Unbelievable AU. Season 1. Deeks isn't LAPD, he's USN. Takes place after "Chinatown" - which is mentioned heavily in this story - in the "Hand to Hand" time frame. Multi-chapter story.

**DISCLAIMER:** Not mine. Just playing with them and promise to put everything back when I'm done. Other characters from other programs may appear in minor roles. They're not mine either.
1. "A good lawyer is a great liar." - Edward Ward

April 6, 2010

After he put the last of his breakfast dishes into the dishwasher, Deeks walked into his home office and used the secure landline to call in.

"Admiral Bates's Office, this is Chief Petty Officer Thompson."

"Jackie, it's Deeks."

"Good morning, Commander. He's been waiting for your call."

"You do know it's," he checked his watch, "6:55AM."

"It's 9:55AM here, sir. And as the Admiral tells me near daily, he's up before zero four hundred hours."

"That's when he should have had me call since I was watching West Coast "Sport Center" coverage of the Championship Game. He should remember time zones, Jacks, America's had them for years, decades, over a century, actually. And we both know the old man knows I'm at home."

"Oh, he knows. And don't call him the old man."

"You're the one who called him that first."

"I know. That's why I don't want you using that name. Besides, I was drunk."

"Yes, yes you were. In vino veritas or in your case, in tequila veritas," Deeks teased. "The Admiral told me to call in this morning. I'm calling in this morning."

"Hold on, I'll transfer you in. Good luck this afternoon, Commander. You're missed."

"I'm guessing not by the Admiral but thanks Jacks. Thanks a lot," Deeks was hoping for more the luck that afternoon.

There was a series of God-awful clicks - his tax dollars at work - before he heard "Where have you been?"

"Good morning, sir." Deeks found himself standing a little straighter even though the Admiral could not see him three thousand miles away. "I am calling as per your orders."

"Nice of you to finally call. Do you know the time?"

"Yes sir, just before zero-seven hundred Pacific Daylight Time."

"Is this the time you usually roll out of bed?"

"No sir, but with my physical this afternoon I decided to take it easy this morning before my meeting with..." Deeks shuffled the files on his desk, "NCIS Special Agent Kensi Marie Blye."
"What time are you meeting with Agent Blye?"

"Zero nine thirty my time sir at some NCIS off-site facility on the docks in Mariana Del Rey."

"Agent Blye is part of the Office of Special Projects."

"Yes, sir, you've told me. They're the best NCIS has," Deeks was glad this was a phone conversation since he was rolling his eyes like a 16-year old shopping with her mother at the Galleria. "As I've made clear, I'd rather Naval Intelligence handle this."

"But your client has made it clear he only wants to deal with NCIS. The SecNav told me the Office of Special Projects had a case earlier this year with a Lt. Commander in the same situation."

"I read the file, sir. Even remember news of the suicide showing up in the L.A Times last month."

"Just remember, that's a file you're not supposed to have as the JAG officer on this case. What you know from the paper is fine but you know nothing out of the file. I'm assuming your uniform is ready to go."

"I'm looking at it now, sir." Deeks had a summer white JAG Commander uniform hanging off his home office door, fresh from the dry cleaners.

"Commander Deeks from the Port Hueneme JAG Office would not have access to any cases files out of the Office of Special Projects and especially not the personnel files of any team members. You know nothing about Lt. Commander Lee that you didn't read in the Times and only the name of Kensi Blye, you got that?"

"I'm just a lowly office grunt doing what I've been ordered by my client, Capt. Mattoni at Port Hueneme and the SecNav, sir."

"Glad you've got that straight," Bates said. "Are you ready for this afternoon?"

"Yes sir. I'm expected at Coronado at fifteen hundred hours my time for my physical and fitness test."

"You're not going to pass, kid," Bates said kindly. "Don't get your hopes up. It's too soon."

"My rehab has been going great and I've been working out every day since I've been home. You should see me, sir. I look better than I did the first day I darkened your office door."

"No one is doubting your commitment to returning to duty, Deeks. Besides, after what you looked like when you left Marmul, I'd just be happy to see you standing straight in your uniform with a shave and a haircut."

"Yes, sir, about that...

"Don't tell me you expect to pull this off looking like Wolverine."

"Well sir, I don't have the adamantium claws, of course."

"Deeks, dammit."

"Sir, I am telling Agent Blye the truth. I'm on medical leave and while I'm recovering, I've gone a little native. I feel the need to fit in with the good folks of the 'Bu Tang Clan."

"The who tang what? Deeks..." Bates sighed. "Agent Blye and NCIS are expecting to meet with a
JAG officer, not a member of Kelly Slater's posse."

"Sir, my files are up-to-date. I checked. I'm on medical leave," Deeks said much more forcefully. "I was called back to duty temporarily when a friend of a friend contacted me after being approached by the Chinese government as part of some sort of complicated espionage plan. I'm involved in this case as a friend looking out for a friend, an attorney working for his client and as a Naval officer protecting his country as part of his sworn duty. I am also working on getting my health back. The great part of that pitch - every word of that is true."

"You better sell the hell out of that story, kid. These aren't your usual feds. Davenport and I are playing golf Saturday at National and I don't want to spend eighteen holes explaining to the SecNav how you managed to piss off NCIS's Office of Special Projects. Or about your desire to look like Tom Hanks in that "Castaway" movie."

Deeks shook his head, this was no an argument he wanted to have. "Anything else I need to know, sir?"

"Yes. There is a woman who runs that office. A Hetty Lange."

"I've heard stories of her, sir. 'The Duchess of Deception' according to some really wild stories Davis and Harris have told me over the years."

"I've had three dealings with her in twenty years. All unpleasant. Quite possibly the most terrifying person I've ever dealt with in a war zone. And I met with Saddam at his surrender during the Gulf War. Keep away from her, keep her away from me. You got that?"

"Yes sir."

"And good luck with your physical, kid. I know you're working hard and I know you want back in." Bates was sympathetic.

"I do. And thank you, sir."

