

## Love At First Explosion

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# Love At First Explosion

by [tv\\_addict007](#)

## Summary

AU Caskett meeting. Rick is a fireman who happens to be the one that helped Beckett after her apartment exploded in 2x18. Coincidence or fate?

## Notes

Enjoy!

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

# Chapter 1

## Chapter 1

It was a chilly night, the sun already bid goodbye for the day. Yet the temperature was still pleasant enough to take a walk, just wearing a light coat.

Rick watched some love-struck couples passing by, cuddled up together while enjoying a romantic walk. It was a Friday night, most were probably on a date. Most likely dinner, followed by a movie and some were topping of the night with a walk under the clear sky.

"... then I've told the barkeep that I don't like olives in my drink. I've told him that explicit! And guess what I had in my drink? An olive! Unbelievable, isn't it? This incompetence nowadays."

The shrill voice of his date – Stacy – brought him out of his thoughts and back into the restaurant. Rick had learnt very fast that there wasn't enough alcohol to make her voice – their *whole* date – better. Not even all the alcohol of the whole world would! For the millionth time tonight, he asked himself how he even could come up with such a crazy idea like a blind date.

Oh right, it wasn't even *his* crazy idea, but the one of his friend.

Dan Spencer, a good friend and coworker at the fire department, came up with that idea. The sister of an old friend from college was still single, and Dan had thought that it would be perfect to set them up for a blind date. Dan had promised him a nice evening.

Well, it looked more like Dan was trying to set him up with a real party killer. He hadn't been bored like this for a long time. Stacy talked about fashion, manicure, shopping and parties. She talked without a break, and he just nodded absently once and then to keep the appearance that he was really interested in everything she was speaking about. Until now, he successfully made it through to dessert.

When Dan had brought up the idea of a blind date for the first time, he had been rather skeptical. After all, a blind date could end in one of two directions: either it'll be a pleasant evening, or a complete disaster.

In his case, it was the latter of those two.

In spite of his initial skepticism, he had let himself get overcome with a tang of anticipation and the thought about a mysterious woman made him curious. Rick had really been excited for this date. His mother and his daughter had quickly joined in in his excitement. Alexis had helped him choosing what to wear for the night and his mother... well, she had had some encouraging words for him. But she always had some of them. She was just glad that he was taking another chance in the dating world.

“Who knows, maybe you’ll meet *the one* today.” She had said, bidding him goodbye. Who knows, he had thought. Maybe his mother would be right and he’d meet the right one.

He rolled his eyes as he thought back to that. But she had been right about one thing. Since his divorce from Meredith, there hadn’t been anyone. Merely one or two short affairs that was all.

Until now he had been hiding rather successfully behind the role of a single father and the very busy fireman. Rick also had the feeling that this wasn’t just the idea of Dan, but his mother had yet to tip her hand.

Before he had gone to the restaurant, which was localized in a quieter neighborhood with some apartment buildings, he had stopped to buy a bouquet of flowers. However as he had stood in the flower shop, he had changed his opinion. A whole bouquet would be a little too much for a blind date, he had thought, suddenly getting nervous. At the end he had decided on buying one single flower, a mini-gerbera. She was wonderful. The flower was lightly pink at the end of its petal and the rest was white, the middle part was completely dark. It was unique and he had hoped that his date would be the same.

Unique.

Rick had had to wait only a few minutes before the door opened and a breath-taking, beautiful woman entered the cozy Restaurant.

She looked good, better than good actually. Long blond hair cascaded down over her shoulders. Her red dress looked good on her tall and athletic figure. The light of the candles was reflected in her azure eyes.

Breaking out of his daze, he had stood up to greet her.

"Stacy?" she had nodded confirming. "Hi, I’m Rick, but you probably already know that." He had smiled nervously. He had been absolutely out of his comfort zone at that moment. He still was. It was a long time since he last had been on a date. Too Long.

"Here, it’s for you. A beautiful flower for a beautiful lady." He had said smilingly, passing her the mini-Gerbera.

"Oh, I’m allergic. Sorry." Stacy had shrugged, ignoring the flower and had taken her seat at the table. *Setback number one.*

After the starter had come setback number two: the fatal one. He was *bored*. Stacy looked beautiful, but her character just didn’t fit to him. She was too superficial, and if her stories were any indication she was apparently a little arrogant. She just wasn’t the right one for him.

He had stopped listening since the main course had been served. The topics were dull. Things anyone could read up in gossip magazines.

Rick was happy when the dessert was served. Not long anymore and he’d have successfully survived this date.

"So, how many kittens have you already saved from trees?" she asked with a flirting smile.

Rick had to suppress rolling his eyes. Why did people think that a fireman had nothing better to do than saving cats out of trees? Honestly, they got up there without any problems, and they almost always got down on the ground again by themselves. *Without* the help of the fire department. It was extremely rare that the fire department had to save any kitten out of trees.

"I've never had to help any cat out of a tree. However, I saved some animals from getting burned. Mostly dogs, but there were some cats too."

"I can't imagine how hard it has to be to decide who to save first."

"Well, it's a little tricky at the beginning, but after some time at the fire department it's not a problem anymore. If there's a decision to be made between human and animal, it's always the human who comes first. They're our first priority." stated Rick.

Of course he was sorry for any animal he had to leave behind, getting trapped by the flames. Knowing that they're going to be burned alive. But he had to take care of the well-being of any person he encounters while being on scene. Any thoughts of saving any animal came after that. One of the worst things was telling a child that their animal wouldn't come back, that their *friend* was gone. His heart broke every time he saw those small teary eyes, knowing that their world just came crashing down.

Kids shouldn't be confronted with loss, but that was how the world functioned and he couldn't change it. Even if he wanted too.

"Well-" Stacy begun, but was interrupted by a loud, ear-deafening bang.

Rick knew that kind of noise. It had been an explosion, and according to the sound level it had to be pretty close. Rick's instincts took over and he immediately searched for the source. Outside were people running hysterically around, screaming something. However Rick didn't hear anything. All sounds were faded to the background.

He wasn't the Rick Rodgers who was on a date anymore. He was the Rick Rodgers who was on duty.

# Chapter 2

## Chapter Summary

Entering Kate....

## Chapter Notes

Enjoy!

## Chapter 2

Quickly he had found the affected building, smoke smoldered out of one of the upper apartments. Stacy was saying something, but he ignored her – just like he did the whole evening already. But this time he had a good reason to. If there were any survivors, every second counted.

Without hesitating he got up and hurried out of the restaurant, making his way directly towards the apartment building. He could hear sirens in the distance, but they still were at least five minutes away from their position. He had to act *now*!

Rick entered the building and climbed up the stairs, dodging around the people whom ran down the stairwell and into safety. As he arrived on the third floor, Rick saw an older man who looked rather confused at him, holding his hands to his head. Rick estimated him to be around seventy, and it looked like he had been more surprised by the explosion than anything else. Rick couldn't find any external injuries. Maybe the man was in shock.

He had seen plenty of explosions in his time as a firefighter. Some at close range, knowing there most likely was a ringing in the ears of the man from the noise.

"Sir, are you alright?" asked Rick, eying the man again from top to body just to be sure that he hadn't missed anything. But like before he couldn't find anything.

The man nodded. "I'm fine. There's only a ringing in my ears." The man yelled, and Rick had to wince briefly.

"Alright. Please get out of the building. Help is already on its way."

