mean anything by that back there,” Elliot said. “She was just showing me that she could walk and then her legs gave out.”

“I know,” Jonathan said, though the reassurance did not reach his eyes. “Just remember, you don’t have to worry about her so much now. She’s in good hands.”

Olivia rolled back into the living room as Jonathan shut the door and sighed. Though they seemed to be on the same accord, it was clear that Jonathan and Elliot still despised one another and only the memory of the look on Elliot’s face when he watched her take her first “step” kept Jonathan’s attitude from bringing down her spirits for the night.

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“Woman on the block!” the guard bellowed as Olivia rolled her along side him. She had half a mind to snatch him by the uniform collar and tell him that she did not need that kind of promulgation drawing further attention to her, but renounced the idea knowing that he was simply doing his job.

As they came down the final corridor, she suddenly felt exposed and frail in her chair and wished that she had brought her braces with her. She could only hobble about on them for short periods of time, but she was uncertain of his state and worried that he might try to intimidate her if she could not directly stare him in the eye and scold him.

The heavy, olive green door swung open a minute later and revealed a disconsolate Jeffrey Drover pacing the far side of the room.

“I’ll be just out here if you need anything,” the officer said just before closing the door and leaving them as alone as anyone could be in a prison.

“So,” she said. “You sounded pathetic on the phone. What did you want?”

Drover stepped toward her side of the room and she rolled backward a half-step causing him to pause where he stood.

"You're in a wheelchair?"

"Good eye. Yes. Yes, I am."

"Is this what that guy did to you?"

"I suppose I could ask which guy, but I'm sure it wouldn't make any difference. Yes. I'm in the chair because of what he did to me. And, I'm in here because you summoned me. What did you want?"

Drover took another step toward her. "You have to help me."

Olivia laughed and shook her head. "You know...I've met some really bold and arrogant pedophiles in my time, but you...you've managed to top them all."

"No, you don't understand. I-"

"Actually, I *do* understand. Let me guess. You want me to talk to Judge So-and-So to help you get some kind of lighter sentence because you think you can get some kind of sympathy through a cop in a wheelchair."

"That's not why I need you."

"Oh!" she said with false surprise. "Well, then enlighten me, Jeffrey."

"There are people...*real* criminals in here. Guys who've murdered people just because they didn't like the way they walked."

"Welcome to prison. It's a bitch, isn't it?"

"No, you don't understand! The...the correction officers or something have told all the people in here that I'm a child molester." His breath caught. "I'm...I'm getting it everyday. Every *single* day. And it's always somebody new. You've got to help me."

She rolled her chair closer and spoke in a clear voice. "Jeff. I don't know how to break to this to you, but you *are* a child molester and you are getting nothing more than your just rewards in here."

"Please!" he said kneeling in front of her. "I'm willing to pay for my mistakes, but no one deserves to be--"

"To be what?" she hissed. "To be raped? Like you did to eight, *eight*, kids. They were *children* for Chrissake. You ripped apart their childhood *and* you lied about, it to my face, multiple times!"

Drover put his head in his hands and cried in front of her, but she felt sickened by the sight and scowled at him.

"My partner tells me that you confessed to raping Daniel Richardson as recently as the Friday before he was murdered...Kreider picked out these boys because of what *you* had done to them and what you were *still* doing to them. As far as I'm concerned, you're just as guilty for murdering them as he is."

"I didn't..." Drover pulled his hands away from his face and large grey eyes were so wet they showed Olivia's reflection like two mirrors. "I didn't kill them. And I was starting to get help. I swear to God I was."

"Swear to God?" Are we swearing to the same god on whom you *swore* you were not touching any boy inappropriately? That one?"

Drover shook on the floor. "I know you have no reason to believe me, but I was. I let Daniel go that night and I'd made up my mind to get help that Monday. But...but,

none of that even matters now. I can't go on like this. I can't eat or sleep because I know the second I turn around, I'm going to be somebody's bitch."

"And, what's worse for you is that I really don't care."

"*Please!* Just...just talk to the DA. I don't want to be let out. I know what I did was wrong and I deserve to be in here, but I can't be in the general population like this anymore. You're the only one who can do something."

She scoffed. "You're a real piece of work, Drover. I'll give you that much."

"I'm *asking* you because you're the only who--"

"You're asking me? Like that night you were *asking* me to just *talk* to you and you jumped me and tried to rape me in an alley!"

"I was just so angry that night and I took it out on you and that other kid and I'm sorry--"

"You don't know anything about anger," she said. "You're lucky I was still too sick to testify at your trial or you'd be doing twenty to life after I got through with you."

Tears spilled from Drover's eyes and splashed onto the cement floor. "Please...please. I need help. I can't go on living like this."

"Well, I would say that life's a bitch, but I guess you already know that."

She rolled backwards and called for the guard.

"They're gonna kill me in here!" Drover yelled from the floor. "You can save my life, Olivia! Just talk to the DA!"

"Even if I was handed a notarized letter stating that you were about to shanked right in front me, I still wouldn't talk to anyone. You deserve everything you get in here. So, I suggest you just bend over and take it like a man. *Don't* call for me ever again."

Without turning around again, she rolled herself out of the room and left Drover crying face down on the floor.

\*\*\*\* stars

Thursday July 12, 2007  
Northbound on Madison Avenue at East 81<sup>st</sup> Street

Olivia's sigh echoed throughout the sedan as Elliot gassed the car through another green traffic light. They had been driving up and down the island for several hours in an attempt to jog Olivia's memory. She had remembered seeing the outside world as she plummeted to the earth and was certain that she had been in Manhattan and not a borough or in New Jersey. Elliot had his reservations about Olivia's memory, but he volunteered to drive her, hoping that something would come of it. A part of him wanted to use the time away from his other cases to simply think for a few moments without a barrage of other people or problems coming in his direction. He had spent the majority of the evenings in the past weeks with his family and trying to strike up conversation with Kathy, but the previous day had hit him to the point that he was ready to scrap the whole idea of trying to save his marriage. He had come "home" for dinner like normal and afterward engaged her in as light a conversation as he could manage. Halfway through, he laughed at something she said while they stood washing and drying the dishes together and nudged her arm, but she stared at him as if he had tried to swoop in and kiss her.

"I don't want to take that kind of step, Elliot," she had said and proceeded to take a step away from him.

"We're just talking, Kathy," he said. "I thought that's all we were doing."

"It's too fast."

"Too fast?" He threw down the dish towel. "You know, this is getting ridiculous. You're making me jump through all these damn hoops just to get us back to what we used to have and I'm getting sick of it."

"I just said we're moving too fast."

"Kathy, this is nonsense! What fast? How can we be moving too fast if I just touched your arm? For Chrissake, I can nudge Olivia's arm without it turning into some kind of affair."

"I'm sure it didn't."

He narrowed his eyes at her. "Are you...Are you trying to tell me that I'm working my ass off to save this marriage just because you think I did something with Olivia?"

"Did you?"

"You've gotta be kidding me. I can't be having this conversation."

"It's just a simple question, Elliot."

"Screw that! *I'm* not the one who had an affair and then threw out her husband because of it!"

Kathy slammed the plate in her hand onto the countertop and it cracked into two pieces in her hands. When she turned toward him, her eyes were ablaze with the kind of anger, he had not seen in a long time.

"You know...when you first told me that your new partner was going to be a woman, I didn't worry about it because I pictured some butch woman with crow's feet. Then, I saw Olivia and I nearly freaked, but I didn't because I trusted you."

"And, I trusted you, but you betrayed me."

She shook her head and crossed her arms. "You want to talk about betrayal? Fine, then let's talk about a video on the Internet that Lizzie showed me months ago. Let's first discuss that and then we can go into who betrayed who."

"Kathy-" he began, but she held up her hand to quiet him.

"Let me finish...Now, you weren't here when Lizzie was calling from her bedroom with Kathleen when they first saw a homemade video that showed their father rolling on the floor with his partner. You weren't here to try to make up something to tell them on the spot when they both looked at me and said 'What does this mean for you and Dad?' I have thought about it and prayed about it and thought about it some more, but I honestly thought that the night I told you what I had done or *almost* done that you would come clean to me about you and Olivia."

"There's nothing to come clean about."

"Elliot, why are standing there lying to my face?" Her eyes were wet, but he knew she would not shed one tear. "I admit that I made a mistake. I saw what I was doing and the path I was going down and I turned away. You on the other hand... There's a video circulating the Internet for the whole world to see that shows that you were ready to make more than a simple mistake with your partner in the middle of her floor and yet...you still refuse to admit you did anything wrong. You insist on standing right in front of me to lie directly in my face. Why Elliot? I

can admit when I'm wrong. Why can't you? Why do you always have to be the victim here? Why is it that I'm the bad guy?"

"Because you're the one who threw me out," he mumbled.

"Because I needed time away from you to think and now I'm thinking I made the right decision!"

"I have nothing to apologize for."

"You know what Elliot? Fine. Just go. I don't need you to apologize to me because there's no reason for you to. If you don't care or respect me enough to tell me the truth, then we are just delaying the inevitable."

"I care-"

"Well, then why won't you just tell me the truth! For God's sake, Elliot. Put yourself in my shoes for a second. If you came home and the girls were watching some video that showed me and some man you thought I'd been having an affair with for years rolling around on the floor and looking like that they were about a half second away from screwing in the middle of a room, you would be just as angry with me right now as I am with you."

"The difference is I never did anything."

"And where do we start drawing the lines, Elliot? Because what I saw on the screen looked like *something* to me. It looked like my husband had been lying to my face for years. Like it was confirmation of what I always knew was going on in the background."

"How many times do I have to say it? There's was never anything going on between me and Olivia." Elliot sighed. "What is it that you want from me?"

"I just want a simple apology. That's it."

"Fine. I'm sorry. I'm sorry that I almost kissed Olivia in a moment of anger so severe I could barely think. I'm sorry that we're even having this conversation when I know I didn't do anything wrong. I'm sorry that even after I've told you, *repeatedly* why I could open up to Olivia about things on the job and not you, you still have some kind of inferiority complex. I'm sorry that you need to make it seem like I did something too or in order to justify your own infidelity. I'm sorry that my daughter had to spend her last years in her house without her father at home. And, I'm becoming sorry that I let up custody of the twins so easily. So, yes. Okay? I'm sorry Kathy. I'm sorry for a lot of things. "

She glared at him for a full minute before storming out of the kitchen and up the stairs.

He had gone too far and though he had tried to make amends the next day with a genuine apology for what he had been too stubborn to admit, she was not very receptive of him and he left the house quickly to drive Olivia around the city.

"Anything yet?" he asked as she stared out the window.

"No. If I see something I'll let you know."