"Just don't get your hopes up or work so hard to prove yourself that you wind up suffering a setback," Bates said with a sigh. Back to business, he ordered, "I want a full report on your meeting with Agent Blye e-mailed to CPO Thompson tomorrow by close of business in this time zone. Send me a text or an e-mail before you start back to LA after your physical today to tell me how you think it went."

"Yes sir." Deeks heard the phone disconnect. He was passing the physical, no matter what Bates thought. He was pain-free, running, surfing, swimming, boxing, lifting weights and training with a retired Special Forces vet and a retired SEAL. The California sun, the Pacific Ocean, the air at the beach all had healing powers East Coasters like Bates never understood.

Walking out of the room, he did feel a twinge in his right side. Opening night jitters, he thought to himself. Nothing more. NCIS's Special Projects first with Special Agent Blye in their special meeting place followed by a long drive to San Diego and his successful physical.

His first Tuesday busy with actual work duties in months. Hopefully, the first of many.

x-x-x

It took a little more than the recommended amount of pomade to get his hair into a near military style. Deeks figured he'd carry his cover - the hair product would likely cause an oil slick in the headband that would worry the EPA. Besides, baseball caps were really more his style anyway.
He locked a change of clothes, his workout gear and weapons in the hollowed out back bench of his 1984 Jeep CJ7 and was off. He knew he was quite the vision - full dress whites, even the shoes, and an ancient, door-less red Jeep. Bates would have a fit. Hopefully, the meeting with Agent Blye wouldn't take too long. The ride to Coronado should leave him enough time to grab a power smoothie before signing in at the base.

As he pulled into the parking area by the address NCIS sent him, Deeks thought this was a pretty good place for off-site meetings. Of course, any place right off the water was a pretty good place for him.

He knocked before he walked through an open door. He found a woman reading a file folder while sitting at what looked like an old kitchen table. The decor was beach kitsch and he loved it. "Agent Blye?" he asked, because she was a lot better looking than her file photo. A whole lot. "I'm Commander Marty Deeks." He extended his hand. "Love the look of this place."

She eyed him suspiciously as she stood, making no move to shake his hand. "You're Commander Deeks from the JAG office?"

"Yes, ma'am." He fished his ID out of his back pocket, glad to have something to do with his unshook hand. "I have proof. I understand you had an unfortunate encounter with Lt. Commander Corby a few months back."

"More unfortunate for him than it was for me." She took the ID, which included a six-year old photo of him just out of NAVSTA Great Lakes, and studied it, then him.

"Ma'am, I've been on an extended medical leave and quite honestly have been enjoying not shaving every day and not getting my hair cut every two weeks for the first time since law school."

"Obviously," she said as she returned his ID.

"And I'd like to get back to that medical leave, so if you..."

"If you don't mind me asking about that medical leave," Kensi asked as she sat down and pointed to a chair she assigned to him. "What happened to you? You look to be in reasonable shape, besides the beach bum's hair, of course."

"Of course," Deeks chuckled. If she only knew, he thought. "I'd been working out of the RLSO in Yokosuka. I was ordered to return to Pearl on another matter. I really didn't feel all that great for the few days before my orders came in but felt really poorly before going to bed early the night before my flight to the States. Got violently ill around midnight. Thought I'd wait until I stopped being sick to take myself to the base clinic. Wound up falling back asleep. My clock went off for my flight and I felt better. Blamed it on some sort of flu and some bad sashimi so boarded the flight to Hickam."

"Wasn't bad sashimi, was it?"

"No. An interesting thing when your appendix ruptures. Sometimes you feel better for a few hours afterwards because the inflammation from the bad appendix goes down. Of course, everything that's no longer inflamed now starts getting infected during those few hours. At that point, you start feeling a whole lot worse."

"That sounds bad."

"No, what's bad is figuring all that out at 36,000 feet, an hour into a nine-hour flight from Yokosuka to Hickam. That's really bad. One member of the flight crew noticed I looked really sick. Lucky for me, another crew member knew a medic on the flight and he sat with me for the rest of the trip. I was
in rough shape by the time we landed but the Navy had an ambulance waiting on the tarmac. What should have been a relatively routine procedure turned into a few weeks in the hospital with peritonitis, sepsis, aspiration pneumonia and the first indefinite leave I've ever had. While I've enjoyed the downtime, I'd probably have enjoyed the time off more if I was healthy enough to do anything fun."

"Well, except for the bad beard and the worse hair, you look healthy."

"Respectfully disagree ma'am, the beard looks fine and the hair looks better," Deeks said with some pride. "I am working my way back to full health. Speaking of work."

"Of course. My office didn't have the files from your office until a few minutes ago so if you don't mind providing some background."

"This has all come together rather quickly. On March 31st, I received a phone call from an acquaintance. Let's call this person Kim going forward. I don't really consider this person a close friend but we have some mutual friends and have spent some time together. Fun person. The caller wanted to meet with me because a family matter may be a military problem."

"Is it unusual for you to get calls from acquaintances looking for help?"

Good question, Deeks thought to himself. "One of our mutual friends has a long history of, well, doing things that aren't...look, he's a knucklehead. He's always doing stupid things. But he did right by me when I was a kid so I bail him out of trouble from time to time when I'm stateside. When the acquaintance called our mutual friend, our knucklehead mutual friend passed along my number."

"Continue."

"The acquaintance wanted to meet at Canters for breakfast and I figured why not, who doesn't love a good nosh?"

Deeks watched her make notes. "When did you meet with, is it a him or a her?" she asked.

"My acquaintance wants to keep all aspects of their identity quiet right now because they are dealing with other legal issues."

"That doesn't seem suspicious to you?"

"Everything about this seems suspicious to me, Agent Blye," Deeks told her truthfully. "I'm just doing what my acquaintance wants and what the Navy has told me to do."

"Alright. So you meet with your acquaintance. What does he tell you?"

"I'll pretend I didn't hear the pronoun. My acquaintance is a freelance computer programmer. Kim works mostly in the gaming industry but because of Kim's technical proficiency, Kim has a contract with the DoD. Started with Y2K jobs back in the day and later worked on drone technology both in the sky and underwater, missile systems and satellite communications between CENTCOM, PACCOM, LANTCOM. You get the idea."