Rick walked further down the hall. It wasn't hard to localize the exact apartment that must've been the source of the explosion. The apartment was destroyed. The wall had some holes in it. The front door seemed to have not stood a chance against the blast of the explosion. The wooden shards were spread out all over the floor.

After a quick glance through the room Rick entered the apartment carefully, watching every one of his steps. There were many dangers in such situations. The floor could give out on him, the fire, the smoke, debris falling from the ceiling. He had to be on alert, at any time. Rick had to move as quick as he could, but at the same time as careful as possible.

Everywhere were small hearths of fire. The smoke clouded his view, burning in his eyes. What had been once a nice apartment was now a complete mess of rubble and cinder.

"Hello?" shouted Rick. The smoke already creeping in his throat, his lungs started to protest. He raised his left arm and put it over his mouth and nose, trying to keep as much smoke out as he could. He continued his search for any survivors.

Cautiously Rick made his way further into the destroyed apartment. "Anybody here?" he yelled again. He had to cough because of the smoke, a sign that it already made his way through his respiratory tract.

Maybe he had luck and nobody had been in the apartment as it had exploded. Nevertheless, he had to check every room. He couldn't rely on speculations. If there had been someone here, the person could be severely injured, possibly unconscious.

All of the sudden he came to a complete standstill when he heard a noise. He was sure it weren't the flames or even the working building.

There it was again! It sounded like a cough. It came from the rear part of the Apartment.

Rick moved quickly, yet still carefully into the direction of the source of the noise.

"Hello? Is there anyone?"

"Over here!" coughed a voice. It sounded like a woman.

He arrived at a smaller room, which he guessed must've been the bathroom.

"Ma'am?"

"I'm over here." Answered a voice, sounding a little rough. That roughness could come from smoke Inhalation.

Most people thought that the fire was the worst, but really it was the smoke that was the worst. It crept through any gaps and trapped its victims without them really noticing. It was a slow and painful death. A lot of people die more often of smoke inhalation than being burned alive.

The woman seemed to be uninjured, the bathtub must've protected her from the biggest part of the explosion. As usual Rick quickly scanned for any external injuries, but this time he

noticed – much to his own surprise – that the woman was completely naked, and he instinctively turned around.

*Really, Rick? Now was not the time to be modest!* he thought while searching for something for her to cover herself up. Sadly, he found nothing. The fire had taken everything.

Without considering any longer, he unbuttoned his shirt. He'd be fine without it for a while. He was a tall and broad-shouldered man. His shirt should cover up most of her body.

At least he hoped so.

"Here, slip into it. That's all I can offer you at the moment." He said, passing her his shirt while still having his head facing the other direction to give her some privacy. A naked woman was really a first for him, as surprising as it sounded.

Though it had just been a very short moment before he had turned around, he could tell without a doubt that she was a beautiful woman. Covered by a touch of soot, it didn't make her any less beautiful. Men must be pining away for her. She surely had dozens of admirers, but she most likely was already taken. Women like her weren't single for long. Which man wouldn't try to win over such a Beauty?

She got up slowly, Rick still glanced politely away. This situation was slightly awkward. And he had thought being on a blind date was out of his comfort zone. This was certainly way more uncomfortable than a date. But there was a first for everything, right?

The woman quickly threw the shirt over herself, and when he was sure that the most part of her was covered up he turned back towards her. Rick was pleased to see that his shirt was long enough for her.

"Thanks." She murmured in her still rough voice.

"No need to thank me. Can you walk?"

"Yeah, I think so."

Rick helped her out of the tub, her small hand held gently onto his bigger one and he couldn't help but notice how good their hands fitted together.

"Was there anyone with you in the apartment or have you been alone?" he asked as he laid an arm around her hip to steady her movement. She hobbled slightly, being barefooted while the floor was covered with lots of sharp things wasn't helping much.

"There wasn't anyone. Just me." She confirmed. He was relieved by this answer, but he told himself that it had more to do with the fact that he hadn't had to retrieve any other person out of the apartment rather than anything else it could mean.

A little part of the ceiling collapsed just a few feet away from them. Rick decided that they had already wasted enough time by their awkward meeting. They had to get out of here! Now!



He crouched down and put his arm around her legs, quickly lifting her up in his arms. Since she hadn't expected him to do just that, she let out a surprised squeal. Her arm automatically made its way up his naked chest before it took place around his neck, searching for a good hold.

It was hot in the apartment because of the fire, but her touch on his bare skin still made him shiver. What was it about this unknown woman? How did she make him feel so clumsy, as if this was his very first day out in the field?

"I can walk myself." She protested stubbornly, but holding onto him a little more firmly than before.

"Oh I'm pretty sure you can, but we're quicker that way."

He got them out of the apartment and moved towards the stairwell.

"Rick!"

He looked up surprised at the sudden voice calling out to him, glancing straight into the eyes of Finn, a fireman of one of the other fire houses in the city. He knew Finn from training units and already met him now and then outside of work, enjoying a few drinks to decompress after a long day.

"The apartment which was the source of the explosion is empty. But the floors below and above have to be secured." Rick informed his friend. In moments like these there wasn't time for small talk. Everything had to be on point and quickly processed.

Finn nodded. "An ambulance is already waiting outside of the building." Replied Finn nodding towards the woman in his arms, before taking off to the next floor followed by other firemen.

Rick held the woman closer to him, so that he could see the steps better. Stumbling and falling wasn't on his agenda at the Moment.

It didn't take long before Rick stepped out of the building, immediately breathing in as much fresh air as he could. He felt the woman in his arms doing the same, still coughing a Little.

His throat burned, screaming for as much oxygen as it could get. The night had gotten a bit colder and he got goosebumps from its coolness. The only source of warmth was the body of the woman he still held safely in his arms, but just like him she was trembling, fighting against the coolness. He held her a little closer to his body, hoping they'd both find some warmth in the other.

She looked so tiny in his arms.

The woman became impatient, trying to get him to let her down again seeing that they were out of the danger zone. However Rick didn't even think about letting her down. He scanned the area. The immediate area around the building was evacuated, various uniformed people ran around. They were all there: police, fire department, EMS.

Until now the cause for the explosion was still unknown.

# Chapter 3

## Chapter Notes

Enjoy!

## Chapter 3

He had no problems finding the ambulance, making his way over to it so that the woman could get looked over by a paramedic.

"Sam!" he yelled, as he recognized the doctor on scene. Dr. Samantha Chase glanced up as she heard someone calling for her. They knew each other, have met each other quite often in their line of work. Years ago, Sam was even working at the same firehouse like him.

Sam noticed the woman in Rick's arms and already got the oxygen mask out of the ambulance. Rick carefully let down the woman in his arms as they arrived at the ambulance, immediately missing her warmth.

"She's the one living in the apartment that exploded. She searched for protection in the bathtub and she had actually found it. She most likely has inhaled a lot of smoke."

Sam passed the oxygen mask to the woman, who accepted it with a short murmured *thanks* and inhaled as deep as she could. Rick was surprised as something was thrown at him, barely able to catch it. He glanced down and saw that it was a blanket, looking confused up at Sam.

"I'm quite sure the female world is absolutely enjoying the view of you shirtless, but you should cover yourself up. We don't want you to get sick, do we?" Sam exclaimed.

Right. Rick had almost forgotten about him being shirtless, while he worried about the woman he carried out of the apartment. Glad that he could finally cover himself from the cold *and* from any watching bystander, he quickly threw the blanket over himself. The warmth of the little piece of wool was very welcome. Looking back up, he stared directly at another oxygen mask which Sam held up in front of him.