He nodded and they continued up Madison. When he turned on the East 90<sup>th</sup>, Olivia sighed again.

Though the progress in her legs had taken great stride recently, as she was now able to hobble along with long braces that attached to her arm and kept her upright, Olivia knew she was at the precipice of a depression.

Jonathan had begun working well into the night and conversation was at a minimum.

Much of her time was spent wondering what she had done to push him away and

whether or not he was just waiting until she was well before he ended the relationship. The previous night, for the first time since they had first spent the night together, Jonathan slept on the other side of the bed instead nearly on top of her and she felt oddly cold when she awakened the next day.

In sharp contrast, Maya announced to her that her boyfriend, Amit, had proposed to her and Olivia did her best to display a sense of happiness to her friend, but once Jonathan had slept nearly crouched away from her, she was unable to keep up her own spirits, especially after learning that Jeffrey Drover had indeed been raped and killed while in general population the previous week. She had been so angry that Drover had even called her for help, but her conscience weighed heavily upon her as she remembered how pitiful he looked when he was pleading for his life. A part of her wanted to pay her respects at his funeral, but her attacker still walked the streets free, and as the weeks pressed on without any evidence as to what happened to the man who had held her, it was all she could to keep herself from allowing a forlorn gloom from covering every part of her life.

“We never going to find him, are we?” she said as she stared out the window.

“We’ll find him, Liv.”

“I’m starting to lose faith. It’s been sixth months. If we were going to find anything, we probably should have found it by now.”

“If you only knew how many times I’ve had this same conversation... You were gone for weeks Olivia and it was everywhere I turned people were starting to lose faith and look what happened.”

“It was just dumb luck.”

“Dumb luck that you survived? C’mon Liv. Even the toughest cop will ad-”

“STOP THE CAR!”

The car tires screeched to a halt causing a noxious cloud of burning rubber to float from beneath the car and hang in the air.

“What?”

“Holy shit. That’s it.”

By the time Elliot had put the car in the Park and taken off his seatbelt, Olivia already had out her braces and was hobbling as best she could to the sidewalk.

“Liv, what is it?” he asked as she stared through the alley between two buildings.

“That billboard...that’s the one I saw.”

“From when though Liv? That Absolut ad has been up for months.”

“No! There was a second...just before I started falling. There was a second and I saw it, clear as day.” She pointed toward the building to her left. “This has to be it.”

“How do you know? You were found in the alley back there.”

“But, this one is positioned exactly where it needs to be...This is the building. I swear on my life, this is the one.”

“Liv, you were found three buildings away from here. Half a block in the other direction.”

She shook her head as she stared up at the billboard. “This is it,” she whispered.

He nodded at her and approached the building that had been locked with a large chain interweaved in the door handles. Grabbing a set of lock cutters from his trunk, he handed his phone to Olivia.

“Call Casey,” he said as the first of the chain links snapped open. “Tell her we need a warrant for this place and we need it now.”

“Right. I’ll get back up too.”

Within five minutes, Elliot had pried open the doors and pulled out a flashlight as his eyes tried to search for some semblance of life within the darkness. Against his wishes, Olivia shuffled through the door behind him and panted as he peered about the first floor.

“Try to find some stairs,” Olivia said. “I’m thinking it was about the third or fourth floor.”

“I’m on it. And, Melinda and I talked about it. I think you might’ve been on the fifth floor.”

“Just be careful. Remember they never found the Smith and Wesson.”

Elliot stepped through the darkened building, occasionally flashing his gun toward rats that flitted from one corner to the other and found a set of stairs that looked like they were intended as an emergency exit.

Five floors later, he attempted to control his panting as a mephitic odor hit his mouth and he pulled the safety off his gun as he pointed it down the corridor at the should of scattering somewhere in the dark.

He could hear the faded sounds of the city through the expanse of black and tried to pique his ears toward any other signs of movement, but his other senses were blocked by the stench that grew more powerful with each step he took down the hall.

As he came to the end of the corridor, Elliot noticed what looked like a wooden door lying on its back through the haze of dark grey light. He stepped toward the opening of the room, his gun drawn and prepared to shoot.

At first he saw nothing as the smell had become so great that his skin burned, but when he walked on top of the broken door and into the room, his eyes finally focused to show a spread of several blank faces stacked on top of one another at the room’s other end. He clapped a hand to his face to block the odor as he took another step in the room, but stopped short as his mind finally processed what lay before him.

Decay had set in at different rates, but each of the faces belonged to a body that lay molted and nude as they were stacked on top of one another. They wriggled slightly from the massive infestation of maggots that squirmed through each of them as if they were a uniformed mass and could see the swarm of flies batting at each vacant body part.

“Jesus,” he whispered and fell against the doorway.

“Elliot?” Olivia’s voice echoed through the two-way at his belt. “How’s it coming?”

He pulled himself out of the room and hung onto a pole that ran from ceiling to floor to keep himself from collapsing to the ground.

“Liv...call Hazmat...”

\*\*\* stars

The scene spread before the building labeled vacant was nothing short of grotesque and officers had to increase the perimeter of the police blockade that surrounded the building as more and more onlookers vomited sporadically from the sight and the smell.

A city Hazmat team had descended on the building shortly after Olivia had called them and two screaming women were removed from a single room on the fifth floor once the bodies had been removed.

The women held onto one another crying out of grief, fear or relief; no one could discern which, and refused to separate even after they were moved to a hospital where doctors determined that they had been repeatedly raped and starved for the entirety of the capture. Detectives attempted to withdraw some kind of statement from them, but they could only cry out and seemed physically incapable for piecing together words.

Months of therapy lay in wait for both of them and, Elliot, who had to endure several additional sessions with George to discuss what he had seen, was completely moved by the sight of the women several weeks later, hanging onto Olivia as if for dear life when she had come to see them. Together, all three cried and Amanda Hill and Taynesha Grant continually blubbered thanks to Olivia, their minds unable to conceive of any other words.

The bodies of eighteen women all in varying stages of decay had been found throughout the fifth floor, including remains of a woman who had been shot in the face weeks earlier, but left to lay on the floor of the room where the two surviving women had been found. She was later identified by fingerprinting as Kimberley Nelson and the commissioner himself came down on any officer who had touched the case. It appeared that someone had dropped the ball and not investigated the area properly and that action lead to the death of not only Amy Kettering, but Kimberley who were both killed after Olivia had flown from the building.

Fingers were pointing in all directions; from inspectors who had not bothered to go through every floor of the building when determining that the original owner had abandoned his project for it to cops who had clearly not taken every effort to search the area. Blame was eventually placed on two young cops who had not been with the force long and the commissioner and the mayor were able to appease the voluminous public outrage that had stirred once the media caught hold of times of death for the two most recent victims.

Though Olivia, and eventually Taynesha and Amanda, all gave descriptions describing the same pale, blond man, no trace of him was found in the building. There some indications that someone ate and slept on some of lower floors, but outside of sandwich wrappers that carried no prints and varied filming equipment, they were not able to find anything. Investigators were able to find his collection of pornographic videos, some of which showed Mark Landon violating Zachary Calbrach and murdering Andrew Shaw, yet no further evidence could be found. Mailing addresses were sorted through and searched in hopes of finding him, yet the video stores to which his films were sent all carried the same fake name, "Roman Landanorak," and address that would have put him in the middle of the East River. As a last resort, they had attempted to trace the wire transfer Mark Landon had received months earlier, but it only led to a Swiss bank that refused to divulge any information.

They determined that he had been in "business" for years using the women for various amounts of time before he simply murdered them and tucked them away in a single room instead of disposing of the body. Detectives were still stumped as to

why he had gone to the trouble of dumping Amy Kettering, but Olivia suggested that he hated the rebellion she probably represented.

She had stayed out of the public limelight as much as possible, having no desire to answer questions about what had happened except to those who stood the possibility of finding the perpetrator.

Before she was allowed to come back to work with Computer Crimes, the deputy inspector and her commanding sergeant insisted that she speak to a psychologist to ensure that she was mentally prepared to continue working. Olivia was more than annoyed with the suggestion and kept her answers short and light as she spoke to George.

“Have the nightmares stopped?” he asked softly in her office.

“Yes. About three days before we found them.”

“Have they returned at all?”

“Nope.”

“How are you doing otherwise? Are you eating well?”

“Yep.”

He pursed his lips. “Olivia, I *am* trying to help.”

“I know, but if I thought I needed help, I would’ve asked for it.”

“You’ve been through a lot. We just want to make sure you’re doing okay before cases come piling on the pressure.”

“I can handle it. I’ve handled difficult situations before and I’ll handle this one. I just need everyone to stop treating me like some kind of porcelain doll.”

George wrote a few notes on the legal pad in front of him. “How is everything else going?”

“What everything? Work is everything.”

“You’ve only been back to work for the past month. Life still went on as you were recovering.”

“Things are...” she sighed and shook her head. “I don’t know. Jonathan and I have been living together for about two months and he’s drawing away from me. I’m not sure what to do because this is probably the longest I’ve ever been in a relationship and I’ve never lived with someone before.”

“What do you think happened?”

“I wish I knew, but I can’t even put anything to it. You know he...he normally sleeps right beside me. Practically on top of me and every morning, I have to disengage myself from this tangle of arms.”

“Has he stopped?”

“Last night. He slept on the other side of the bed. I can’t remember him ever doing that.”

“Well, it sounds like he clings to you at night because he might fear losing something or losing you. Did something happen last night specifically that might’ve given him reason to think that he could be losing you?”

She shook her head. “No. Last night, when he got home, I was just in the sitting room and I was playing my cello because...fuck...”

“What happened?”

“I got a new bow for my birthday and I’d gone on and on about it, but last night was the first I’d played in months...”

She did not want to elaborate, but George guessed it.

"It's Elliot, isn't it? Jonathan is jealous."

"We keep having this same argument over and over and over again. He tells me that he's worried about how close Elliot and I are and I tell him over and over and *over* again that he doesn't have anything to worry about, but he never hears me and now, here we are. I mean, what am I supposed to do? How many times do I have to repeat myself before he believes me?"

"Well, have you-"

"You know what? Forget it." She pushed herself away from his desk and rolled in her chair toward the door.

"We can talk about this, Olivia."

"No, we're supposed to be talking about how all that's happened is affecting my ability to do my job. It's not. It won't. I'm fine and I think we're done."

"You know where to find me when you're ready to talk about it," George said as Olivia pushed herself out of his office.

She rolled into a bathroom on the floor and pulled herself into a ball in her chair as she began to cry.