"I do."

"My acquaintance was engaged to someone they met in grad school. When Kim went to meet with the fiancé's family, the family was comprised of a team of sleeper agents. The acquaintance learned their entire life was a lie, including being the love of the fiancé's life. Kim was told that Kim's parents were sent to American their mission was to raise jewels for the Communist crown."
Agent Blye nodded her head. "The ultimate socialist hero."

"So you have heard this story before. My acquaintance isn't the first."

"Oh no. A Naval Officer named Lee..."

"The Lt. Commander who committed suicide on an overpass on the 710 a few weeks back?" Deeks was fully read in but Bates told him to play along so he was playing along.

"Yes. While you won't share her name, is it correct to assume your acquaintance's family was from China?"

"Again with the pronouns Agent Blye, I think you're trying to get me to slip up," Deeks chided. "And me, coming out of my sickbed to help."

"Except for the questionable choices with your hair, both on your head and your face, you look fine, Commander."

"Nice to know you think I'm a fine looking man, Agent Blye," Deeks teased, getting a little rise from Agent Blye. That made his day. "And you can call me Deeks, since I joined the Navy, everyone does."

"Kensi," she told him.

"Kensi, my acquaintance's family was from China and the family emigrated just before Kim was born."

"Is there a sibling?"

"Thank you for the gender neutral term. Yes, an older sister. When my acquaintance was ten, the sister, who was either eleven or twelve, was killed with their mother in a car wreck on the way home from piano lessons. The other driver, who was drunk, was also killed. After that, it was just my acquaintance and the acquaintance's father who Kim said was never the same after the accident. When my acquaintance was in high school, Kim's father started suffering from early on-set Alzheimer's. Kim was offered scholarships to MIT, Stanford and Georgia Tech, Kim wound up Cal Tech because it meant not leaving Los Angeles and they offered a full ride. Kim's father was in a nursing home by the time Kim finished college."

"Cal Tech, is that where you met him?"

"Or her. And no," Deeks replied, figured her tenacity was an asset during an investigation but the quest for Tommy's name just wasn't happening. "Loyola-Marymount was my college of choice before Pepperdine Law. Back to my acquaintance, the future non-in-laws explained that when Kim's family was allowed to emigrant to America, my acquaintance's parents were part of a program to infiltrate American military, economic and political structures for the greater glory of the People's Republic."

"We heard pretty much the same from Lt. Commander Lee's family but his parents said the Lt. Commander always knew what was expected of him."

"My acquaintance claims that neither parent told either Kim or Kim's sister about the real reason they were in America. I don't know how you tell a kid that and expect them to keep quiet but obviously Lt. Commander Lee was able to do it. With a dead mother and an incapacitated father, Kim said, and I believe Kim, that there was no way to learn what the master plan was or that there was even a master plan. Kim left the meeting with the in-laws stunned and feeling alone."
"Of course."

"Kim's father has been in this very nice assisted living facility for about fifteen years. Kim makes sure Senior Kim is well cared for but the man is out of it. He's peaceful and calm most of the time according to Kim but the fiancé knew where he was situated..."

"Which meant the sleeper agents did as well."

"Exactly. And that meant senior Kim was a potential hostage. This is where Kim's legal liabilities come in. I'm already working a deal through the Justice Department on this but you know, Kim's father was removed from his assistant living facility and transferred to one several hundred miles from here. With a computer bought with cash, Kim hacked a number of databases and created a new identity for the father, fake medical directives and is faking bills being paid to keep the older man comfortable. Kim is paying those bills - no fleecing Medicare or anything like that - but Kim did this to protect the only person that can be used as a hostage. Kim believes the fiancé's family of sleeper agents don't know where the father currently is."

"How is Kim sure of that?"

"Kim took a pretty severe beating for it from the fiancé's brothers," Deeks threw air quotes around the word brothers. "Kim said they only stopped when the father of the fiancé feared Kim wouldn't be able to return to work. Kim was working on a DoD project for weeks about submarine technology and..."

"The Chinese want his code."

"Or her code. No need to be sexist Kensi," Deeks smiled as he teased her. She was cute. Well, cute and a whole lot more. "And that's exactly what the Chinese wanted. Kim was escorted home that night, had a minder stay over. The next morning, Kim checked into the military facility where Kim was working at zero-nine hundred and left at seventeen hundred hours according to their records. Only Kim left ten minutes after signing in and called me."

"Congratulations Commander, not a single slipped pronoun."

"I tried," Deeks said with a broad smile, feeling relieved. "Kim wants to help take down this sleeper cell. Kim feels totally American and loves being American. Kim calls it the Immigrant's Kid Mentality - no interest in the old country because things are so much better here."

"How is the deal going with the DoJ?"

"It's already done just waiting to be signed. Kim will have to do six months of free work for them on their computer security system and teaching their Cyber Crimes Unit some tricks. Kim's good with that stuff. The upside to the deal is that Kim's father now has a U.S. Marshal watching him at all times and the assisted care facility has several Navy medics and MPs working as temporary staff near the senior Kim compliments of the DoD."

"You're in contact with Kim?"

"Kim's in contact with me every other day. Kim is moving from location to location. Pays in cash, no electronic footprint. Kim knows how to disappear. About three years ago, Kim and a couple of friends made a small mint from Apple on fixing a security issue. Kim and the friends decided to do a summer off the grid to see if they could just disappear. A pregnant pal would try to find them online - she was on bed rest. Three months of seeing America, no record of any of it."

"A team of Chinese spies who have been living covertly in the U.S. for years have a lot more
resources to track you client than a pregnant woman putting her feet up."

"I'm assuming you have a camera in your phone."

"Of course."

"The pregnant woman with her feet up wrote the code for most cameras to function in cellphones and the interface software that allows users upload automatically to Facebook, Flickr and other photo sharing websites. She also wrote the fantasy football app for ESPN when she was on bed rest for her first child a few years earlier. She's not exactly your typical pregnant lady surfing the net," Deeks told her. "As for my client, Kim gave me a burner phone while Kim buys a new one after every other call."

"What is Kim willing to do, exactly, to help?"