He shook his head. "I'm fine." he declared.

Sam merely lifted unimpressed an eyebrow and continued to hold out the mask under his nose, waiting for him to take it. "You know the protocol."

He sighed, rolled his eyes and took defiantly the mask before taking three deep breaths. He did know the protocol, thank you very much.

"Happy? I swear I haven't inhaled much smoke. I'm really fine."

She stared at him for a moment before her glance softened and she grinned at him. Firemen were one of her worst patients. It was always a hassle to treat them. Satisfied with him, she put the mask back into the ambulance. Now she turned back to her other and probably less annoying patient.

"Ma'am, is everything alright? Are you hurt somewhere?" asked Sam, while she examined the woman for any injuries.

"No, I'm okay." The woman replied. Her voice was still a little rough, but not as much as before. Right now, a slight gentleness was making slowly its way back into her voice. As she looked up to meet his eyes, he noticed for the first time that her eye color was a hazel brown, with a glint of green flecks. He could lose himself in her eyes. After a few seconds she broke off their eye contact, fixing her glance at something behind him.

Confused at what she could possibly be looking at, he turned around and saw two men coming towards them. "Beckett!"

*Beckett?* Was that her name? Never once had he thought about asking for her name. All he had thought about was getting them out of the building and towards safety.

"How are you?" asked one of the men, the light wind waved through his blond hair.

"It's fine, Ryan." The woman smiled. *Beckett*, he reminded himself.

"We'll get this bastard." The other man replied. He had a darker skin tone, and Rick guessed that he must have a Latin origin. He looked a little sharper than the other one. Beckett gave him a reassured smile.

Rick followed their conversation, fishing for any information he could get. Beckett, Ryan and the other man he still didn't know the name of seemed to know each other really well. Ryan wore a badge on his belt, while the other man wore his on a chain around his neck. *Detectives*, concluded Rick.

Was Beckett also a detective? He wouldn't have deemed her for one. He had guessed that she was a lawyer or even a model, but a detective? Not really. But this little detail made everything much more interesting to him. Had the explosion not been an accident? Was it related to a case they were working on?

His mind was reeling with all the possibilities, and he was deep in thought as he noticed that Sam was talking to him. "She with you?" She asked, nodding her head at something behind the cordon of the Police.

Not knowing what she could mean, he looked to the side and saw Stacy behind the barrier, jumping up and down waving at him while calling his name again and again.

*God*, the woman was mid *thirty*! Couldn't she behave like that? Rick gave Sam a pained look. She understood, her eyes showed him some compassion, but it didn't stop her from

smiling at him, obviously amused by this scene. Slightly embarrassed, Rick walked over to his *Groupie*.

"I'm so sorry Stacy. I didn't mean to just leave you at the restaurant." Rick apologized, and it was true. He really was sorry. As much as he had hated their date, he would have never left her at the restaurant without a good reason. He hadn't thought much about it. He had just changed into work mode, quickly analyzing the situation and wanted to help as best as he could. He felt even worse when he thought about how the evening first became interesting through the explosion. Of course he would think differently if there had been any people seriously injured or even dead.

"Are you kidding?! You're a hero! How you've run into that building and saved that woman! But what happened to your shirt?"

That made him automatically look down. The blanket covered most of his upper body, but there was still a gap at the front showing of a bit of his naked skin. "I gave it to the woman. She was – let's say – underdressed."

"What gentleman you are." She said proudly and looked at him as if she was ready to eat him alive at any minute. "We can continue our date at some other day if you want to."

He winced internally at that. He wouldn't live through another date with her. Rick tried to let her down softly. "Look, I don't think we should go on another date. I just don't have so much time between my job and being a good father to my daughter. It wouldn't be fair to you."

"Oh," her mouth formed big O, "Well, call me when something changes."

He forced a smile and nodded, all the while knowing that he'll never call her.

"Oh, before I forget it. You forgot your jacket in the restaurant." Stacy passed him his black leather jacket, stood up on her toes and gave him a kiss on his cheek, before turning around. She looked briefly back at him and made the call-me-gesture, just before she disappeared in the crowd.

Relieved to see her gone, he made his way over to Sam again. Beckett and the two men were nowhere to be seen, as he had to notice much to his dismay. He would've liked to exchange some more words with her. But Sam was still there, putting away her medical Equipment.

"Who was your *fan*?" She asked him teasingly, as he stood next to her again.

"Don't ask! She was my blind date."

Sam looked surprised. "Rick Rodgers on a blind date? That's new. How did that happened?"

"How do you think?" he replied with a knowing look.

"Dan."

"Exactly. Though it isn't confirmed yet, I'm pretty sure my mother has a part in this too." he sighed.

"With family and friends like these, you don't need any enemies." Sam exclaimed, almost feeling sorry for him.

"Not really." Rick looked around, seemingly searching for something. "Where's your patient?"

"She left with those two men, searching for Captain Wayne. I think they want to ask if they can already enter the apartment. Did you know that the FBI is here, too?"

"The FBI? Must be one hell of a case." He stated, already lost in thoughts. Sam eyed him knowingly. Everyone who knew Rick as good as she did, knew that he loved mysterious things. He loved mysteries, loved to reveal them. There were times in which she thought that Rick had taken the wrong career path, but after all he went to the fire department instead of the police. Besides, as much as he loved a good mystery, he really loved to be a fireman.

"Maybe you should go to Captain Wayne too. I'm pretty sure he wants to talk to you." Sam told him while cleaning up the ambulance and closing the doors, getting ready to leave the scene again.

"I probably should."

"Well, I'll see you around. Greet Alexis and Martha from me."

"I will. And you say hi to Mike." Rick waved to her before he went to search for Captain Wayne.

# Chapter 4

## Chapter Notes

Enjoy the update :D

## Chapter 4

Rick walked over to Captain Wayne. The captain would certainly want to hear his report, but Rick knew that Captain Wayne wouldn't be all too happy with him. After all, he had entered the building without back up or proper protection. Rick had gone completely against all he was trained for. He could already hear the lecture he was sure would come. His own captain, Captain Harper, would put his oar in too. The only difference was that Captain Harper's scolding him would be followed by telling him that he was proud of him, ending their conversation with a fake stern glance and the order for him not to do it again. However, both men would know that Rick would do it again, if something like this happened again.

Captain Harper was a good man and an even better fireman. Rick was proud to call him his Captain. Besides, he and Harper were really close. In his first year at the fire department, there had been an explosion while being inside the building. At that time Harper hadn't been his Captain yet, they had worked side by side watching each other's backs. The explosion caused the floor to collapse and Rick lost his footing, barely grabbing onto something to hold him up. He had hung directly over the raging fire.

Rick would never forget that night. He had slowly lost his hold, and he had thought that this would be his end. He'd die, falling into the flames and being burned alive. Just as he had completely lost his hold, two hands grabbed his arms and hauled him up again. Those hands had belonged to Harper. If it hadn't been for him, he wouldn't be here today.

Since that night they had become really good friends, and Rick was still grateful for him. But it wasn't just him. His mother was also grateful that he saved her only son from dying that night. Harper and his family were often over for dinner, but Rick really had shown his gratitude when his daughter was born. She would've never known her dad if Harper wouldn't have saved him. Her name would always remind him of his heroic deed: Alexis Harper Rodgers.