In truth, she was not fine. From distant memories of Amy being so frightened to move to how it felt to wake up cold with Jonathan at the other side of the bed, she could feel every aspect of her life crashing down around her. What made it worse, the only thing she wanted to do was call Elliot and cry on his shoulder, but she knew it was not possible. Wanting him when he was attempting to pull his marriage back together seemed like something greater than sin and she did not want to break down in front of George. She could not give any credence to the idea that she was anything but strong.

After several minutes, Olivia emerged from the stall and dried her face, thankful for the power of waterproof eye makeup. She would deal with Jonathan, eventually. It was just a matter of sitting him down and reiterating that nothing had changed since the last time they had their "Elliot" talk.

As she pushed the elevator button, she made a note to call Maya and use the excuse of "wedding planning" to clear her mind of everything else that seemed to be bearing down upon her.

She glanced down the corridor as she rolled her chair onto the elevator and sighed.

*I really should've just got it off my chest...*

\*\*\*\* stars

## Unknown Time and Place

All his work. His years of work taken. *Stolen* from him.

The homeless man around the alley huddled away from him as if he had a bad aura about him.

The mat he had found to lay upon was cold and wet from combined garbage and condensed humidity and the feel of it upon his skin only gave rise to more anger. It all came back onto her. He was sure of that. He shook his head in the darkness that surrounded him.

He had seen her peering through the first floor darkness and the sight of her vulnerability caused his heart to skip a beat. She was so close as she stared up the stairs upheld

by metallic braces. He could have easily snatched her again in that moment, but stirrings from the above floors deterred him. The stirring was different from that of the others that remained in the room and he knew had been found. And, it all came back to her. There was no uncertainty that she had brought the stranger and she was the one who had ruined it all.

The surrounding crowds that milled around his home gave him the occasional awkward glance as he brushed through the people wearing a jacket with the hood pulled over his head despite the summer heat, but he could not chance being seen. She would know him instantly and he could not have that.

He never should have made the deal with that bastard Landon. It was a good thing he refused to exchange his real name or else *all* would be lost. But, he had to focus, regroup, inspire himself to begin again.

First thing was first, however. Revenge was a necessity.

All his treasures were stolen away and it was time make reprisal on the thief. Payback was necessary before he flew away to start over everything.

The gun was gone, but his blade pressed against his leg, comforting him. It would come in use at the end. Now, he just needed to find her and wreak the same havoc on her that she had him. It was simply a matter of using the name.

What was the name?

*What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other word would smell as sweet.*

He had read that somewhere too, but the name was important.

There had been so many and most had tried to shout their names in hopes of gaining some sympathy.

*Eleanor, Elizabeth, Emilia...Something short, but longer at the same time.*

The name was all he needed. With just the name he could seek his rancorous vengeance.

He combed his memory of his precious little time with her and sat straight up as her voice echoed through his head.

“My name is Olivia Benson and I’m a cop. You have to let me go...”

\*\*\*\* stars

Friday August 3, 2007  
11:37 AM

The large orderly in the white uniform glanced down at Olivia’s wheelchair-bound form for fourth time and a part of her wanted to simply stand and slap him as she asked “You’ve never seen someone in wheelchair before?” but she thought better of it. There was a possibility that he was simply concerned that someone in a wheelchair wished to see one of the long-term residents of the hospital.

Once the elevator doors opened, the orderly stepped in stride with Olivia’s powerful pushes on the chair’s wheels and stopped in front of a large, locked door outside of which was a nameplate that read “Morse, Harry Stewart.”

“I’ll be right here,” the orderly said as he opened the door. “If you need anything at all...”

She rolled onto the padded floor, suddenly wishing she had simply struggled with her braces instead of spending the day in her chair to rest her legs on doctor’s orders.

“I’ll be fine,” she said and her voice carried across the room eliciting an immediate response from the small figure that leaned against the window.

Morse turned and stared at her, small eyes wide and curious and she took another roll into the room.

She had never seen Morse previously and in contrast to what Elliot had been telling her, he seemed to have re-grown some of his blond hair and was not as fantastically thin as Elliot made him out to be. His skin, while very pale, also had the slightest vestiges of pink attributed with someone who was growing healthier. In the corner of the room, lied a crumpled newspaper and Olivia could see that the main article concerning herself and the two women had been read ad nauseum.

Morse’s mouth gaped as he continued to stare and he drew himself slightly taller as his eyes took in every part of her.

“So,” she began softly. “You’re Harry Morse.”

“Yes...yes, I am.”

They stared at one another silently for a moment and Olivia wondered if she had indeed made a mistake in coming. Elliot and Jonathan *and* Maya *and* Jillian *and* Munch *and* Fin *and* Cragen *and* George had each insisted that there was no use in seeing Morse as he had no further information about her case and was likely to hurt her upon sight, but Olivia had a drawing need to see the man who had watched her for so many years.

Once the aftermath of 90<sup>th</sup> Street had passed slightly, she took it upon herself to see what had been gathered about her case while she had been gone. While she had been told of Morse’s videos, she had not really understood what had been said until she was able to view them for herself. Andrea had set them up for her, also adding that watching was most likely going to do nothing but give her nightmares about who else might be watching, but Olivia was persistent.

As she saw images of herself close to seven years younger, she was just as unnerved as Andrea suggested she would be, but she also held a special fascination for the videos. Somewhere in her day-to-day tasks she deemed as ordinary and completely uninteresting, Morse had found something to cherish; something simply captivating. She was further intrigued when she saw the paintings and drawings he had made. Never in her life had someone put so much effort into something as simple as capturing an expression on her face and while she was unnerved, the need to meet said person was planted and grew stronger and stronger until she could no longer hold it at bay.

“How old are you Harry?” she asked in attempt to break his adamant gaze.

“Thirty.”

“Really? You have such a young face. I wouldn’t have guessed that you were even legal.”

Morse smiled. “I get that a lot.”

“Now that I see you up close, I realize I remember you”

Morse’s eyes grew wide. “From how?”

“I ran into you at the store down the street. The only reason I remember is because you looked so freaked out when you dropped your camera and you ran away from me. It just seemed really weird, that’s all.”

Morse nodded and she pursed her lips. She rolled closer to him and his eyes grew wide again.

"I..." she began, but was not sure what to say to him. "I don't know whether I should slap you or hug you."

"I hope it's the latter," Morse said sitting on the floor in front of her as Olivia rolled her eyes. "He's right. You have lost a lot weight. You're too thin."

She opened her mouth to inquire about whom he spoke, but Elliot's name to her quickly.

"Well, I've been through a lot."

"I know. I only wish I could've done something to stop it."

"Well, the reason we were able to track down the guy who took me in the first place was because of...you. I mean, if you hadn't been... We may never have figured out that my neighbor was involved."

Morse nodded. "I never liked him. But, he seemed so weak and simple. Besides there were so many others I had to keep track of, he didn't even register on the radar."

"You were the boy...the man who came to my rescue the night Drover attacked me too."

"Yeah. It took me a minute to see what he was doing and I couldn't let that happen to you. You're too important."

Olivia sighed and shifted in her chair.

"I didn't mean to make you uncomfortable," Morse said. "It's just so...sublime having you here in front of me. Talking to me, saying my name, looking at me... intentionally."

"You know," Olivia said, "you could've come and talked to me at anytime. I didn't realize I was that unapproachable."

"Oh, you're not. You're a light that shines on this dark city. It's just that not enough people realize it, or they would hold you in the same regard as I do. I suppose that Hallows might, but I can tell from your eyes that you're not ready to give into him...For some reason, you don't want to let yourself be happy with him."

She wanted to protest, but an old argument floated to mind and she shifted again in an attempt to keep back the tears that were threatening from the idea that someone, a complete stranger, could know her so unconditionally.

"You're right...It's very strange, but you're right. We've had that conversation before actually. How did you know?"

"I don't want to make you uncomfortable again, but I've watched you for a long time and I know why you do the things you do."

"But, how can you just proclaim that? I don't even know why I do or say the things I do."

"You don't have the benefit of watching yourself and taking notes. I do. I've heard you say things in your apartment that you promised yourself you'd never say and I've seen you accept help when you seem so adamant against it at times. Like, there was an instance a little more than a year ago. Before you disappeared on me the first time. You had come home with that cut on your neck and you and your friend Maya stood in your bathroom as she tried to put some kind of ointment on it. I remember because she kept saying that the ointment would keep it from scarring, but it burned and you pulled it out of her hands and threw it into the sink. But, after a few minutes, you started crying and she cried with you and you let her help you. You never ask for help and you only take it after you take a step away from yourself to realize what's happened in your life that makes you need

help in the first place. You're odd like that, but that's part of the reason why I needed to watch you. So much intrigue wrapped up in just one person. I must say you've kept me entranced for years."

Olivia stared at Morse for a long time, again unsure what to do or say.

"I have to go," she said finally.

"It's okay. I said too much and now you don't feel right even being near me. I understand."

She nodded and swung her chair toward the door.

"Olivia," Morse called, now standing.

"Yes?"

"You will come see me again, won't you? I don't expect that even my grandfather will be able get me out of here anytime soon."

She pursed her lips as she stared at Morse's expectant face.

*No use even trying to lie to him*, she thought.

"I'll see what I can do."

"Okay," he said and sat down again on the cushioned floor as he grinned. "That's the answer I was hoping for. That's almost as good as a yes."

She smirked at him and quickly left the padded room, her mind ablaze with tumultuous thought.

\*\*\*\* stars

Wednesday August 15, 2007  
East 72<sup>nd</sup> Street and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue

Olivia paused her fingers on the ivory keys of her piano and glanced at the antique clock her mother had left her that now hung from the far wall of the apartment's sitting room. It was nearing ten o'clock at night and Jonathan had still not come home. He had promised her he would start coming home earlier after they had had a lengthy discussion about their relationship and she found it more than ironic that she was the one who waited for him each night, when it had been the opposite seven months earlier.

Jonathan had been trying to close the largest deal of his career in the past month and with the extra effort came longer hours spent away from one another. Though, she found the solitude peaceful and acquiescent to playing her music, there were many times she felt the need to look over her shoulder or make sure her gun was still within reaching distance when she was alone in the apartment.

There were multiple doormen at the building's entrances and she was eleven stories in the air, but the knowledge that her captor was still loose had distressed her more than Morse's videos. While he still existed as nothing short of a hazy memory locked in a building far away, Olivia was able to continue with her daily affairs without a second thought, but upon seeing the magnitude of his actions when she was squeezed Amanda Hill and Taynesha Grant, her nerves were shot and she turned to music as much as possible to keep herself calm.

She had returned to Computer Crimes shortly, but took another extended leave of absence, desiring to work with her special victims, yet unable to do so. A part of

her considered leaving the force altogether and perhaps start a new path of her laugh, but the more rational side of her psyche told her it was simply the idea that the killer was still free that kept her unable to focus on the misdeeds of fraudulent scammers.