"Whatever it takes. America has been very good to Kim. Kim's got money. Serious money. And wants the life that Kim's earned. Kim wants me to put together a sting, which means when I told the Navy about what was going on, they recommended your office for the sting."

"What kind of sting?"

"Kim is part of a group working on stealth submarine technology."

"That was part of Lt. Commander Lee's background."

"The technology Kim is working on not only masks the movements of a U.S. submarine but can send out a false data making it look like the sub is up to ten kilometers from its actual location. And it can be repeated so the people looking for the sub are reading that there are up to eight subs in eight different locations."

"That's impressive."

"Kim is really good. The code used in the sting obviously won't work but will give the appearance of working. What it will do is open a gateway into the Chinese Intelligence computers. Kim wrote the code and handed it over to Naval Intelligence. I've been Kim's go-between with Naval Intelligence. They're willing to, well, make their presence known once Kim's code is deployed." Deeks couldn't tell her that Navy Intel planned on doing a lot more than making their presence known. "After NCIS and Naval Intelligence pick up the fiancé's alleged family, Kim will go public with the whole story except for Naval Intelligence's involvement."

"Any sleepers couldn't blackmail a public person and Chinese Intelligence would simply deny everything. Anything happens to Kim, the Chinese become instant suspects."

"Exactly. Kim is well known in the computer and gaming community and is willing to do interviews with both US and Chinese media outlets. Naval Intelligence won't say a word, they never do, and after a government denial I'm sure Chinese Intelligence won't talk either. Anything happens to Kim or Kim's father, Chinese Intelligence will know they're not only tops on the suspects list, they are the suspect list. The intelligence community can ship back the fiancé's family of sleeper agents after a few months of quality time in Gitmo for some political prisoners. This is a win for everyone."

"What do you need from us?"

"I want to bring Kim in but Kim wants to make sure everything is set and ready to go. As I said, Naval Intel already has Kim's code - I've passed it along to them. The plan is to have your office monitor the exchange between Kim and the sleepers and to make sure Kim remains safe. Once the
Chinese install the software and Naval Intel gives the OK, NCIS moves in to arrest the fiancé and family. That needs to be done as soon as Navy Intel says go so they don't disappear."

"Sounds reasonable. At some point we will need to meet Kim, make sure his or her story works out."

"I should be speaking to Kim in the next day or so. I will ask Kim to come in but I've asked every time we've spoken but so far the answer has been no. Maybe now that NCIS is on board, Kim will reconsider."

"Is there some way I can contact you?"

"Of course," he told her, pulling out his Naval ID once again and handing her a business card he put behind it. "I'm still not back in the office so I wrote my cell-phone number on the back. I won't be available this afternoon but after that, I'm free."

"And if I need to speak to you this afternoon?"

"I'll be at the doctor's. The Navy doesn't really want to give me the extended spring break I so richly deserve if I am fit for duty."

"Are you fit for duty?" she asked.

"I guess I'll find out in a couple of hours." God, I hope so, Deeks thought. "Do you need anything else?"

"No, I was notified that the file finally showed up at my office just as I arrived here."

"You mean this is not your office? I wouldn't mind coming to work here every day. Comfy looking couch, kayaks, surfboards...Agent Blye, a man could enjoy sitting here and doing some paper work."

"And on that, I need to return to my office, Commander," Kensi stood and extended her hand. "I'll call if I have any questions about the file or the plan."

Deeks stood and shook her hand. "It was good meeting with you Agent Blye, sorry, Kensi. If I can get Kim to come in, I'll update you. Otherwise, I'm just waiting for approval from all the assorted offices and my client to move forward with the plan."

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Deeks eased himself into his hot tub. Everything hurt. God, did everything hurt. The meeting with Agent Blye wrapped up quickly enough so he could drive home, lose the JAG uniform and wash the pomade out of his hair. He felt more like himself driving down to Coronado in a hoodie, board shorts and Tevas.

While there was traffic for most of the ride south, he still arrived at the base nearly an hour early. Anxious much, he thought as he signed in. He spent nearly an hour and a half with the doctors, the MRI machine and x-ray. Then it was three hours of running, jumping, swimming, boxing, push-ups, sit-ups, pull-ups and the obstacle course before wrapping up on the firing range. In the gym and at the pool, he knew his top scores from previous qualifying sessions and knew he bested them all. While his firing range scores were basically even with his past performance, that still left him in the top five of Bates's current team. The Admiral had to see he was fit for duty. Deeks told the man as much in the promised text before the ride home.

He started stiffening up about an hour into the ride back. He picked up two fish burgers and an iced coffee at a Jack In The Box drive thru in San Clemente. That was a mistake. He should have found a
place to walk around a little. Staying in the Jeep and eating on the way home got him to his front door around ten-thirty but he was paying for that now.

A half-hour in the hot tub, a couple of Advils and half a Pliny the Elder had him feeling much better. League Pass had the Thunder at the Jazz going into overtime so he just collapsed onto his couch. Monty joined him as Russell Westbrook started off the OT with a 19-foot miss.

About a minute in, the burner phone rang, causing Monty to bark. "Montgomery residence," Deeks answered, eyeing his dog.

"Dude, are you drunk?"

"No, just tired. What's up Tommy?"

"How'd it go with NCIS today?"

"They listened. They're checking some things out but they knew the basics of your story because a Lt. Commander had something similar happen."

"How many of us do you think there are?"

"Who knows? Listen, you should come in."

"Get everything set with NCIS, then I'll meet with them. When do I meet with the Justice Department?"

"As soon as the NCIS deal is done, I'll bring you to AUSA Kuzak. You sign the papers, you do what they ask and your record will be expunged. I really think I could have gotten them to drop all the charges if you let me push."

"Man, I did the wrong thing. I need to do the right thing."

"You were protecting your family, Tommy. You can make restitution by paying a penalty and not by doing six months of probation and some concurrent consulting for the DoJ."

"But I want to. If I do it right, all this gets expunged from my record. And if I'm awesome, maybe they'll give me a contractor's gig too."

"You are way too much of a capitalist, you know that."

"Of course, I do. That's how all my problems started. Call you Thursday."