Rick had found Captain Wayne faster than he had thought. He saw Beckett standing with her back to him a few feet away, talking to some people he hadn't seen before. But she somehow seemed to feel his gaze on her, because she turned around and smiled softly at him as she noticed him. She obviously had found some clothes to wear, but much to his surprised she still wore his shirt. He nodded at her before stepping over to Wayne.

"Lieutenant Rodgers." Wayne greeted him in a rather unfriendly tone, clearly not happy to see him. Just great.

Rick nodded, "Captain".

"I heard you were first at the scene?" It was more a statement than a question.

"Yes, sir. I was in the restaurant right opposite the apartment building as it happened."

"And then you entered the building. Without any protection gear or back up." Wayne continued, his glance cold as Stone.

Rick knew the rules. But he'd never apologize for wanting to help save a human life. "I've analyzed the situation and deemed it safe to enter and help with the evacuation while knowing that help was on the way, Sir."

"It's dangerous to enter critical buildings alone and unprotected. So many things could happen. You, as a lieutenant of the firehouse 55, should know this. Especially after what happened to you almost fourteen years ago." Reprimanded him the Captain angrily. Rick stayed silent, enduring this little lecture. "I'll exchange a few words with Captain Harper. You're dismissed, Lieutenant Rodgers."

Without spending any second longer with Wayne, Rick turned around and quickly walked away. However he didn't come far before someone put his arm around his neck and pulled him to the side. Rick knew that it could only be one Person.

"Played the hero tonight, didn't you?" grinned Finn. Finn Garcia had only been working for the last five years as a fireman. But this job was his whole life. He had no family, besides his parents up in Chicago. Finn was the typical dream boy: Mid twenty, blond longish hair, an athletic body, tall and green eyes, and he was always ready to flirt with any woman he encountered. The women on his side changed regularly.

Finn reminded Rick of himself. In his College time he had been just like Finn. A womanizer, using his obvious attracting effect on the female students. Until he had met Meredith. They had had fun, but it hadn't been anything serious. It only had become serious when she had told him that she was pregnant. That had been the exact moment his life had changed. Changed for the better. He wanted to be a good father. Unfortunately Meredith hadn't taken this chance to change, to grow up.

Rick remembered that Finn had said something. "I only did what I thought was right."

"And I admire you for that, my friend."

"What do you know about the explosion?" Rick asked hoping Finn would know more.

Finn retrieved his arm from Rick's shoulder and he looked a little bit more serious than before, changing into work mode. "The apartments over and below are secured. The fire is extinguished. There aren't any seriously injured or dead people. The worst injury was a cut above the eye."



"Then it was at least not as bad as it had looked." Rick concluded, relieved that nothing too serious happened. Of course it was bothersome if one's apartment exploded, but it would've been worse if someone had actually died. A human life was certainly more worth than any furniture.

"Have you been on a hot date, or who was the woman you have talked to at the barrier?"

"Dan played Cupid again." Rick nodded confirming.

"Ouch. What happened to your shirt by the way?"

Rick shrugged. "I had to give it to the woman I've carried out of the building. She needed it more than I did."

"What do you mea – oh! She was naked?!" Finn exclaimed surprised. Rick nodded, but didn't comment any further. Ms. –Mrs.? – Beckett was certainly enough embarrassed by it. Finn seemed to realize this too and closed of that particular topic. He can be an ass sometimes, but only sometimes.

Somebody called for Finn, causing him to bid goodbye to Rick. But not before informing his friend that they had to stage a poker night again very soon.

Rick pulled the blanket off of him, baring his naked upper body to the cold night. He quickly put on his leather jacket and covered up himself with the blanket again.

"Sorry." Came a gentle voice from behind him. A voice that had sounded a little rougher when he heard it the last time. Rick thought that her voice sounded more and more like a melody. He turned around and smiled at her.

There she stood: Beckett. Black boots, black trousers and the rest of her body was still covered by his blue shirt. She had an apologetic smile on her lips, her cheeks slightly flushed, but that could be from the coolness. The blanket Sam had given her back at the ambulance must be laying somewhere long forgotten. But her eyes was still the one thing that fascinated him the most. There was a special gleam in them.

He tore himself out of his fascination. "What do you mean?"

"You're freezing because of me." She lowered her head a little, staring at the little piece of his skin that still was visible through the opening of his jacket.

"If this means that you're not freezing, then it's fine with me." he smiled.

Beckett bit onto her lower lip, looking everywhere but at him. "I just wanted to thank you. For fishing me out of my tub." She chuckled, probably thinking back to their time in her bathroom. Now he had to laugh too. "And I especially wanted to thank you for giving me your shirt. That was very nice of you."

"Your welcome. But you really don't have to thank me for all of that. I just did my job." This information made Beckett prick up her ears, looking curiously at him as if she wanted to know more about him.

"What are you doing for a living, Mr. ...?"

"Rodgers. Rick Rodgers and I'm a fireman." Rick offered his hand to shake which she gladly took. There it was again. This little tingling feeling as soon as his hand touched his one.

"I'm Kate Beckett. I work for the NYPD."

"You're a cop?" he asked surprised, but he had already thought as much.

"Detective." She confirmed. "Homicide."

"Consider me throughout impressed." He replied and her cheeks flushed again, this time however he was sure it wasn't because of the coolness of the night. It almost seemed that she was a little uncomfortable with getting a compliment so openly.

"Beckett!" Ryan - probably her colleague - called for her.

"Well, I've got to go. So, thanks again." She said before she turned around and walked back to her colleagues.

Rodgers watched her walking away, memorizing every movement she made. He stored away every little detail, knowing that this was probably the last time he'd see her.

But he was sure that he would never forget about her.

She was unique.

# Chapter 5

## Chapter 5

Dead tired by the events of the night Rick opened the door to the loft, happy to be finally home. At the moment, all he could think about was getting into bed. The adrenalin that rushed through his system a few hours ago had long since gone, leaving him completely exhausted.

It was way past midnight, and the loft was already dark. No doubt his mother and daughter were already fast asleep, getting the rest he was craving right now. Rick had five hours until he had to get to work again, and being called into Harper's office was probably the first thing on his agenda that day.

Rick would have had the chance to see his two favorite ladies if he had gone home right after he spoke to Detective Beckett, but he had searched for Finn again to ask if they really had everything under control and his help really wasn't needed on scene. Normally he would have asked the Captain, but he had already gotten a lecture from Wayne, besides he wasn't a big fan of him.

Captain Wayne was a facile man. Strict and direct, but at the same time very loyal and collegial. He just couldn't stand the type of man Rick was. Wayne didn't like it if one of his firemen stood out, trying to play the hero. It wasn't that he didn't appreciate the engagement and dedication, but he was a man straight by the rules, and sometimes Rick deemed it necessary to break those rules to save a life. That was the only thing that Wayne didn't like about him and he showed it every time they met.

Rick took off his leather jacket and hung it to the wardrobe, leaving him half naked again. At least it was warmer in the loft than outside, he thought.

"That must have been one hell of a date."

He glanced surprised up, seeing his mother sitting on the couch in the darkness of the loft while sipping her drink. He should've known better. His mother was a night owl. She never went to bed early.

"Let's say it was explosive." He replied dryly and scuffled further into the loft.

"So, did you...?" she wiggled with her brows.

"No," he shook his head. And even if they would have, that wasn't something he'd like to discuss with his mother. "There was an explosion opposite of the restaurant we were in."

That made Martha stand up, looking worriedly at her son. She'd probably never get used to his job. She'll always worry about him, praying that he'll come home again. "What? What happened? Are you okay?"