Her fingers twitched for a song and Debussy's elegant canticle resounded at her touch. For a moment the song brought a smile to her face, that is, until she remembered how well Elliot had said things had been recently with his wife. Kathy accepted his apology, though he never told Olivia for what he was apologizing, but he had still not made the final leap into moving back home.

Olivia's ears piqued at the sound of the floorboards shifting behind her and she called out as she continued playing.

"It's about time you got home. I was getting lonely here all by myself."

When she did not receive a response, she stopped and listened, but heard nothing outside of the sounds of her own breathing.

"Jonathan?" she called. "Jonathan, is that you? Maya?"

The floor boards shifted again and Olivia grabbed her braces and fastened them to her arms. She had stepped not several feet into the corridor when she looked up and found a pale face gleaming at her from the open door.

Her breath caught as his menacing, sharp blue eyes glimmered in the hall light and he took a step toward her.

She reached for the gun in her holster and pointed it directly at his chest, but her body froze, too terrified to pull the trigger. He blinked at her for a second, but then bolted out of the apartment and down the hall.

By the time, she had reached the corridor, all she could hear was the sound of the door to the emergency stairs clicking closed.

Olivia found the phone and called for the front desk, screaming into the phone a moment later.

"There's a man in my apartment! He just ran out of here and he's going down the stairs!"

"We're calling the police. Which stairs Miss Benson?"

"He's coming! He's coming right now! Down the South stairs! Meet him at the bottom!"

She dropped the phone and snatched her braces as she hobbled in a near run toward the elevators. When she had reached the bottom, her gun was ready to shoot at anything that moved too quickly and she stepped out of the elevator to see five uniformed officers with their gun weapons trained on the door to stairs.

For several minutes, she stood with them, her trigger finger set, but the tension waned and two sets of cops went shooting up the stairs at either end of the building.

Within the hour, the building had been evacuated and Jonathan kept one arm around her waist to help her stay upright as her legs were ready to give way on her braces.

The officers canvassed the entire building, yet by the time Elliot and Cragen appeared at the complex, there was no news on his whereabouts.

Inside the apartment later, a heated argument erupted as Cragen wanted to have a protective detail imposed on Olivia until he was found.

"Difany you can stay for the first shift right?" Cragen asked the officer nearest to him.

"No," Olivia said. "I don't need protective detail."

"Come on, Liv!" Elliot said nearly yelling. "This guy managed to get in here and get right back out again. You were lucky he didn't just come up behind you and take you out."

"He didn't and he's not going to. I'm aware of the situation and now we can take appropriate action."

"Yeah, like leaving," Jonathan said. "We're not staying here another second. I don't care how many cops you put in here."

"We're not leaving," Olivia said. "If he's found me here, he'll find me at a hotel or your brother's or somewhere else across the city or wherever."

"So, you just want to sit here and be bait for him!" Jonathan yelled.

"I want him found and running isn't going to do that! If he's going to come for me, let him come. I'm ready. This is not going to get the best of me!"

"At least take the detail," Cragen said. "Two eyes can watch out for him better than just one."

"No," she said. "I don't need one. Before, I had the feeling that something was up and even then I had my gun on me. Now, I'm prepared."

"How prepared can you be, Olivia?" Elliot said. "You can barely walk, let alone defend yourself."

"I've already *defended* myself against him. I don't need the goddamn detail!"

Cragen ran a hand over his head. "I'm through reasoning with you. You're getting the detail whether you like or not. I'm not having a cop under my command go down like this after what we've all been just trying to find you."

"No," she repeated. "I don't need it. I can-"

"Olivia," Jonathan said in a low voice. "For the love of God...just take the damn detail. We don't need you trying to prove you're a hero. You've already made it out of a fifth floor window to get away from him already. No one doubts that you can handle him. If you're intent on staying here, we need to make sure that if he does come at you again, we can take him down for the last time. I don't want any more slip-ups and neither do your fellow officers. Please...stop being stubborn and allow us to help you."

Olivia wanted to protest again, but as she opened her mouth, Morse's words echoed in her ears and she sighed instead. "Fine...do it."

\*\*\*\*\* stars

Monday August 27, 2007

8:24PM

The series of black and red cards stared back at Olivia as she frowned at her hand. Dave Difany smirked as he held his own thin array of cards, small flowers of cards spread in packs of three and four lain in front of him on his side of the coffee table.

"This is crap," she said after staring at her cards for a full minute. "Can't we play something else?"

"You only don't like it because you're losing so badly," Difany said.

"Of course that's it! If I was winning, I wouldn't be complaining."

He laughed and set down his cards as she let out a sigh and threw her twenty cards into the air letting them flutter down like leaves. She and Difany had played a card game every single night he had spent in the apartment as a part of her night police detail. For the first week, she glared at him every time he crossed her path, but Jonathan stressed that Difany and the other three cops who followed her every movement, were simply doing their jobs and everything was done to keep her safe. Afterward, she let down her guard slightly, but still craved a resolution.

After the misfortune of not finding him or his method in and out of the building, even after hours of searching, the other tenants on the floor had checked into a nearby hotel hoping not to be caught in the fray. Olivia heard the murmurs as she checked in from time to time and the front desk and as the neighbors across the hall were leaving for the Hilton, she could have sworn she heard Mrs. McNeely say to her husband, "I told you she'd be trouble. Jonathan has his pick of any woman in the world and he picks the one who's got maniacs after her."

*I wish he would just come for me already*, Olivia found herself thinking from all the stress that surrounded her. Everyone was so busy trying to protect her that she was left alone with her police escort for much of the day and was very lonely because of it.

Part of the reason she had so vehemently resisted the protective detail was because she was ashamed of how she had reacted when confronted with her attacker. Maya, being the only person in whom she confided such thoughts, insisted that what she did was natural and she acted like anyone would have in the same situation, but Olivia still refused to commit to the idea. Admitting that meant admitting she was just like any other victim.

"Think up something else you want to play," Difany said. "I'm gonna take a leak. You know the drill...Don't answer the door, call for help if."

"Yeah, yeah, yeah. I got it."

She glanced at the clock as he left and willed Jonathan to come home. He had begun sleeping on top of her again and instead of wishing for space, she relished in the comfort his open arms brought. His "big deal" had not yet closed and he still spent a fair amount of time in his office, but it was not by his own choice.

Thought, Olivia did not want to be alone with the police detail, she also did not want to be the cause of some regret in his career later down the line and she pushed him out of the bed each morning, imploring him to do what he loved.

When five minutes passed and she was still sitting on the sofa alone, Olivia called out for Detective Difany.

"Dave?"

Hearing no response, she rose from the couch, but froze when she heard the sound of something heavy falling to the floor several yards away from her in the apartment.

\*\*\*\* stars

Elliot hummed along with the radio in the kind of cheerful mood he had seen in months as he drove up 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue. He had not had a moment to go see Olivia in close to a week and when he looked at his calendar and realized how long it had been, was intent on stopping, even if he did have to deal with Jonathan.

He and Kathy were making the final preparations to get everything Kathleen needed to start at City College in the upcoming weeks and the twins, his babies, were preparing for their first day of high school. The stop he had made to buy Olivia a bouquet of yellow roses and a box of chocolate did not dampen his spirits as a surly Irish man argued that he received two dollars less than he should have in change with the Arab clerk and spewed obscenities at the Arab, who sent them right back in his own language. As he continued his trek toward the East Side, he hoped Olivia would be in a good mood regardless of the protective detail all the men in her life had imposed upon her.

One of the night doormen at Olivia's building had recently been hired and did not want to let Elliot into the building until the elder tapped him on the shoulder and informed him that Elliot was "a friend of Mr. Hallowsay and Miss Benson." While the elevator doors closed, a smirk spread across Elliot's face at the thought of the expression on Olivia's face when she saw that he had not only surprised her with a visit, but also came bearing gifts.

\*\*\*\* stars

"Dave?" Olivia called again, but received no answer.

Her breath began coming in jagged gasps as she reached for one brace and hobbled toward the bathroom. She immediately thought of her gun which she had left on the couch, but wanted to be certain before she overreacted.

"Dave, are you okay?"

Olivia took another step toward the bathroom, but froze when she felt something brush against her back. She wanted to turn around in the corridor, but the movement was stymied as she heard the sound of metal scraping together like a sword coming unsheathed and felt something cool and flat sliding against her face.

"I've missed you," he breathed onto her neck.

His wide, eight-inch knife caught one of the tears that fell from her eyes and as he pressed a hand to her shoulder, he held up the tear to stare at the droplet in the hall light.

"Tears? That's so beneath you. Isn't it... Olivia?"

She tried to take a breath, but her diaphragm had stopped functioning and only vibrated against her attempts. From down the hall, she could see into the bathroom and saw Difany lying face down in a pool of his own blood with a large gash across his throat.

"There aren't going to be any problems this time," he said. "You will obey me for the last moments of your life and then I'll have my vengeance. No one takes anything away from me."

"Y-you're..."

"I'm...? What? Crazy? Angry? All the above? Probably, but I won't rest until I can lick your blood clean from this knife. *That's* when I'll be satisfied."

Olivia's hand began to shake and he wrapped his arms around her, flashing the blade before her eyes.

"It's okay," he whispered into her neck. "It's okay. I'm here now. And, I promise, everything will be fine."

\*\*\*\* stars

The elevator doors chimed open and stepped into the corridor with an extra bounce in his step. He hesitated for a moment, wondering if he should call first since Olivia was no longer a single woman living on her own, but waved away the thought as he approached the door.

He knocked twice and waited, but did not hear the slightest movement from the other side of the door. Knocking again, he held his breath as he tried to hear or feel the slightest tread of footsteps, but heard and felt none.

Elliot sighed, immediately dejected that he would not get to see Olivia that night and headed back toward the elevators.

\*\*\*\* stars

Olivia gasped when she heard the knock at the door and wanted to cry out for help, but, as if reading her thoughts, he clenched his arms tighter around her and pressed the knife directly against her throat.

“Don’t say a word or I promise it’ll be the last you say.”

Her body shook from combined fear and exhaustion in her legs. She wanted to collapse, but knew any wayward movement might plunge his blade into her throat.

A single tear ran down her face, and as his breath came in soft hums against her ear, Olivia prayed for the first time since she was eight years old.

*Jesus...please...I can’t die like this...Please...*

\*\*\*\* stars

Elliot paused as he pushed the button for the elevator.

*Well, she’s gotta be there, he thought. Or else they wouldn’t have let me up.*

He fished a set of keys out of his pocket, found the new key that was marked with an “O” and turned it in the lock.

“Liv?” he said as opened the door a crack. “Liv, it’s me. Hope, I’m not interrupting anything.”