"Be safe, man," Deeks hung up as Deron Williams made a shot with one second left to give the Jazz the 140-139 win. Deeks looked at Monty, who must have been reading his mind by letting loose a long yawn. Deeks announced, "Bedtime. Back to Port Hueneme tomorrow morning." It really was his busiest Tuesday in months. And it was awesome.

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Pesky author's notes:

This AU was not my idea. It is, however, a great idea. It was a prompt from lightedwindows on tumblr/callmesandy here/sandyk at AO3: "Instead of going from public defender to cop, Deeks joins the military, serves in combat and is recruited to the JAG Corps. He meets Kensi in Season One and you know, woooooooooooooing, love, super competent Deeks impressing Kensi with his smart brains." Not quite doing that but close. I hope I do it justice. By the way, I'm not good at
prompts but this idea was just too good.

Since this is an AU, the timeline is the same for "Hand to Hand" but that episode doesn't happen since this story does instead. Everything in season one prior to "Hand to Hand" happens, however.

Same posting schedule as usual, one chapter every Sunday (internet willing). This looks to be a six chapter story (I'm dividing up one chapter because I can't shut up!).

See you next Sunday - hope everyone isn't too confused (I'm good at doing that here).
Only Crime is To Lose

2. "Rules are for children. This is war and in war the only crime is to lose."
- Joe Abercrombie, "Last Argument of Kings"

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April 7, 2010

Forget the Army, Deeks thought, he got more done by 9AM this morning than most people will do all day. Wednesday started with the weekly 6AM conference call at Port Hueneme with Bates and the rest of the team at Suitland. Bates wasn't there - meeting on the Hill until noon his time - so things moved a lot faster. An hour and a half later - with a stop off at the dry cleaners - he was at the Runnels Pool for his laps - ten freestyle, five breast stroke, five butterfly, five back stroke, five freestyle rotations. Not bad for a man who just finished up a long fitness test twelve hours earlier.

Once his morning swim was done, it was a ride to the Pampered Pooch for Monty's special diet, holistic dog food. He'd call it a rip off but the dog never was healthier and it was only $75 for a 35-pound bag. Alright, maybe not "only" but Deeks certainly knew that the mix of organic bacon and free range chicken made Monty a pampered pooch. Monty ate better now than Deeks did in law school. At 8:45, he was finishing up at his favorite produce shop in Redondo Beach with enough fruits and vegetables to keep him in smoothies and juices for another week - the pampered Marty. Of course that ran him about $25 less than Monty's food.

He still had to write his report about the meeting with Agent Blye but he could do that from his home office balcony by lunch. Not a bad Wednesday morning at all, he thought, seconds before his cell phone rang. "Yes," he answered an unfamiliar local number.

"Commander Deeks, this is Kensi Blye."

Back to Commander - I guess she's back to Agent Blye again, Deeks thought. "Good morning Agent Blye, what can I do for you this fine and lovely day?"

"I was wondering if we could meet this morning. Something urgent has come up and I need to see you immediately."

He looked down at his ancient flip-flops, khaki cargo shorts and blue and orange Pepperdine Waves tee. Add in the semi-wet hair styled by driving and he wasn't the picture of a Navy man. "I'll be honest with you, Agent Blye. I'm driving back from grocery shopping in Redondo Beach and am sort of dressed for it and not Navy business."

"It will just take a few minutes Commander. It's not an official meeting; I just need some points clarified before we can go forward."

"Same place as yesterday, ma'am?"

"Yes."

"I should be there in half-an-hour, Agent Blye," he told her as he disconnected. Good thing he didn't write that report after all.

Pulling into the parking lot, he saw the same silver Caddy SUV from yesterday's meeting. Agent Blye, it seemed, liked the finely built American vehicle. Pulling a zip-up grey hoodie out of the back
bench of his Jeep, he still felt wildly underdressed. Walking into the building, he announced, "I warned you about my lack of uniform, Agent Blye."

Entering the main room, he found himself on the business end of three people - Agents Callen and Hanna if he remembered their file photos correctly and Agent Blye - all pointing their weapons at him.

"Whatever I did," Deeks told them as he slowly raised his hands over his head. "I'm sure I can explain."

"Who are you?" Agent Hanna asked.

"Marty Deeks, Commander Marty Deeks. I met with Agent Blye yesterday." Deeks looked over at her. "Obviously I thought the meeting went significantly better than she did."

"Who are you?" Agent Callen asked.

"Martin A. Deeks, Commander, US Navy. 987-00-4320." "Name, rank and serial number?" Agent Blye asked.

"Not exactly feeling the love. Can I put my arms down?"

"Are you carrying a weapon?"

"Does a devastating wit and a cutting sense of humor count?" He decided to keep his arms up. It was just easier.

Agent Hanna took a step closer. "Put both hands on the table and spread your legs."

"You're patting me down?"

"Do it," Agent Blye ordered.

Deeks took two steps forward and started to put his hands on the table. Agent Hanna slammed Deeks's torso into the top of the table, using his left arm to hold Deeks's shoulders down while pointing his weapon in his right hand at Deeks's head. Deeks felt his phone and wallet pulled from his back pockets, his keys lifted from the hoodie pocket.

"My dog-tags are on my key ring. I am Marty Deeks." He told them. Since Deeks could still see Agent Blye, he assumed Agent Callen was doing the pat down. As Callen started working his way up Deeks's left leg, he told Callen, "I have a knife strapped to my upper right thigh."

"Why's that?" Agent Blye asked.

Deeks chuckled, "I'm right handed."

"Why do you have a knife strapped to your thigh?"

"Upper thigh," Deeks clarified as Callen started patting his right leg. "And I should warn you - I went commando this morning."

"How do you expect to use a knife that's strapped under your clothes?" Agent Blye asked.

"I cut a hole into the cargo shorts leg pocket. Pull it out from there," Deeks asked. A second later, Agent Callen was taking his knife out through the cargo pants pocket. "I'd like that back, along with
my wallet, phone and keys once you three realized I'm just a poor sailor who has done nothing wrong."

"Why are you carrying a knife?" Agent Callen asked.