“I’m fine, Mother. I don’t know exactly what happened. All I know is that there had been an explosion. I’d have to ask Finn if he learnt something knew about the cause.”

“Can’t you go anywhere without risking your life?”

“Come on. It’s not like I’ve planned for this to happen.” He reasoned.

“You could’ve done like any other civilian, calling for help and wait until they’re there to do their job.”

“But it’s my job, too.”

“It was your day off!”

Rick rolled his eyes. In situations like the one tonight, he didn’t care if he was on duty or not. He didn’t become a fireman because he thought it was cool. He became one because he wanted to help people. That was exactly what he had done after the explosion.

“I’m not somebody who sits back and waits for the cavalry to arrive. Not if I can help. You know that.” He said, looking at his mother. They had this exact conversation in the past. Over and over. But it got less over the years. He got more experienced on the job, knew how to do his job without risking his own life. At the same time he knew that there were some situations in which he had to take small risks to rescue a person, but he’d never tell his mother of them. She was worried enough, even if she didn’t show it as often as she used to.

“Alexis already in bed?” Rick asked, changing the topic to a safer ground.

“Yes. She wanted to wait up for you, but it got too late and she has a test tomorrow.”

“Okay. Speaking of late, I’ll go to bed now too. I’ve got to go to work in a few hours.” He said, walking over to his mother to give her a kiss on the forehead. “You should go get some sleep too, Mother.”

“I will.” She replied, watching her son retreat to his bedroom.

As much as she was worrying about him while doing his job, she was very proud of him. Proud to have such a generous, strong and caring man as her son.

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Rick cursed. He was late. Very late. He should have been at work for an hour now, but he had been stuck in traffic. He had to admit that he may have overslept a little. Only a little. But it seemed to be enough for traffic to get worse. He just hoped that they weren’t called to go out into the field yet.

He hurried up the stairs into the bullpen, waving at some of his colleague’s. “Morning, guys.”

“Good morning, Rick. Heard you got into trouble last night.” Mark grinned.

“Just a slight change of plans.” He joked, before making his way over to his desk. His friend and colleague Dan Spencer looked up from his desk as he saw Rick arriving in the bullpen, a

big smirk on his lips.

“Lieutenant Richard Rodgers, ladies and gentlemen. Has his first date after an eternity and he ends up running into a burning building!” Dan exclaimed and some of the other colleague’s whom stood close to them chuckled at that.

“Yeah, yeah. Joke as much as you want too.”

“How was the date?”

Rick sighed. “You know, I don’t wish anyone something bad, but if you ask me the explosion could have happened a bit sooner. Maybe around the tenth minute into the date?”

Dan grimaced. “That bad?”

“That woman was one big catastrophe. I fell almost asleep!” Rick exclaimed.

“But she looks hot, doesn’t she?”

“That’s the only positive trait in my opinion. I’m sure she’s not that bad, but she just isn’t the one for me. We’re in no way compactible.”

“At least you tried. You got over yourself and your fears. It’s a start.”

“I’m not afraid of women.”

“Really?” Dan stated, lifting his brow unimpressed.

“Yeah. I just don’t have enough time between work and being a dad. Besides, I guess I just haven’t found the right one.”

“You and your fantasy.” Dan said, shaking his head at his friend. “As much as anyone hopes, your soulmate isn’t just going to pop up in front of you on your way home. You have to go out there.”

This time it was Rick who shook his head unbelievably, smiling at his friend. “O ye of little faith!”

“So tell me about that explosion.”

Rick put his bag away and sat down, already having changed into his work clothes at home. “It was right opposite of the restaurant we were in.”

“The little Italian one?”

“Yeah. The food is really good. Anyway, the explosion was in an apartment on the third level. I have to admit that I may have seen worse, but Detective Beckett definitely has to search for a new apartment. It’s completely ruined.”

“Detective Beckett?” Dan asked confused. His friend had never told him something about a Detective Beckett.

“Detective Kate Beckett. She works for the NYPD. It was her apartment that exploded.”

Dan smirked. “Is she the one you carried out of the building being half naked?”

“Yeah. Wayne wasn’t really amused by that.” Rick replied, ignoring the Jap about him being half naked.

“I already heard about that. Wayne was less than happy with you.”

Rick rolled his eyes. “Wayne is never happy with anyone.”

“You should’ve seen him storming in here this morning. Went straight into Harper’s office.” Snorted Dan.

“He was already here?”

“Yes. First thing today.”

“Maybe I should be lucky that I overslept then.”

Dan nodded. “You definitely should.”

“Rodgers!”

Both Dan and Rick glanced towards the Captain’s office where Harper stood, looking at them. “My office.”

Rick sighed. As much as he knew that he wouldn’t get into much trouble with Harper, he still didn’t look forward to this conversation. Besides he knew exactly that his action got his Captain in some trouble with Wayne, maybe even with Chief Aiden. Harper was his friend. He didn’t want him to get reprimanded because of him.

Harper motioned for him to sit down, looking stone-faced at Rick. Almost cautiously, Rick sat down and waited for his Captain to speak.

“You’re late.”

“I got stuck in traffic. I’m sorry.”

“Captain Wayne stopped by this morning.”

“What did he want?” Rick asked, but he already knew the answer.

“He wanted me to lecture you, possibly even suspend you.”

Now Rick had to gulp. His Captain would never... “What was your response?”

“That I’d take care of it and scold you for your reckless actions.” Harper exclaimed annoyed by Rick’s actions, before his face softened. “So consider yourself scolded.”

Rick looked surprised up. “That’s all?”

Harper sighed. “What did you expect? He stormed in, yelled, vented, and yelled some more.”

“I reckoned that I’d get a full lecture.”

“Would it work?” He asked, but he already knew the answer. “We both know that it’s going to happen again given the circumstances, and we both know too, that I’m going to have your back again. I’ll always defend you. You’re one of my best men. But there might come a time where I can’t protect you anymore. You have to be more careful. If not for doing me a favor, then at least do it for your daughter. She doesn’t deserve to grow up fatherless.”

That one worked. Of course Rick thought of his daughter every time he entered a burning building. She was always on his mind. In difficult situations, she was his motivation. He fought every day to come back home to her.

She really shouldn’t grow up without her dad. Even with her fourteen years, she still was his little princess. And he was her hero.

That was what she called him when she was little. *Her* hero.

And heroes always came back home to their families.

# Chapter 6

## Chapter Summary

Some fun Kate/Lanie interaction and Rick/Kate meet again!

## Chapter Notes

Enjoy the update!

## Chapter 6

“Have you been able to find a new apartment yet?”

“No. Not really.” Sighed Kate as she played absently with her glass, observing the little alcohol that was still inside. She and her best friend Lanie were decompressing from the events of the day in a bar near the precinct. Another killer behind bars, another case solved.

It had been almost five weeks since her apartment exploded. Since then she had been living with her dad. It wasn't like she didn't enjoy seeing him more often than she did normally, but she craved for her own private sanctuary. She wanted to be on her own again. But until now she had yet to find a new apartment that she could see herself living in.

Loud laughter drew her attention immediately to the billiard tables in the back of the bar.

A group of men were having fun, playing in teams against each other. But every time she glanced into their directions, there really was only one man she was looking at.

It was a coincidence, really. She hadn't known he'd be here tonight. Hadn't even seen him here in the past. She and Lanie sat at their usual table, enjoying a few drinks together. And like always Kate had scanned the room mindlessly after sitting down, taking in the people in the bar. That was the moment she had seen him.