Elliot stepped into the hallway and dropped everything his hands as he pulled his gun from his holster and pointed it at the pair that stood before him.

In contrast to Olivia, he appeared so white he nearly glowed against her skin and hair and his fingers clenched tighter around the knife he held directly against Olivia’s throat. She stood without her braces though he could see her legs shaking under the stress and he took a step forward, never taking his eyes off the ones that seemed to burn his face as he stared.

“Let...her...go.”

He smiled against Olivia’s face. “Well, isn’t this fun? And, I thought we would do this all alone, but now we’ve got a third player.”

Elliot took a step forward, his gun trained on the pale figure behind Olivia, who managed to choke two words from her throat. “Elliot...shoot.”

Elliot shook his head once. “Let her go.”

He shook his head behind Olivia. "Are you willing to risk it... Detective? Are willing to risk taking a shot at me while I've got her in front of me like this?"

"You're a coward, now let her go."

"Coward? I'd say I'm brilliant if anything. If I wasn't, then you would've already shot at the both of us, but I know you won't. I can see it in your eyes. You can't risk hurting her when she's already so fragile." He brushed his lips against her neck. "And, she *is* fragile, Detective. So, very fragile. Her legs are beginning to shake under her own weight. She's still so unaccustomed to standing on her own for so long. If she falters, the blade will sink into her skin, but she remains standing. She shakes because she is fragile, but she still stands. And you... If your hand was just a slight bit off... You might miss and I might simply slit her throat before you could take a second shot. Your errant shot could do it. *You* might be the one to kill her and I know you couldn't have that."

"Then, why don't you just save us both a lot of time and let her go."

"She's mine," he said into Olivia's hair. "I'm just here to take what belongs to me."

"Let her go," Elliot repeated and took another small step. "No one belongs to you."

"She's *mine*. I *paid* for her. Albeit, at a much lower rate than the others, but what a deal."

"Let... me go," Olivia said her voice catching in her throat.

He took a deep breath. "Oh, I've missed that phrase these past few months. You would say it to me almost non-stop, wouldn't you? Even now. With a knife to your throat. You're still telling me to let you go. But, that's what I like about you. Your simple spirit. You don't ask me to let you go. You *tell* me to. Like you're commanding from on high."

"Look," Elliot said, having taken another step forward. "You put down your knife and I'll put down my gun and you can walk out of here."

"You don't understand. She's mine and I'm leaving here with what is mine."

Elliot tried to take another step, but stopped as he watched him push the glistening blade further into her skin emitting a gasp from Olivia's mouth.

His face was expressionless, mostly hidden behind her hair, and Elliot wanted nothing more than to take a shot at his forehead.

Elliot locked eyes with Olivia, but he saw no sense of panic or fear. The moment he stared directly at her, the connection between them that had been severed when she had left him the previous year linked and Elliot saw a window into her thoughts.

Within an instant, Olivia had shifted and thrown her arm into his stomach before he could move his blade and Elliot came at him, tossing his gun to the floor.

A tangle of arms and cotton hit the wooden floor and Olivia saw his knife moving through the air with malicious intent. Elliot's hand moved towards his neck, but he did not see the knife inching toward his chest.

Elliot discarded gun lied closest to her and with his hand still wrapped around her waist she reached for it, hearing the sickening squish of sharp metal coming in contact with flesh.

Forgetting the gun momentarily and saw his eyes ablaze as his blade pulled toward Elliot's ribcage, the sound of ripping fabric and shredding skin flowing in its wake.

Olivia's heart was ready to pound out of her chest at the sight and she exerted every force in her body away from him and toward the gun. The gun sticking to her hand with near magnetic force, she twisted within his grasp and pulls the trigger with a single hand.

The force of the gun pushed her backward and she could see his eyes sear at her one last time before the black bullet made contact with the bridge of his nose. It pushed through thin skin and bone quickly and a spray of red splashes across her face as his head moves backward with the force of the traveling bullet.

Within a second, the bullet had exited his skull, its tail taking a pink expanse of skin and brain with it as it ricocheted off of a lone nail in the floor and dug itself into the door frame. The trail of shining blood and entrails made a path toward the bullet and his body, now free its moving metallic menace, slowly fell backward to pool near-black blood across the floor.

Olivia rolled away from him and used her arms to drag herself across the floor to Elliot who lied on his back the knife still embedded in his abdomen.

His eyes were glazed and stared unblinking at the ceiling.

"Elliot..." she called as finally pulled close to him. His damask blood had puddled over the floor and soaked into her pajamas, causing her to slide against the floor as she tried to reach for the knife.

Covered in the same viscous red fluid, the knife slipped out of her hands twice before she could pull it out, extracting curdled gasp from Elliot. She shifted on the floor and attempted to put pressure on his stomach, but the wound had slit vertically up his middle and was too large for her hands to cover.

Shaking, she reached into Elliot's jacket feeling for something plastic and small. Olivia grabbed his phone and quickly dialed 9-1-1, her fingers sliding across the claret-covered buttons.

With an ambulance on the way, Olivia shifted once more and cradled Elliot's head in her lap. His chest was trying to expand to fill his lungs, but whether from pain of the wound or from lack of the strength needed to do so, his breathing came in short, but slowing gasps. Blood poured from the corner of his mouth and Olivia, not knowing what else to do, continually wiped it away, realizing with each wave of her hand, Elliot stood less and less a chance recovering from the loss of so much blood.

Her tears splashed onto his face and her own breathing grew ragged as his eyes began to grow dull as she stared into them.

She bent over to place her tear and blood-stained face next to his.

"Just keep breathing," she whispered. "Elliot...just keep breathing..."

## Chapter Thirty-Two

### Unknown Time and Place

The lights from the ambulance were blinding as they flashed into her eyes and her entire body ached from the waist downward, but Olivia does not care. Only Elliot mattered.

He had taken hold of her hand as she lied with him on the blood-covered floor and she refused to let go; not when they strapped him to a gurney, not as they wheeled him on the carriage out of the apartment.

Her legs lengthened beneath her and she ran with the EMTs telling, pleading, with Elliot just hang on and stay with her.

They lifted him onto the bus and a pair of hands from behind her lifted her into it as well. Her hand only loosened from his for a bare moment, but even that felt like an eternity.

Though she knew that time had passed, only the feel of his fading heartbeat through his hands gave her any semblance of it. The hospital was in view after what seemed like moments later and the EMTs struggled to help her off the bus as she refused to let go of him.

She nearly fell as her legs gave out, but her resolve to hold onto him had never been stronger and she found vigor from deep within to stand and stretch her legs to run beside the gurney, Elliot's hand clasped inside her own.

The EMTs shouted stats to the emergency room surgeons, but it simply came as static to Olivia's ears. Her focus remained solely on him.

They reached the doors to surgical bay and someone, a nurse or a doctor, she did not know which, tried to pry her away from him. She refused to yield at first, but a voice calling, "Detective Benson, *please*," allowed her to release her grip.

The shorter of the surrounding nurses called to her, saying something about how she was covered in blood and they could get her cleaned up, but she could not quite make out the words as they buzzed and echoed in her head.

The world spun in front of her eyes and the remaining strength in her legs gave out at last as she felt her body falling toward the floor. Her head rolled and faced the ceiling and she could feel the beginnings of an old convulsion starting at the base of her neck when all before her turned to darkness.

\*\*\*\* stars

Tuesday August 29, 2007  
Mount Carmel Hospital East  
4:53AM

Jonathan passed through an expanse of people carrying flowers and resisted the urge to begin shoving them out of his way. He had rushed to the hospital after seeing the scene at his apartment and his hands still shook from the thought that Olivia might be dead.

Flattening himself against the wall to slide through the crowd, he finally managed to get to the room he sought. He knocked once, but did not wait for an answer before he stepped into the room. Inside, he found Elliot asleep, heavily bandaged about the middle, and a woman sitting beside him with a tear stained face.

"Yes?" she said, blue eyes large and concerned.

He crossed the room toward her. "I'm, uh...I'm Jonathan."

She put out her hand for him to shake, but withdrew it quickly realizing she still had a wad of wet tissues in it. "I'm Kathy Stabler. You're Jonathan Halloway. You're dating Olivia."

"Yeah," he said slightly taken aback from how much a stranger seemed to know about him. "She, uh...She's been admitted again...Had another seizure after they brought him in...Is he...H-how is he?"

Kathy nodded her head. "Good. He'll be okay. The doctors said there was a lot of damage, but that none of his...insides were badly cut. They expect him to make a full recovery, but...he'll just be in here for a while."

Jonathan nodded absent-mindedly and reached for the chair next to her. "May I?"

"Please." She moved her things out of the chair. "How's Olivia? I know she came in with him and the nurses said she was hysterical."

"She'll be fine. They did an MRI just to make sure. Her doctor thinks it was just the stress combined with walking, well, running with his cart last night was just too much at one time."

"She was walking? Running? All by herself?"

"Yeah," he said with a smile. "It's good news, right? I mean, at least we know she'll be okay eventually."

Kathy returned the smile and sighed as she stared back at Elliot's resting form.

"I'm just glad they're both okay. If something had happened to Olivia...I know he'd never be able to forgive himself. And, I don't know what I would've done if he didn't...if he didn't make it. I just...I'm just..."

"Kind of numb?" Jonathan finished and she nodded.

"Yeah. I don't know what to do."

"I guess the best we can do is just be there for them so that the first person they see when they wake is someone who loves them."

She nodded again and quickly wiped away the tear that was threatening to roll down her face.

"You know," Jonathan began after a minute's silence, "Throughout all the time I've known Olivia, she's been telling me about Elliot, and also about you. I know it's probably not any of my business, but since you're here and I'm not sure when I'll get to talk to you again, I think it's best that I just say this."

"Say what?"

"Well, I think...everyone probably thinks...you should go back to your husband."

Kathy turned her head from him quickly and gasped, feeling like she had been slapped in the face by his words.

"I don't mean to be preachy," Jonathan added, "and I don't want to pry, but it's like...you leaving him has had this cascading effect over the lives of half the people in this city. I mean, just looking at it from my own end...he's upset and talks to Liv about it, your kids talk to Liv about it and then she spends half the night telling me everything. Then, I need someone to talk to, so I end up telling my brothers, my father, my secretaries...and before I know it, I'm having a corporate lunch and the subject randomly comes up from strangers who'd heard it through the grapevine."

"It's just...given all that's happened...I don't know. Before this guy took Olivia, I was ready to just give up on her altogether. And, when I got her back, I realized how

much she'd already affected me and how much I really loved her and we've only known each other for less than three years. You and Elliot...I mean, you've got kids together."

"I know," Kathy said. "And, we *have* been talking, but..."