"A gentleman always carried a pocket knife," Deeks answered automatically.

"This is a hell of a lot more than a pocket knife. You have this custom made?" Agent Hanna asked.

"Yes, and if I'm ever decoupled from this table, I'd be happy to discuss my weapon preferences - though the devastating wit and cutting sense of humor usually are my first choices."

"Do you know Lt. Commander Steve Hancock?" Agent Hanna continued to question him, easing up ever so slightly on Deeks's shoulders.

"I'm not familiar with the Lt. Commander. You do know that there are over 50,000 Naval Officers on active duty." Deeks said as Callen finished his pat down. "I don't know all of them."

"Well, Lt. Commander Hancock doesn't know you either."

"And that obviously warrants getting felt up by your friend here. Shame really because if I'm going to get felt up by one of you, why not get Agent Blye to do that pat down? I'd probably have enjoyed it a little more." Deeks commented.

Agent Hanna didn't appreciate the remark, pulling Deeks up a little only to slam him back into the table. While the move knocked the wind out of him, Deeks was seeing stars from his right hip being driven into the corner of the table. He was almost grateful he couldn't scream in pain.

"So you're a JAG lawyer assigned to Port Hueneme," Agent Callen said.

"Which makes this treatment really out of line," Deeks wheezed - still trying to breathe normally.

"And you've been on sick leave because of complications of a ruptured appendix," Callen continued as if he didn't hear Deeks. "Except Lt. Commander Hancock, the chief personnel administrator at Port Hueneme has never met you. You're on their books but nobody's ever seen you. For the past ten weeks you've signed in just before 6AM every Wednesday and sign out between 8AM and 9AM. Nobody knows where you go and what you do when you're there but you sure as hell don't work in JAG Office."

Deeks knew his cover story was shot. "I need to make a phone call."

"No," Agent Hanna told Deeks as he hauled him off the table and walked him down a hallway. The two walked into a room where Agent Hanna brought him to a chair. "Sit tight," Agent Hanna said as he shoved Deeks into the chair. "We'll be back," the large agent said as he closed the door.

Once Agent Hanna left, Deeks surveyed the room. Two chairs at a big table, a small desk with a chair to his left, two more chairs and a credenza to his right along with a camera in the right side corner about eight feet off the ground and one over his head, next to the light fixture. At his feet, however, was his salvation - a trap door. He unzipped his hoodie and took it off. Fortunately, it only took one toss to get the grey garment to cover the camera.

Deeks stood and quickly wedged his chair under the door knob. Jumping on the large table, he ripped out the wiring connecting the overhead camera to whoever was watching him. Once off the table, he flipped it toward him, stood it on its side and pulled it close to the door. He moved the other four chairs and the small desk - the credenza was way too heavy - near the door. A door that now
had Agents Callen and Hanna on the other side yelling at him open it.

Deeks pulled up the trap door and saw a ladder - thank you NCIS - and a rope. Looking down through the trap door opening, he saw it was a short swim to the shore. Deeks climbed down the ladder, pulling the door closed behind him. He took the rope and tied it to the trap door's waterside handle and then to the beam holding the ladder. No need to have Agents Callen and Hanna join him on his short swim. Agent Blye could have been a swim buddy candidate but the whole pointing a gun at him was a turn-off. He tucked his flip-flops into his cargo shorts and swam off.

When he got to the shore, he saw a surveillance camera pointing to the parking area as he put his flip-flops back on. He circled back and adjusted the camera up. Whoever was watching was getting a lovely look at the Southern California sky. As he made his way to his jeep, Deeks saw Agent Blye was on the other side of the parking area, talking on her phone. Pulling his spare keys out of a small magnetic case just behind the spare tire mount, Deeks went into the hollowed out back bench and pushed his thumb against the fingerprint pad of the safe he had bolted to the Jeep's floor. He pulled out a small backpack and made his way back toward the boat shed.

Just as Deeks got near the front door of the facility, he heard Agents Callen and Hanna break through the door where they thought he was being held. Deeks snuck behind them and closed the door. He heard several swear words as he started sliding the bolts closed on both the top and bottom of the door. See how they liked being locked into the little room, this time with a tied off trap door. Turning around, he saw the fuse box for the facility on the wall. It took twenty seconds to take out all the lights and cameras.

Before walking into the main room, he pulled his gun out of the backpack. He was alone as he retrieved his knife, phone and his keys. While Agent Callen was good enough to leave his belongings on the table, Deeks thought if these NCIS agents weren't going to play nice, neither was he. He pulled up a secure app on his phone - a cell phone jammer. Now all forms of communication were cut off for his hosts.

About a minute later, a door opened - not the one he came through. Walking in from the parking area, Agent Blye said "Guys, I just lost my cell..." She stopped talking when she saw Deeks pointing a gun at her.

"Hands up, sweetheart," he ordered. When she didn't comply immediately, he cocked his weapon. "Now."

"Where are Callen and Sam?" she asked as he walked over to her.

"Hands on the table," he didn't answer her question. "Now." Agent Blye put both hands on the table. Deeks frisked her quickly, relieving her of her gun, cellphone, keys and a really nice knife. Turnabout was, after all, fair play.

"Where are Callen and Sam?" she asked again as he sat her down in a chair. He opened his backpack again and found some zip-tie handcuffs. He secured her arms to the back of the chair. Just as he stood to face her, Agents Callen and Hanna started slamming into the locked room's door.

"I put the two of them in a little time out. They need to learn how to treat a guest and I wanted us to talk," Deeks told her as he picked up one of the chairs. "Excuse me," he said as he walked down the hall to the locked room. He placed the chair on its side just before the start of the door's frame.

Returning to Agent Blye, Deeks asked, "Did I do something to offend you yesterday, Agent Blye?" He took the seat to her left, giving him a good view of both the hallway where Agents Callen and Hanna were trying to break free and the door where she entered the room.
"You're not who you say you are."

"Much like my fellow sailor Popeye, I am who I am. Commander Marty Deeks, U.S. Navy," Deeks said as the adrenaline of the last few minutes started to dissipate. Of course, that meant his right hip was really beginning to bother him. He pulled out his keys and waved his tags at her. "See, all official and everything."