She had recognized him immediately. His tall height and broad shoulders, his brown hair that looked as soft as the last time she had seen him. And especially his blue eyes that seemed to have a constant spark in them. Every time she heard the group laugh, her eyes magically landed on him on the other side of the room.

Honestly? She'd have never thought that she'd see him again.



Kate had to admit that she still had his shirt. At the beginning she told herself that she'd return it to him, but she quickly realized that she didn't know where he worked at exactly, and searching every firehouse for him would have made her look crazy. After dismissing the idea of returning it, she planned to keep it a few days longer, since it really was one of the only pieces of clothing she had then.

But she *still* had it.

A shirt of a man she didn't know. After two months since the explosion. She'd never tell a soul about that, and she hoped to god that nobody would ever find out. What this little fact told her about herself, she didn't want to know.

"Earth to Beckett."

"What?" Kate exclaimed surprised, completely caught off-guard by her best friend.

"Really?" Lanie asked. "Where the hell are you with your thoughts tonight?"

Kate shook her head dismissingly. "Oh well, nowhere special."

Lanie sat up a little straighter, a teasing glint suddenly visible in her eyes. "Do you want to know what I'm thinking? I think your thoughts are somewhere in those blue eyes of the man you keep eyeing throughout the evening." stated Lanie. "Should I leave you two alone?"

"Oh, please!" scoffed Kate. Maybe she hadn't been as discreet as she had thought. Damn, it was time for damage control. "Maybe I looked once or twice in his direction. So what?"

"Sure. That's something you can tell our dear god, and even he wouldn't believe you."

Why was it that Lanie always seemed to look right through her? She always knew when she lied or tried to deflect when she came too close to the truth.

"It's him." Kate murmured, keeping her head lowered.

Lanie had barely heard Kate's reply because of the loud noise of the bar and her friend's quiet voice. "It's whom?"

Kate sighed, slightly annoyed that her friend made her spill it out for her. "The fireman that helped me out of my apartment."

"The one that saw you naked?"

Now she rolled her eyes, making her annoyance obvious to Lanie, who smiled satisfied at her. "He didn't see me naked. He was a gentleman. He turned around almost instantly and gave me his shirt to cover myself up."

"*Almost* instantly." repeated Lanie, drawing out the word *almost*. "He's hot."

Kate gazed back at him, humming slightly.

Lanie eyed her friend curiously, taking in her absent glance towards the group of men in the back. If she didn't know it better, she'd say that Kate Beckett had a crush. Biting down a smirk, she decided to keep that kind of knowledge as ammunition for later use.

After a few seconds Lanie thought it was time to get Kate's thoughts back to their table. "I don't know about you, but I get to know a guy first before I take off my clothes for him."

That statement earned an eye roll from Kate. Lanie would never let her live that one down. What did she expect? It hadn't been like she knew that her apartment would explode any minute.

Now it was Lanie who looked towards the men, narrowing her eyes. "But he's definitely a Mr.-July kind of guy. Are you claiming him or is he fair game?"

"Lanie!" Kate hissed, already feeling how her cheeks turned pink.

Lanie looked innocently at Kate. "What? It was just a normal question. Relax." Taking in the flushed expression of Kate she smirked again, not being able to keep another teasing jab to herself. "God you must have it bad."

"There's nothing and there will never be something. He was kind to me, that's all. He probably wouldn't even recognize me again."

"Why do you think that? Because he didn't approach you after your second longing glance towards him?" Lanie stated matter-of-factly, earning another annoyed glance for her exaggerated statement. "The bar is packed. The poor guy most likely hasn't seen you yet."

"Or it's like I said it is. He didn't remember me. He rescues dozens of women."

"Women who are completely naked?" countered Lanie with a smirk.

"I'm already regretting ever telling you about that." sighed Kate.

"Technically you didn't. The boys told me about that little fact. You'd have never told a soul about that."

"Gee, I wonder why!" Kate remarked sarcastically. "Remember me to give those two knuckleheads my paperwork for the next two weeks as a reward for extraordinary gossiping."

"Did you really expect a different behavior?"

Kate chuckled at that. Lanie was right, those two would probably never change. But as much as it was annoying at times, she wouldn't want it any other way. They were her partners, her family.

"I have to make a quick visit to the bathroom. Why don't you order us another round?" asked Kate, not really waiting for a response.

A few minutes later Kate made her way back to their table, coming to an abrupt stop when she saw that Lanie wasn't sitting in her seat. Was she still getting their drinks?

Continuing to the table, she spotted instantly the plain white napkin with Lanie's handwriting on it. *Sorry, Girl. Couldn't resist. Enjoy the rest your night.*

Kate looked confused at her friend's message. What did she mean?

"Hey."

All of the sudden her body tensed while her heart skipped a beat. She didn't! Lanie would never dare...

Kate turned around and winced inwardly. She *did*. She actually did it.

In front of her stood Richard Rodgers, smiling softly at her. The man who had held her attention more than Lanie had this evening. There was no point in denying it anymore. At least not to herself. If asked by anyone else she'd be fully in deflection mode.

"Hi." She replied surprised, feeling a little awkward. What should she say to him?

"Your friend approached me. Told me who she was and that you're here too."

"Yeah. And then she ditched me." She answered drily.

Rick smiled. "She shoved me those drinks in my hands," he explained, holding up the drinks Lanie should've gotten them. "Telling me that she had to be somewhere else. Something about bodies. I take it she works for the police too, otherwise I might have let a serial killer on the loose."

Kate chuckled, biting onto her lower lip. She flushed slightly as she noticed his eyes glancing quickly down at her lips before his blue eyes were staring directly into her hazel ones again. "She does work for the NYPD. She's our ME."

"Explains the talk about bodies." Rick grinned.

An awkward silence fell over them. Both of them seemed to not really know what to say. After a few seconds their eyes meet again, and they both erupted into laughter.

"I'm sorry. I honestly thought that I'd never see you again."

"Yeah, me too. It's not often that I meet a person again who I carried out of a burning apartment." He stated. "So you got ditched and my friends already left, why don't we enjoy those free drinks together?"

She should go home. Tell him that it had been nice to see him again, and wish him a good night. She had had enough drinks for the night already, had to be early at work again the next day. She should pack her things, pull on her coat and walk out of the door not once looking back at him.

She really should do all that, stay in her routine. A man didn't fit in her life at the moment.

But something stopped her from doing so, realizing quickly that she just didn't *want* to do those things.

She smiled. "Sure why not."

# Chapter 7

## Chapter Summary

More of Castle/Beckett

### Chapter 7

Rick realized pretty quickly that he liked her laugh. It was a sweet melody, encouraging everyone to join into it. He could listen to it the rest of the night, enjoying the sight of her. Her eyes beaming with pure amusement, the corner of her lips being lifted upwards every time a smile formed on her lips.

He also noted that she always unconsciously pulled a stray strand behind her ears when she was trying not to smile, biting onto her lower lip. An adorable habit of hers.

Currently she was laughing about him and his experience with the police force. “And you really stole a police horse while being naked? Why did you do that?”

Rick shrugged, trying to look like a pure innocent man. “I was drunk. And I lost a bet.”

“You did it because you lost a bet?”

“I always owe up to my debts. Even if it’s something like that.”

Kate chuckled. “That poor police officer. Must have been shocked to see a naked man steal his horse.”

“*He* was shocked? *I* was shocked when I woke up in a holding cell the next day, having one of the worst hangover I’ve ever had.”

“And what was the verdict for your actions?”