"Look, I know what you've probably been thinking because I've been thinking the same thing since the first time I saw them together...affair, but that's not it. Olivia and Elliot have this special...bond that neither you nor me nor anyone else in this world is ever going to understand, but that doesn't mean they don't love us. And, like I said, I don't want to preach, but after everything that's happened or whatever he did, I think you owe him a second chance."

Jonathan stood and handed a business card to her. "Just think about it and if you ever needed someone to commiserate with..."

"Thanks," she said softly while taking the card.

"And, let me know when he wakes up because I know Liv is going to want to see him. Kathy nodded as he left. She had her mind made up long before he had shown up, and she was not about to make any changes.

\*\*\*\* stars

Olivia opened her eyes to see Jonathan's tall form staring out the window of her room. At first her heart skipped a beat as she wondered if she had dreamed that she had left the hospital and wiggled her toes to convince herself that time had indeed elapsed though she was in the hospital again.

"Hey," Jonathan said hearing the commotion from Olivia's bed and he crossed the room in a single side to sit next to her. "How are you feeling?"

She thought about it for a moment as she continued to move her feet, but a new thought popped into her head.

"Where's Elliot?"

"He's fine," Jonathan said. "He pulled through surgery and I talked to his wife and his doctors a little later and everyone says he's going to be okay. He was in real bad shape for a while, but you had called the ambulance so quickly that he didn't lose as much blood as they thought he had."

"I was going to tell the nurse to take some of my blood if he needed it."

"They couldn't have taken it anyways, Liv. Not with the shape you were in last night."

Olivia closed her eyes for a moment. "The guy..."

"He's dead."

"He was going to kill me."

Jonathan shivered. "And you did the right thing. You kept him from killing you and your partner. I don't think I would've survived if you had died. To get you back and have you taken away from me all over again. Liv...I'll be honest, when I came home last night and saw all the blood...I passed out. I thought...I thought he'd got you. Even being here on the East Side and with doormen and with a cop in there, I thought he'd come through everything just to kill you. It wasn't until I came a little later that the cops there told me what happened. They said you were okay, but they told me about Elliot and I actually went to check on him first, so that when you were conscious again, I'd have answers for you."

"Thank you...for everything."

"It was the least I could do, Liv. I...I should've been there."

"For what, Jonathan? Did you see the knife? He took out Difany and he would've killed you too. He wanted me and he would've killed...*did* kill as many people as it took to get at me."

Jonathan put his head in hands and a moment later he was weeping openly.

"I just...You could've died, while I sat in my office trying to get one more useless thing done. There's so much blood across the apartment. God, Olivia. When I saw it..."

"You thought it was all me."

He nodded and sighed.

"I brought you some fresh clothes. The guys from your precinct told me they'd be in after a little while. They need to get your statement."

"Do they even know who he is?"

"They said they got his fingerprints, but his face...I'm sure you or Elliot would be able to pick him out of a lineup...when you're ready."

She tried to sit up but felt her head spin.

"Just lie down," Jonathan said. "You've been through so much."

"I want to see Elliot."

"Maybe a little later. His wife's down there with him right now and he's still unconscious."

"I'm still not sure what happened. I don't know how he got in there...I don't know what made Elliot decide to come by...I don't even know what happened from the time they wheeled him into surgery and now."

"Well, they said you were running with the cart, and that, with the stress of what happened wore you out too much and you had another seizure. That's why they kept you. As for Elliot coming by...I don't know. Fate, luck...Jesus. I haven't the slightest idea, but what I do know is that I'm probably the most grateful man on this earth right now."

He slipped his hand around her and she sighed sleepily.

*It's over, she thought. It's finally over.*

\*\*\*\* stars

Olivia huffed as she pushed on the wheels of the chair and rolled forward onto the floor where Elliot was recovering. She had been against going back to her wheelchair after having made so much progress in the previous months, but when she collapsed twice after trying to use her braces, she flopped into the chair thankful that she could at least move about independently. Jonathan had helped her get dressed that morning, but she told him she would meet him at the entrance in an hour. She knew that Elliot and Jonathan seemed to upset one another so much and she needed to see Elliot, without Jonathan hovering over her shoulder.

When she got to the room, Kathy stared at her with an odd expression Olivia had never seen on Kathy's face when she looked at her. For the first time since she had known her, Kathy looked at her without the slightest air of suspicion or intrigue.

"Hi," Olivia said, still by the door.

"Hey," Kathy said. "Come in. You need some help?"

“No, I’ve got it,” Olivia said wheeling herself through the doorway. “How is he?”

Kathy smiled. “He’s fine. He’s got the colour back in his face again and the doctors say he should make a full recovery in a few months. He actually woke up a little while ago asking for the kids. Maureen first, then he drilled me about Lizzie, Dickie and Kathleen. And, then he asked for you, of course.”

Olivia smiled at her. “Well, I’m about to leave in a bit and I just wanted to see him before I left.”

“Come,” she said beckoning Olivia closer and eventually trading positions with her. “I was about to go myself. I’ve been in these clothes all day and all of last night and I’m in need of a shower. Stay with him for a little. He might wake up again if you nudge him just right.”

She smiled and closed the door behind her, leaving Olivia to stare at Elliot. Olivia sighed as she rolled closer, her chair squeaking across the floor tiles.

As she watched him sleep, she wondered if this was what it was like for him. Did he silently will her to wake up when she dozed for hours at a time?

After twenty minutes of allowing her mind to race, she pulled the brake off her chair and prepared to leave, when she heard Elliot sigh on the bed.

“Liv?”

“Hey!” she said brightly. “Yeah, it’s me. How you feeling?”

“Like someone tried to dissect me.”

She shook her head. “He tried. That I remember clearly.”

He blinked at her. “What? No flowers? No balloons?”

“Not today,” she said laughing. “Maya asked about you.”

“How’s she doing?”

“Well, she was in near hysterics earlier, but Jonathan managed to calm her down. We’re having lunch a little later today, and I’m sure there’ll be a mimosa or two involved.”

He smiled, but it faded quickly as she shifted in her chair.

“You’re back in your chair again.”

“Yeah,” she said sighing. “I tried to get back on the crutches, but I, uh...”

“But, what?”

“I just can’t. Not right now. I don’t really remember the other night all that well, but apparently, I was running beside you when they brought you in and the exertion just wore me out. Jonathan had one of his specialists come in to see me and they think it was just too much stress too soon, but they think I’ll be fine. But, enough about me. What about you?”

He smiled. “Already told you. I feel like crap, but I’ll be okay.” He paused, his smile fading slightly. “Did we get him?”

“Yeah. I shot him. With your gun. The one you just tossed when you came at him.”

“I figured we both had him down.”

“God, Elliot,” she said shaking her head. “That was so stupid. I was so scared when I saw his knife flying. And, then...then there was so much blood.”

“I know,” he said softly.

“You should’ve just shot him.”

“Not with you in the way.”

“But, he’d all but let go of me. You would’ve had a clear shot at him.”

"Not with you in the way, Olivia."

"Elliot," she said tears forming in her eyes. "You...you risked your life when you could've just shot him. He was holding a knife the size of my arm and you came at him anyway. That was just so stupid..."

"I know," he said. "But, I couldn't think logically at that point, Liv. I wasn't going to be able to shoot and if I didn't move, he would've done the same thing to you that he did to me, only it would've been worse. A lot worse."

"But, you shouldn't have..."

"Shouldn't have what? Risk my life for you? C'mon Liv. You know that's the least I'm willing to do for you."

Tears were steadily streaming down her cheeks, but she did nothing to arrest the flow.

"You could've died," she said. "I thought you were dead for a second. And, the whole time...with all that blood, I just kept thinking about your kids, and Kathy and... how was I supposed to live with myself knowing you died for me. It's almost like Gitano all over again."

Elliot tried to shift on the bed, but the pain across his midsection would not allow it.

"Don't try to move," she said, sniffing. "You might tear the stitches."

"Liv," he said ignoring the comment. "That guy was about murder you in front of me and I couldn't let that happen. We're all going to die eventually, and if that was my time, then I was willing to go out trying to save you rather than as an old man warm in my bed having watched you slaughtered before my eyes."

"But, you could've died. It was just so stupid..."

He smiled at her. "Sometimes we do stupid things for the people we care most about."

She only shook her head and smiled in return.

Silence fell upon them and they stared at one another, each searching the other's eyes one again. Elliot took out his hand and embraced Olivia's for a moment until she shifted in her chair.

"I told Jonathan I'd meet him at the entrance," she said.

He let go of her slightly. "Okay. Where are you staying?"

"The Hilton for now."

He laughed. "Champagne wishes and caviar dreams, eh?"

"Oh, stop it," she said smiling. "Or I'll hit you in the stomach."

She began to roll away from, but he reached out for her once again.

"Liv?"

"Yeah?"

"C'mere," he said motioning her toward him.

She moved closer, but he beckoned her further and managed to shift until he was almost sitting upright on the bed.

"Don't tear the stitches," she said.

"Just come here."

"Yes?" she said half in her chair and half leaning on his bed, only several inches away from him.

"I need to say this," he said softly. "And I don't want you to respond. I just need to say it."

"Okay...?"

He reached out and pulled her even closer to him. Before she could react, their lips met and she closed her eyes allowing him to simply hold her. He let go of her after a full minute, his eyes bright. "I love you, Olivia. And, I want you to know that I'd gladly lay my life down for you. Any day, any time, anywhere." She pursed her lips, speechless and repressed the tear that lied at the brim of her eyes. "That's all," he said. "Just don't forget my flowers tomorrow." Olivia laughed and fell back in her chair. She managed to close the door to his room a few moments later, and on the elevator, as her lips still tingled, she thought that once she got Jonathan settled at the hotel, there was someone she needed to see.

\*\*\*\* stars

Bellevue Hospital  
3:16PM

"I see you've been painting. Quite a bit actually."

Olivia stared at the numerous canvasses that hung at varied states of completion on the walls of Morse's cell. Some were still sketches and others looked very similar, as if he began one and started a second as another, greater, idea came to mind. Light from the window poured into the room and gave the watercolours with which he worked a vibrant hue.

"Well, it's easy," Morse said, "when you have such a wonderful muse."

She sighed and shook her head as a smirk tugged at her mouth. "We found him. The guy who Mark Landon had apparently sold me to in February. I just thought you might want to know."

"Thank you. I did want to know. I've exchanged my canvasses for my newspaper privileges and my father says he won't do anything about until I start talking to the shrinks again, which I won't do. So, thank you, but... Looking at you now, I don't think that's why you came all this way to see me."