"Then why doesn't anyone at Port Hueneme know you?"

"I'm a shy guy," he said with a shrug. "What can I tell you?"

There was another bang on the door. Deeks fished his satellite phone out of his backpack. He hit 01 on the speed dial.

"Admiral Bates's Office, this is Chief Petty Officer Thompson."

"Jackie, it's Deeks. I'm on my satellite phone. Is he back in the office?"

"Are you OK?"

"Delightful and you?"

"Listening to the Admiral have words with the SecNav about you. NCIS broke into your personnel file last night and while they didn't get here, they wound up calling..."

"The chief personnel admin at Port Hueneme."

"You know this?"

"There's been a little bump in the road with my dealings with NCIS."

"Commander, don't do anything crazy. I'll have the Admiral call you the minute he gets off the phone."

Callen and Hanna smashed into the door hard. They were doing that every thirty seconds or so.

"Jacks, since I'm on the sat phone, I may have done something that, well, the Admiral might consider crazy."

"Oh Commander, hold on."

Deeks looked at Kensi and smiled. "I'm on hold."

"It better be with the President."

"Tell me you haven't done something stupid," Bates growled into the phone.

"Define stupid, sir."

"I have Leon Vance of NCIS on the other line. When I'm done chewing him out, expect a call."

"Please try to get your anger and aggressive feelings out on Vance, sir, so you're in a better place when you have to deal with me."

There was nothing but a click as a reply. Deeks looked at the ancient refrigerator and wondered if it was functional. "You have ice in that thing?" Deeks asked Kensi just as Callen and Hanna finally
broke through the door. And then immediately tripped over the chair. Score two more for the poor, dumb sailor with the hip screaming in pain.

"Where is he?" Hanna said just before he reentered the room.

Deeks pointed his gun at Agent Blye. "He's here with Agent Blye. And I'd hate for anything unfortunate to happen to her so here's the plan: magazines out of the guns and tossed on the table. Spares, too. Guns are thrown on the couch."

"You won't shoot her."

Deeks put his hand in the backpack and pulled out a stun gun. "Not with the real gun, I won't. But there are three of you and just me, coming off injury leave. I think I can make a fairly successful case to anyone in authority that I was thrown on a table, locked into a room and made to feel my safety was at risk. I'm wet, wounded and being abused. I'd hate to tell my superiors that you didn't have enough concern for my safety or Agent Blye's that I had to introduce her to the stun gun to make sure everyone was on the same page."

"Now I'll only tell you one more time before Agent Blye is in for the literal shock of her life, mags on the table, guns on couch."

Callen and Hanna complied.

"Knives next, again on the table. I'm hard pressed to believe that Agent Blye and I are the only ones with knives."

Again, Callen and Hanna complied. Deeks stood and collected the magazines and knives before grabbing the guns. He dumped them all in his backpack. "Agent Callen, you sit here," Deeks ordered as he pointed to his former chair. "Agent Hanna, you can sit across the table from your partner."

"You know who we are," Callen said as he sat. Deeks quickly used the zip-tie handcuffs to secure him to the chair.

"Oh, you're not the only ones who can poke around in federal databases," Deeks replied as he started to cuff Sam to the chair. "I'm just the one here who can do it successfully. Hanna is from Brooklyn. Former SEAL. Couple of anti-terror task forces," Deeks made a note that Hanna clenched his fists when he mentioned task forces. "Callen is an international man of mystery. No family, No first name, just an initial. Worked for a few other initials...a few years with CIA, a few years with DEA, then over to the FBI and now here with NCIS. Partnered up with Hanna about three years ago."

Deeks stood and looked at his handiwork. Not bad for a man still trying to prove to the Navy he was seaworthy. "And you, Agent Blye," he continued. "Ivy League-educated military brat. Been with Special Projects for what, a little over a year? You did do the typical NCIS world tour though, Japan, Norfolk, the Navy Yard. I can do all sorts of other party tricks while I wait to hear from my boss."

"OK, you know us. Still doesn't tell us who you are," Kensi said,

"What did my personnel file say? A file I'm guessing your tech guy got for you three. Beale is his name, right? That file is something you're not supposed to even be interested in. And that set off major alarms all the way to Davenport's office." Deeks noticed Hanna's foot sliding toward the table leg. "Agent Hanna, move that foot one more inch and I won't touch you," Deeks fired up the stun gun. "But Agents Blye and Callen will pay and of course, ladies first. Now, what did the file say?"

"You're Commander Martin Deeks, U.S. Navy, a JAG lawyer. Loyola undergrad degree in
"And that warrants what you pulled this morning? There are dozens of JAG lawyers with that identical background."

"And you're not any of them," Hanna commented. "You don't even look Navy."

"Why doesn't the chief personnel admin know you?" Callen asked.

"Who are you?" Hanna followed up.

"For like the tenth time, Commander Marty Deeks, U.S. Navy," Deeks started.

"Naval Intelligence," a tiny, older woman finished as she walked into the room. "And what do we have here?"

"You wouldn't happen to be Hetty Lange, would you?"

"Yes, I'm Hetty Lange. It is a pleasure to meet you Commander Deeks."

"Nice to meet you too, Ms. Lange," Deeks replied, knowing his call with Bates just got one hundred times worse.

Pulling a pearl handled folding knife from her pocket and cutting Agent Blye free, the older woman said "It's Miss. And I prefer Hetty." She made her way to Agent Callen. "Is all this really necessary?"

"I was outnumbered. Badly. Still am."

"And yet you're the one not in handcuffs. Well done, Commander. I will personally guarantee your safety."

Deeks decided to free Agent Hanna since Hetty's presence calmed the others. "What can I do for you, Hetty? I was brought here under false pretenses. Do you have a story to sell to me as well?"

"Well first Commander Deeks, Admiral Bates says hello and will be calling you at home at fourteen hundred hours."

Great, Deeks thought to himself. He got smacked around here and if they hurried, he can grab a quick lunch and get smacked around long distance. Awesome.