Rick sighed. “Community service. Three months.”

“Three months of cleaning up New York City?”

“No. Three months cleaning out the stables of the police horses.”

She had to laugh at this, picturing him standing in the middle of a dunghill holding a pitchfork. Kate would’ve loved to see it for herself. “Serves your right.”

“What about you?” He asked, emptying his glass too.

“What about me?”

He sat a little straighter now, looking curiously at her. “What did you do? Which skeletons are in your closet?”

“There are no skeletons.” She replied matter-of-factly.

“Come on,” he scoffed. “You can’t tell me you never did anything wrong.”

“You do know I’m a cop, right?”

“So? Even cops have fun from time to time, letting their hair down.”

Kate narrowed her eyes at him, thinking of anything she could tell him. “Fine. I dated a grunge rocker when I went to school.”

“That’s just..... bad. Come on, you can definitely do better.”

“I missed my prom, going instead to a poetry slam.”

“Please, I missed my prom because I got expelled right before the event, after I sneaked into school with my friends one night, pushing a cow up twelve flights of stairs and onto the roof.”

Damn. Was this really degenerating into a competition? She leant forward gazing directly into his eyes, ready to up her game. “After I applied for the NYPD, they did a background check on me. Afterwards I found out that I married my ex a few year prior on a trip to Vegas.”

“That’s better.” Rick smiled. “But I’m sure you can still top that.”

“When I was a teenager I went to a concert, picked the lock on the tour bus and stole the jacket of one of the band members.”

Rick smirked triumphant. “Ah, there it is. A little rebel.”

“So you’re satisfied now?”

“For now.” He grinned. “How did a rebel like you become a cop?”

Kate stayed silent and he already thought that he wouldn’t get an answer from her, however she exhaled deeply and started to speak in a low voice “Someone close to me got killed.”

His next question was already on its way to be voiced out, at the tip of his tongue. His curiosity awoken. Who had been killed? How? When? Did they catch the killer? However the look of her eyes made him halt.

Sadness and grief were visible in them. This conversation he'd be about to start would make her uncomfortable. She'd probably shut down altogether, searching for a suitable apology and leave him sitting here in a matter of seconds. And as blunt as he could be sometimes, he never would directly make anyone uncomfortable, especially not when it was as palpable as it was right at this moment.

It was obvious that their *fun time* was over, and Rick almost regretted to have ever asked that question. The topic obviously a sore point for her. "I'm sorry for your loss."

She smiled slightly at him, appreciating his way of giving her an out of this particular topic. "And how did you become a fireman?"

"I wanted to do something cool." He shrugged.

Kate rose an eyebrow, not fully believing his nonchalance. "Really?"

"No." he smiled. "But this job does have a coolness factor, you have to admit that."

She just rolled her eyes at his child-like behavior.

"My story goes way back when I was a kid. I just turned ten, my friend and I played in an abandoned house down the street we lived. Our parents told us again and again how we aren't allowed to enter it, but we never cared. It was an empty house, a huge place and certainly big enough to serve as a fantastic playground. One day we were messing around like we always did, however we accidentally knocked over one of your self-made lamps and the wooden floor caught fire. I've never seen a fire spread this fast." He told her, and she was totally engrossed in his storytelling. Kate was picturing how he and his friend must have panicked after the fire started to spread out.

"The only exit of the room we were in was cut off by the fire. We panicked, pressed our backs to the naked wall on the opposite side. We didn't know what to do. Smoke was starting to get into our systems, our eyes got blurry. I remember having trouble breathing. A sudden tiredness was creeping its way through my body, paralyzing me and my eyes slowly closed. The last thing I saw before I fell unconscious was a black figure jumping through the flames, then there was only blackness."

He took a moment while he relieved one of his most frightened moments in his life.

"I learned later that the figure I saw was a fireman who came to get us out of the house. I've never saw him again, could never thank him for what he did. That man rescued two kids from their certain death. Two kids whom had their whole lives still in front of them, had dreams. Since then I knew I wanted to do the same, saving people. But not only saving them, but at the same time saving their dreams and hopes. Giving them a chance to act on them, to live."

"And you never met the man that saved you?" Kate asked.

Rick shook his head. "No. I searched for him. After I got accepted by the FDNY, I asked my way around. I found a man who had worked with the one who saved my friend and me. He told me that his name was Rob Finnigan and that he moved back to Seattle a month after this incident."

Silence took over for a moment, both mending to their own thoughts.

Kate's eyes flicked back up, resting them on Rick's face. "Had this been the reason why you got into my apartment? Did you think that there were some children involved?"

“I got into your apartment because I wanted to help, not caring what kind of people were in there. Am I happy that there weren’t any children? Hell yeah. But that doesn’t mean I wouldn’t have helped even if I had known that fact.”

Glancing to her empty glass and a quick check to see what time it was, Kate decided that it would probably be a good idea to head home. As much as she would like to stay a little longer, she knew that she’ll most likely won’t get out of bed the next morning if she’d do so. “It’s late. I should go home.”

“Would you like to have lunch with me tomorrow?”

That question caught her off-guard. She hadn’t thought that he’d want to meet up again, at least not that soon. However she answered his question without really thinking it over. Her head had surrendered earlier this evening, not overthinking any of her moves. She could do that tomorrow again. Today she wanted to finish the evening careless of any future worry. “Sure. But I’m not sure if I’ll get a case or not.”

Rick smiled. “Hey, I have two perfectly working legs. I can bring lunch wherever you want me to.”

“You don’t have to play delivery man, Rick. Let’s just settle with me calling you. Either I have time or we have to reschedule our lunch meeting. That okay?”

“Sure.” Rick agreed readily, though he knew already that even if she didn’t have time tomorrow, he’d make sure to bring her something. He was too eager to see her again to wait for a time they both would have time again. Besides, if it really should come to that, maybe he could see the precinct and get to know something of her case. His interest already spiking in him. “Let’s hope for the best then.”

“Good night, Rick.” Kate replied, taking her coat and making her way to the door.

“See you tomorrow.” She heard Rick calling after her and she looked shortly back over her shoulder, seeing Rick grinning at her and she had to shake her head at his trust of them seeing each other the next day.

Still she couldn’t keep a small smile off her lips, hope blossoming up in her.

Hope, that he was right.



# Chapter 8

## Chapter 8

“Can you tell me anything yet, Lanie?” Kate asked as she entered the autopsy. Sure enough they have gotten a new case this morning, the call arousing her from her sleep before even her alarm clock got the chance to. Kate had had more problems to get out of her soft and comfortable bed than usual, the payback for her extra drink with Rick.

A man had been stabbed to death in his apartment, his daughter found him in the kitchen of the apartment this morning. Emily, the daughter of their victim, had just turned fourteen. They lived alone, her mother had apparently left them when Emily had just reached the shy age of three years. As Kate had seen Emily, she remembered back to where she had been in the teen’s shoes. Sure she had been already nineteen and still had her father at the time, but losing a parent was horrible, regardless of the age difference.

Lanie brought Kate back to the present with an irritated glance towards the detective. “I just came back, haven’t even opened the body yet. We were stuck in traffic. Our new driver doesn’t know his way around here yet.”

Kate blew out a deep breath, driving her hand through her hair. This day already was promising to become a stressful one when she had first seen the murder scene. “When do you think you could have something for me?”

“In time.”

“Lanie I have a distraught teenager upstairs, who had to see the lifeless body of her father in their kitchen, laying in his own puddle of blood.”