"No," she said. "It's not. The guy... my attacker. I've... I killed him. He's not the first, but this time... I don't feel anything from it. I'm not craving a cigarette. I don't feel like I should go to church to find absolution. I don't feel anything. And, the more I think about it, I realize that I could spend hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars trying to go over this with a shrink, or... I could just come to you. You seem to know me so well already."

Morse sat straighter on the floor, his eyes penetrating.

"So, tell me," she continued. "Why don't I feel anything for killing him?"

"You didn't kill him," Morse said quickly.

"I assure you, I did."

Morse shook his head. "No, you didn't. He was a monster. He was probably already half-dead anyway, but you didn't *kill* him. With the others, you took their lives away and their chances at redemption, but him... this was simply payback."

"Payback? That's the best answer you've got for me?"

"He took your life away from you. Mark Landon started it, but he's the one who broke you and hurt you. He's the reason why you're in a wheelchair months afterward and will spend the next several months re-learning to walk without any help and

even after that, you'll never be the same. You'll wake up at night and wonder if he's there. You'll remember him anytime you're all alone. For the rest of your life, he'll always be there. He took your life away and this was just payback."

"Payback," she whispered.

"Yep. Payback. It's as simple as that." Morse stood and she rolled backward slightly.

"I'm so...glad to know that you got him. I think...I think everything in the world seems right again now that I know you're fine."

Olivia nodded. "Does this mean if they let you out, you're going to stop following me?"

"I promise," Morse said smiling. "I won't be following you anymore, Olivia."

She gave him a small smile and rolled closer to him. "Well, then...I guess you can have that hug now."

Her eyes nearly began tearing at the pure elation on Morse's face as she allowed him to come close and bend down to hug her from her chair. As she left the clinic, she rolled down the window of the town car Jonathan had ordered for her, complete with driver, wondering if Morse was right.

The summer air breezed against her face until the car stopped at a stoplight. In the car next to her, a skinny, dark black woman sang loudly with the music that flowed from her stereo and the lyrics to gospel song, floated in Olivia's car minutes after the town car had turned down another street.

*For every mountain...*  
*You've brought me over...*  
*For every trial...*  
*You've seen me through...*  
*For every blessing...*  
*Hallelujah...*  
*For this, I give you praise.*

Morse might have been. She might have gotten payback for having to take flight from her life. Nonetheless, she knew she would be attending church with Jonathan the following Sunday.

\*\*\* stars

Mount Carmel Hospital East  
5:09PM

"How you feeling?" Kathy asked with a bright smile as Elliot turned off his television. He was happy to see her, having grown bored with day-time television and wondered how Olivia withstood months of her hospital stay.

"Feeling good, glad and generally happy."

"That's good. It's so good, Elliot. You had me scared for a moment there."

He nodded and motioned for her to move closer to him.

No time like the present, he thought.

"I've missed you, Kathy."

"I didn't think I was gone all that long."

"I've missed having you in my life like you should be. I miss waking up beside you on Saturday mornings and I miss everything about the home you and I made

together. I miss you so much at burns, and I know it's not just the stitches talking." Kathy sighed and he continued. "After the way this year has gone, I don't want to continue living like this. With this things happening the way that they are."

"I doubt Olivia's going to get attacked again," Kathy said, but he shook his head.

"This doesn't have anything to do with Olivia." He took her hand within his own. "I want to make a fresh start with you, Kath. I want us to go back to the happy days we used to have together."

Tears dropped from Kathy's eyes and she pulled her hands from his to take a large envelope out of her bag.

"You're papers," she said. "They've expired...because I never submitted them."

Elliot stared at his blanket. "You want me to resubmit?"

"No," she said softly. "I just want you to get better...and I want you to come home to me."

He wrapped his arms around her and ignored the pain in his midsection as she leaned forward to kiss him. She did not feel like Olivia, but she still felt like home.

\*\*\*\* stars

Thursday August 30, 2007  
4:01AM

The cell phone on the nightstand nearest to Olivia chirped in the dark quiet, eliciting a loud groan from Jonathan. It had not interrupted their sleep in several months and the ringing had yielded to the phone's voicemail by the Olivia was alert enough to reach out for it.

She dislodged herself from his arms to look at the display and frowned.

"What is it?" Jonathan said. "You're not even back at work yet. Who the hell could be calling?"

"I don't know," she said and quickly played the message.

An hour later, she pushed her chair off the hospital elevator to find an array of police officers and hospital personnel mulling around Morse's padded cell. A tall man, whose small blue eyes held a vague familiarity spotted her as she approached and stepped toward her.

"I assume you're Detective Olivia Benson?"

She nodded, but her eyes kept darting toward the open door. Up close, she could see the man's eyes were soft, betraying his hardened expression and were also red and puffed as if he had been recently crying.

"What's happened?" she asked.

"We've never met. My name is Richard Morse the Second. My youngest son, Harry, I believe you're familiar with." Olivia nodded and he continued. "Well, Harry's... hung himself. Apparently, he'd been collecting things to do for the past several days and the orderly found him a couple hours ago."

Morse the second handed Olivia small white envelope. "Harry wrote a letter other than his note. It's addressed to you. His suicide note just says he wanted you to have the paintings, but that only you were to open the letter."

He blinked rapidly as if drawing back tears for his youngest son.

"Mr. Morse," she said rolling nearer. "I'm so sorry."

"What for? Harry...Harry's been lost for a long time. I'm just sorry for what he put *you* through." He paused. "If you have any other questions my assistant, Mr. James over there, can answer them. Good night, Miss Benson."

The following Monday, Olivia sniffed against her hay fever allergies as the wind blew the grass that covered the vast cemetery. Both Jonathan and Elliot stood beside her as she sat in her chair dressed in black, though both had suggested she not attend the funeral in the first place. She wanted, however, to do something to say a last goodbye to someone who was very much a stranger, but appeared to care about her more than anyone else she had ever encountered.

"Still can't believe how many of these people I know," Jonathan mumbled.

"I still can't believe how many of these people I busted way back when for petty crimes," Elliot whispered. "That guy over there definitely peed against the Guggenheim about fifteen years ago."

They both snickered softly and Olivia rolled her eyes, ignoring them and choosing instead to remember the letter Morse had written to her:

For the most honorable, beautiful woman this world will ever know, I write to you, to let you know that I have seen that you are in good hands and thus do not need to be your self-appointed, physical guardian angel. I don't like your partner and I never will, but I see that he is a good man and with him by your side, I know no harm will befall you. I've not been too sure about Halloway because I know how that family can be, as they're far too akin to my own (we might even be distantly related, now that I think of it), but I have seen that he too is good man. If ever I thought there was another man in this world who could worship you the way I do, Halloway would be the one to do it and I wish you all the best and many happy years together.

I am writing to tell you one last thing: Don't become depressed because what I have done. Don't reach for the cancer sticks and don't go see some head shrinker because you think there was something you might have said or done to stop me. I knew long ago that one day I would have stop watching you and that my life would be no longer necessary, but don't think that you should have told me my life was valuable. I would have flown from this world long ago if I had not seen a reason to live in you so many years ago.

And so, my dear Olivia, I bid you farewell. I love you from within the depths of my very soul and I know I'll someday see you again.

~ Harry

\*\*\*\* stars

Monday September 17, 2007

Carl Schurz Park

4:48PM

“Don’t you just love New York in the fall?”

Olivia sighed as she watched Jonathan lean against the fence that separated the park from the river. Her legs had grown much stronger in the past weeks and to help her progress, Jonathan had taken time away from work, his major close finally completed, and each day they took a walk to the park with several breaks in between as she still needed her right brace to walk; both were needed for extended periods of walking.

The bench on which she sat faced the river and she watched the water ripple as the grey of night was beginning to creep on the horizon. Jonathan had been especially buoyant on their walk and she could only smile as he bounced his hands along the railing, so seemingly happy to be alive.

“It’s always been one of my favorite things about the city,” Olivia said. “Of course, fall always leads into the bleak winter and then I’m ready to pull up stakes and move to LA, but fall *is* nice.”

Jonathan laughed as he stepped toward her. “Always the pessimist.”

“Realist. We’re called Realists. Pessimist...honestly. Who’s pessimistic now?”

He shook his head and knelt on the ground. “There’s a rock under here.”

“Yeah, I’m sure there’s rocks everywhere. Where *are* outside.”

Jonathan picked up the rock, rolled it over in his hand as he examined it and then held it out to Olivia.

“You want to skip it?”

“Do I look like I skip rocks.”

“Stones, Olivia. Skipping stones.”

“Ah. *Stones*.”

“It’s a cool one though.”

“Yeah, I guess.”

“It’s all smooth, kinda like the water was earlier today.”

He handed the rock to her and picked up another. Olivia laughed at the sight and shook her head.

“You’re just like a little kid, you know? Playing in the dirt all day.”

“Ooh,” he said as he held up his new rock. “I think I like this one better.”

“What’s special about it?”

“Everything. It’s got these smooth patches and these rough edges too. It’s like both the smooth parts and rough parts give the rock its character. You know, there’s a part of you that kinda wants to change it. Maybe shape it so that it’s all smooth, but the better part of you knows the reason it’s so beautiful...the reason it’s special is because of both the rough and the smooth. The good and the bad.”

Olivia rolled the smooth stone in her hand for a moment with a contented smile on her face. She then attempted to skip the stone across the water, but it just plunked to the bottom and she shook her head.

“When did you become so fascinated with rocks...wait, sorry. *Stones*.”

“I had to do a little research on them. Turns out, I learned a lot.”

“I bet. You’re turning out to be this fountain of knowledge. Too bad it isn’t about something useful.”

“Oh, but I *did* learn something useful,” he said with a sardonic tone and a smile. “I learned lots of stuff. Like for instance, did you know that different stones can tell stories? Even have little secrets?”

“Secrets? You’re putting me on. What kind of secrets can a rock...a *stone* have?”

“Plenty! Take this one for example.” He holds up the rock so it’s directly in front of her.

“Like you could give it a little shake...and who knows what might pop out.”

He shook the rock in front of her as he spoke and as Olivia sighed at his boyish grin, she felt something fall into her lap. She looked straight down to find a small circular object glistening in the setting sunlight.

“Oh my god...” she whispered.

In her lap sat a single ring; two Princess cut stones flanking a large, two-carat diamond, all set in platinum. Jonathan picked up the ring with a bemused, slightly uninterested expression on his face and examined it.

“You see? It’s like I said. You never know what kind of secrets a stone can hold.”

Olivia clapped a hand to her mouth, breathing “Oh my God.” again.

He held her left hand in his right, this time grinning widely and slowly brought the ring closer to her fourth finger.