“I know, Kate. As soon as I have something, I’ll call you. I promise.” Lanie replied, starting on the Y incision. “How was the rest of your night out?”

Kate rolled her eyes, unbelieving that her best friend would want to start this conversation while working on the body of their victim. Though she should know by now that Lanie wasn’t irritated by those things, being able to talk about anything in any situation. “It was good.”

“Good? That’s all?”

“What do you want me to say?”

Lanie glanced briefly at Kate, shrugging. “Spilling all the juicy details maybe?”

“There are no *juicy details*. We drank the drink you shoved into his hands, and talked for some time before calling it a night.”

“When are you meeting again?” Lanie asked curious.

Kate sighed. “Well we planned to meet up for lunch today, but I called him earlier to cancel.”

“What? Why did you do that?”

“Err Lanie, new case? A man had been killed in his apartment? Remember?”

This time Lanie rolled her eyes. “I remember perfectly, especially when said man is laying right in front of me. Thanks for the reminder though. I just mean that you could have still met him for lunch. The boys would be fine enough to be on their own for an hour. Promise them to get them coffee and a burger and they’d have been happy.” Lanie exclaimed.

“I already know that they’re easy-care.”

“Then call that hunk of a man and tell him you’ve changed your mind. Tell him something about having time since you have to wait for some results, which you do by the way.” Lanie said nodding towards the body she was working on.

“I can’t.”

“What’s the problem? You just have to pull out your cell, dial and speak. I know you know how to do this. I’ve seen you plenty of time doing this procedure with successful results.”

“That’s not what I mean. It’s already lunch time. He works as a fireman, Lanie. He can’t just suddenly drop everything just because I changed my mind at the last minute. I’ll call some time later and reschedule, okay?”

“I’ll ask you later if you really called him.”

Kate wanted to reply as her cell chirped up, glancing at the display she noticed a text from Ryan. “That’s Ryan. Maybe they have something. You’ll call me when you have something?”

“Sure.”

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Stepping out of the elevator Rick slowly made his way over to the bullpen, taking a good look at the open room. Some people hurried along the floors, different telephones were ringing, giving the place a busy buzz. Every person who passed him didn’t even spare a glance at him, making him feel somewhat lost. He had no idea where to look for Kate.

Entering the open office space and taking a quick look at the people, he spotted a familiar face. Two, as a matter of fact. He recognized them as the two men whom worked with Kate. As he walked towards them Rick tried to remember their names, recalling that one of them had a first name as a surname.

The Latin detective seemed to notice his presence, looking up at him while he nudged his colleague to inform him of the presence of their visitor. “Can we help you?”

Rick cleared his throat, still not being able to find Kate anywhere close by. “Yeah, I’m searching for Detective Beckett. Is she here?”

The Latin detective squinted his eyes, mustering Rick throughout. “Yo Ryan, does he seem familiar to you too?”

Ryan! That was his name. God, such a simple name and he couldn’t remember it. Combing through his memory, Rick tried to remember the conversation from the night of the explosion of Kate’s apartment. But there was nothing. No name. Either he hadn’t heard it then or they had never said it in the beginning. His eyes flickered quickly towards the name plate on the desk in front of him. *Detective Esposito*. Great. Finally a name to the man’s face.

“Yeah, definitely.”

“Are you a friend of Beckett?” Esposito asked.

Was he a friend? Well, he would say he was definitely more than a stranger, but still less than a friend. But was he really stressing over his status with Kate? Definitely too soon for that. “I’ve met her two months ago. We wanted to meet up for lunch today.”

“Oh yeah! You’re the fireman who carried Beckett out of her apartment.” Ryan remembered.

Esposito widened his eyes as he realized that Ryan was right. “Half-naked. How could I forget that?”

Rick shrugged. “Just call me Rick, please.”

Now Ryan and Esposito stepped closer, a sparkle in their eyes that told Rick that they were up to something, the new closeness to them making him a little uncomfortable. Not that he would show them that. “So, *Rick*. We didn’t know that you and Beckett are in contact with each other.”

“Yeah, how often have you two already met up?” Ryan asked, not giving Rick any time to respond. Though before he could even open his mouth he was cut off by Esposito again. “Are you dating?”

Rick waited for them to end their tirade of questions, not even attempting to interrupt their babbling. It amused him a little, their curiosity about their colleague’s private life. Kate must be a very private person, not telling a lot of people about the things going on outside of the workplace.

When he thought that it was safe to speak, he put down the bag he had been carrying the whole time and took a deep breath. “First of all, Kate and I are not dating. We’ve met by chance last night when she had been out with a friend of hers. We had a drink and planned to meet up for lunch today. That’s all.”

“With whom had she been out last night?”

“I don’t know. Like I said, we don’t know each other that well. But she said her friend was the M.E.?”

“Then she was out with Lanie.” Esposito concluded.

“Okay,” Rick began. “So back to my first question. Is Kate around or not?”

“No. She went to Lanie. But she should be back any minute.”

“Would you mind if I’ll wait for her?”

Ryan and Esposito glanced at each other. “We don’t know, man. We’ve got a new case this morning and she’ll probably not have time to grab lunch with you.”

Pointing to the big bag behind him, Rick replied. “Good thing that I brought lunch with me.”

“You’ve got lunch?” Ryan asked hungrily, the two detective suddenly forgetting all about Rick’s presence as they stared at the white bag. Their day had been pretty busy until now, and they haven’t had the chance to stop and eat something yet.

“What’ve got?”

“Chinese.” Rick replied.

“Man, what I wouldn’t give for some egg rolls.”

“And chow mein.”

“Lo mein.”

“And don’t forget the sweet and sour pork.”

Rick rolled his eyes at them, the only thing missing of their appearance of starved human being was the drool running down their chins. But it probably wouldn’t take long for that to happen. “You know guys, I probably brought too much with me anyway. I couldn’t decide on what to get Kate, so I took a little of everything. Why don’t you take something out of the bag?”

“Thanks, man!” Esposito answered, already grabbing for the bag.

“Yeah, Rick. That’s really nice of you.”

Shrugging, Rick succumbed to his fate to spent lunch with Kate’s colleagues rather than with the woman herself, but he was here without her knowledge after all. She didn’t even know that he was here.

The two men dug through the bag. “Didn’t you bring coffee?”

“No, but I’ll remember that for the next time.” Rick replied sarcastically.

“You should.” Esposito murmured munching.

“Ya, Beckett needs her caffeine.”

“Beckett without caffeine is dangerous.”

“Especially in the mornings.”

Rising his hands in surrender, he internally smiled at this strange situation. “Okay, okay. Should I ever bring lunch again, I’ll remember the coffee.”

“Not just lunch. Any time you stop by you should bring coffee.”

“And doughnuts.”

Rick scoffed. “I get the feeling you’re listing all the things I should bring *you*.”

“Well, we’ll probably be here most of the times you’d stop by. It would be mean if only Beckett gets all the good stuff.” Ryan shrugged.

“I’m a lieutenant with the FDNY, not a delivery guy.”

“We’re not saying that you should just come here to bring food and coffee. We just want you to consider that we’re hard working detectives whom need their food and caffeine to function, and that we’d appreciate it when a visitor brings one – or even both things – with them.”

Humming at their irritating sense of hospitality, Rick took a seat on the desk behind him while he watched the two detective inhaling their lunch. He was just about to respond something as he heard the clicking sound of high heels making their way towards them. However before he could turn around, he heard a voice behind him.

Her voice.

“Rick?!”

## End Notes

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