“Olivia,” he began. “I could be here all day spouting sonnets about chocolate brown eyes that melt my heart, radiant smiles that light my day, or how just being with you makes me feel like a whole person, but I’m not. You know how I tend to run on and turn a good speech trite. So, I figure all I need to say at this point is...Olivia, I love you. Will you marry me?”

Olivia pulled her free hand from her mouth as Jonathan slipped the cool metal enclosure onto her finger. Tears blurred her vision as she wondered why she had not considered that he was going to do this earlier. She gasped and her mouth pulled into a wide smile as bent forward to throw her arms around him and spoke softly into his ear.

“Yes.”

He held her for what felt like an eternity and then cupped her face as he kissed her, still down on his knees.

“So, tell me,” she said once the streetlights began to spring to life from the impending twilight. “What were you going to do if I actually threw *that* rock into the river?”

He laughed. “Well, after I regained consciousness...I would have tried to laugh it off and would’ve planned again for another day.”

She squeezed his hand, relishing the feel of the engagement ring that fit her hand perfectly. He helped her off the bench and aided her with his arm as she walked using him for a crutch so they could walk hand in hand slowly. As they made their way back to the apartment, Jonathan nodded at every person he saw and pointed at Olivia saying, “See her? She’s just agreed to marry me!”

The next morning, Olivia sat patiently waiting for Maya to arrive at the restaurant at which they had agreed to meet since neither had had a spare moment to see the

other. When she flagged Maya to her table, she deliberately kept her hand hidden beneath her menu.

“So, anyway,” Maya said as she sipped her morning coffee, chattering away happily.

“Amit’s mother is losing her damn mind. She wants her son to have a traditional Indian wedding and I’m really not feeling it. I want my damn Vera Wang and the cake with the little people dressed on it and all that other nonsense. We’ll just do our own thing too.”

“She’ll come around.”

“Fat chance of that. Anyway...I heard you and Jonathan are regular church goers now.”

“You heard right.”

Maya rolled her eyes and gave an exaggerated sigh. “After all these, my favorite little atheist has finally chosen a religion. And, we had such high hopes of making a Hindu out of you yet.”

“Yeah, right,” Olivia laughed keeping her menu on top of her hand. “That had about as much as chance of happening as your soon to be mother-in-law accepting a white Vera Wang at her son’s wedding.”

“Har...har.”

Olivia laughed again, and having not moved her menu since Maya had sat in the booth, drew a suspicious stare from her friend.

“What the hell are you hiding under there?” she said. “A chipped nail or something?”

Olivia looked at the menu with an uninterested look on her face before removing the menu to reveal her glowing ring. “Oh, this?”

The scream that flowed out of Maya’s mouth as she grabbed Olivia’s hand emanated across the restaurant and Olivia could feel her face growing red at the number of faces that had turned toward the commotion.

“Oh my God!” she said laughing. “Shut up! People are starting to stare!”

\*\*\*\* stars

Friday September 21, 2007  
Central Park

“My God!” Elliot said as he held up Olivia’s hand so that her ring could glimmer in the light. “I was temporarily blinded there for a second! I mean wow...good God...it’s so...Jesus Christ, Olivia! How are you even able to lift your hand?”

They sat shoulder to shoulder on a bench that faced the reservoir after they had met at the park and made it halfway around the water before both needed a break and Elliot took a good look at Olivia’s ring. He was surprised at first, thinking it would have been the solitaire Jonathan had thrown at him in a fit of fury months earlier, but the new ring was just a beautiful against her skin.

“Yeah...it’s big,” Olivia said sheepishly. “Oh, well.”

“You’re going to have watch it if smack someone once you get back to SVU, Liv. Otherwise you’re gonna start taking out people with that rock.”

She nudged him. “Oh, would you stop it. It’s not that big. Anyways, how’s it feel to be free of the hospital?”

“Just fantastic, though I do think I’ll miss the nurse who gave me my sponge bath.”

Olivia shook her head. "And speaking of nurses...are you all set for this weekend?"

"More than set. More than ready. I've been waiting for this for two years." He bumped her shoulder. "I suppose you're not going to be any help this time around, are you?"

"With moving?" She shrugged. "I could supervise. Give you and your brothers some moral support."

"Dickie'll...I'm sorry *Rick* will be helping out too. After all, he's a high school man now."

"Rick...that's just adorable. I can't wait to hear what happens after you call him 'Dickie' before something like a school dance."

"I'm sure it'll be just the thing to cement our father-son relationship."

She grinned at him and they sat staring across the water for a few moments before Elliot broke the silence.

"You sure your *driver's* going to be all right? It's been a while."

"Are you going to be like this about the damn driver forever? Just tell me now, so I know if I need to get used to it."

"I'm kidding...kind of."

"Look, Jonathan insists and I'm engaged now. I think I read somewhere about wives being submissive to their husbands or some crap like that. Besides, it's easier than trying to flag down a cab."

Elliot shook his head. "All that time on the East Side, Liv...Soon, you'll be ordering people around worse than Hal...Jonathan."

"Stop it. I will never order anyone around."

"Unless they work for you."

"No one's working for *me*. That's *Jonathan's* housekeeper."

"Ah, but you said it yourself. You're engaged now. What's his is yours and vice versa."

"Yeah...I mean marriage. *Marriage*. It's just so surreal."

"You'll love it," he said nudging her again. "Is he making you sign a pre-nup?"

"Of course. I had Jillian and Maya look it over. There's a special section regarding infidelity. Originally, it read that if I cheated, he even got to take *my* pension, but we're still hashing out that detail."

"Well...He's a Halloway. I guess that's to be expected."

"Yeah, I guess."

"So, does this mean you and Maya are going to have joint wedding?" he laughed.

"Something out of a Brady Bunch special?"

"No. Come on!"

He shrugged. "I don't know. The two of you being so close as you are..."

"Yeah. I suppose we have been close forever haven't we? The thing is though, I never thought we'd make it past high school."

"No?"

"No. She was off being *Maya*, the exotic, popular one and I was just Little Liv who was taller than half the boys. I kept expecting her to just leave me and spend all her time with the popular kids, but she didn't."

"And here you are. You've told her right?"

"Course I have. Do you think she'd let me live if I waited a week to tell her?"

Elliot shook his head and laughed the conversation changed to Olivia's old apartment. He had had major qualms about allowing Maureen and her boyfriend, Justin living together in Olivia's old apartment, but he eventually caved once he realized the rent would still remain the same for the Village apartment.

"My landlord's not happy about it," Olivia said, "but he'll be fine. He's still got Sam, Mrs. Fitzgivens and about seven others in the building to get rid of first before he has anything to complain about. Besides, it's the least he could do considering Morse."

"How are you feeling about that?"

"I think I'm okay. Yeah, I'll be okay."

He nodded at her and they watched the water together in silence for another twenty minutes before they helped one another back to the street. Before they parted ways, they clasped hands and for just a moment, Elliot's wedding ring and Olivia's engagement ring clinked together in unison. Each squeezed the hand of the other and they stared at one another. Olivia nodded first and they broke contact to get into their respective rides home.

As their vehicles parted ways, Elliot's going down Park Drive South and Olivia's across 65<sup>th</sup> Street, each held the same thought.

*It must be fate.*

\*\*\* stars

Wednesday September 26, 2007

Woodside, New York

Elliot hummed in the mirror as he put the finishing touches to his shave to clear the five o'clock shadow from his face. He was celebrating his forty-fourth birthday and as he stared in the mirror he could not suppress a smile at image that stared back at him.

For his last birthday, his wife and children were gone and his partner had left him. He had been stuck with a new partner who was not nearly adequate as Olivia and he had spent the day alone.

Downstairs, Maureen, Kathleen, Lizzie were now gawking over Olivia's engagement ring while Dickie was been wrestled into a ball by Nolan and Bryce and Kathy laughed about old Christmases. He would begin working again starting the next week and everything was as it should have been. He had his family back and he had his partner. Even when he woke up in the morning, he knew it was going to be a good day.

He had been sick for the first few days of the week and a slight infection had landed him back in the hospital Sunday night, but he was released the next day. From lifting and shifting his things from his apartment to his home with his brothers and son, he had torn a few of the stitches and they healed again badly. Overall, however, he was in near perfect health.

Elliot could see the staples, sutures and padding that held his midsection together easily though his shirt, but he did not care. His only birthday wish was push away the memory of the men who had harmed his partner and move on with his life.

The building where Olivia had been kept had been torn down and all of her attacker's possessions destroyed lest someone desire to take up his "work" in reverence. The unit was able to put a name to the face and closed twenty-six open cases in the process. Cragen had Olivia deliver the general statement to the press and Elliot laughed when he noticed that Dickie had "favorited" every part of the speech on his YouTube account.

"Come on, Dad," he heard Lizzie call as he wiped his face. "Kathleen is getting a little antsy with the lighter thing."

"I'll be down in a sec, Baby."

She turned and ran back down the stairs and Elliot stared at himself in the mirror. He had lost a little weight in the past year, lost a little more hair and gained a couple lines in his face, but he was happy nonetheless.

He heard the voices of his family erupt into laughter downstairs and he smiled himself. *Just the way it should be.*

\*\*\*\* stars

Monday October 1, 2007

SVU Squad Room

8:03AM

Olivia rocked on her braces as the elevator stopped on the third floor causing Elliot to glance at her. He was worried at first when he came to pick her up that morning and she had not one, but both braces keeping her upright, but she reassured him that it was just a precaution upon which Jonathan insisted since she had told him that the town car would no longer be necessary.

"You ready?" Elliot asked.

"Are you?"

"Always."

"Same here."

They both knew they would be more or less chained to a desk for the next few months as the both continued to recuperate from their respective ailments, but there was a slight buzz of excitement in the elevator as they prepared to start working again.

When they stepped off the elevator, the sound of clapping and cheering reverberated throughout the squad room and they both laughed as they approached their highly decorated desks. A myriad of cards and "Welcome Back" flyers flowed over the desk pair and twenty joyful minutes simply trying to find a clear space in their desks.

Within the hour, Cragen had given them each a set of light assignments that could be performed while still within the confines of the precinct and Munch stood in front of their desks shaking his head.

"I suppose you two get to ride desks for a while, eh?"

Elliot shrugged and Olivia smirked at him.

"Those are some lame-ass excuses if you ask me. 'Someone attacked me and I'm re-learning to walk'... 'Someone attacked me and nearly cut my heart out'...you know when I was first starting out, I could've had a gash across my stomach and

braces to keep *me* up and I still would've been walking a beat." He shook his head sardonically. "They're just not making cops like they used to." He dodged a balled up wad of paper, Olivia threw at him and left the squad room with Fin. Olivia turned her smile toward Elliot who returned hers in stride. They nodded at one another across their desks and poured over the case files set before them.

El Fin:

Thursday September 27, 2007 1:43AM