"You work for Roger Bates, Admiral Roger Bates?" Hanna asked, genuinely curious.

Kensi looked confused. "Who is Admiral Bates?"

"Admiral Bates has a rather nondescript official title but he is the chief of covert Naval Intel. His command coordinates everything from submarine radio codes to highly classified intelligence missions," Hetty answered.

"But legend has it he personally runs a team of fifteen to twenty officers. Mostly Navy but one or two Marines who specialize in long-term, dangerous assignments," Hanna told the others. "Nothing on the books, no official acknowledgement that he does it or if the program, NEIT, even exists."

"NEIT?" Kensi asked.
"NEIT - Naval Enhanced Intelligence Team," Hetty told the younger woman. Deeks smiled and said nothing. "Neit is also the God of War in Irish mythology," Hetty added.

"And the lovely Mrs. Bates is the former Angela Tully whose father is from County Roscommon in Ireland. She's a federal prosecutor with a great appreciation for Celtic literature," Deeks added. "Or so I've heard."

"You don't even look intelligent, how can you be Naval Intelligence?" Kensi asked.

"First, ouch. Second, I never said that I was," Deeks said with a smile.

"You haven't denied it, either." Hanna gave him the once over.

"You want to know who I am. I'm a Naval Commander and an attorney whose time here included getting knocked around, an unplanned swim and now being asked questions I have no intention on answering until I hear from the home office. So unless I was brought here for some legitimate reason and not just as an opportunity for me to showcase my escapability and how awesome I look in a wet tee-shirt, I've got other things to do today." Like go to his trainer and sit in the ice tub until his hip stopped throbbing. Then have Bates call and tear him in new one.

"Commander Deeks, please," Hetty started, "Agents Callen, Hanna and Blye were dealing with you by using an abundance of caution."

"Oh, is that what you call this morning's behavior, 'an abundance of caution' is it? I'd hate to see how you'd treat an enemy combatant."

Hetty sighed. "Commander, you have my word that NCIS is only performing due diligence when confirming your story to us. When there were some questions about your status, the secrecy your client required forced us to perform a deeper investigation into you."

"And obviously that includes bringing me here under false pretenses and locking me up before I could call someone who would verify my identity."

"I told you something urgent came up," Kensi explained. "Your background being a little hinky was what came up."

"And you haven't told us anything about your background," Callen noted. "But you seem to know all about us."

"You wouldn't happen to have an ice pack would you?" Deeks asked Hetty, the throbbing in his hip was becoming a distraction.

"Come on, Commander," Hanna sneered. "You want us to think you're part of NEIT and you need an ice pack after an aggressive pat down and a little exercise."

"According to the Admiral, the Commander was grievously wounded in Afghanistan last fall." Hetty walked over to the rattan storage trunk that doubled as a coffee table near the couch and pulled out a medium sized first-aid kit.

"You told me your appendix ruptured and had to be removed," Kensi said.

Hetty placed two instant ice packs on the table. Deeks took one and sat down. Activating it, he eased it down his pants to his right hip. The cold aggravated the raised scars on his side but it was better than the throbbing of his hip. "I didn't tell you what caused it to rupture. Besides, the doctors may have taken the ruptured appendix out while they were dealing with other issues."
"What happened?" Kensi asked, seeming sympathetic.

Deeks just gave her a look. "Really, we're all going to bond now. I'll tell you everything you couldn't dig up on me. Well, probably not you. Your man Beale in your real office, probably not far from here doing information and logistics in a room full of computers and big old plasma screens."

"Commander, I'd like us to start with a clean slate. Why did Naval Intelligence assign you this case?" Hetty asked.

"I have nothing to say about Naval Intelligence and what was or wasn't assigned," Deeks hedged, not sure how much Bates wanted him to share. "So let's do this again: I am familiar with someone who as approached by the Chinese government to hand over defense department secrets as I told Agent Blye yesterday. Since the Navy paid for law school, everyone who knows me knows I'm a lawyer for the Navy. That's why I was approached to do this while I was recovering from losing my appendix," and six months of my life Deeks added to himself. "Now you know exactly who I am."

"You're not even going to confirm you're Naval Intelligence," Callen said.

"Not really feeling the love. Maybe on our second date I'll open up. I will need a little wining and dining, though."

"So we're just supposed to trust you on this," Kensi wondered.

"Miss Lan...Hetty, what did the Admiral say?" Deeks asked.

"That the case you've presented has been vetted by the ONI and we're supposed to cooperate to the fullest."

Callen shook his head. "We really don't take orders from the Office of Naval Intelligence."

"But we do from the Director Vance and the SecNav," Hetty advised. "And we've been told to work with the Commander. In the meantime, Commander Deeks, my apologies for today. You will have our full cooperation going forward."

"Fantastic," Deeks said with more than a hint of sarcasm. "Now if you don't mind, I'm going to be off. I'll be in contact with your agency from this point forward, no need to call me." Deeks dumped their weapons on the couch after he grabbed his backpack and the second ice pack. "You all have a great day," he said as he walked out of the boat shed with the second ice pack pressed to his hip.

x-x-x

Deeks spent the rest of the morning at Restorative Rehab in Topanga - an emergency 30-minute session in the whirlpool followed by acupuncture and massage. By the time he left, just after noon, he was reasonably comfortable.

Once home, Deeks wrote his report detailing both his first encounter with Agent Blye and the morning's festivities. Deeks left out his sore hip - Bates was getting his medical data from Coronado, there was no reason to add to the volumes of information. The report was written, proofread and sent to Jackie just before 1PM Los Angeles time. He made himself a sandwich, played sock with Monty and waited for Bates's call. At fourteen hundred on the dot, the phone rang.

"I can explain, sir," was the way Deeks answered the phone.

"It's Jackie, Commander, hold on."
"I'm sure you can explain," was the way Bates answered the phone.

"Yes sir, I can." This wasn't the first time they had a variation of this conversation.

"I got a full run-down from Hetty Lange, my second conversation with her today and two more conversations than I ever wanted to have with that woman."

"I understand, sir."

"I saw the video. How in the hell did you think you were going to pass as Naval Officer looking like the bass player for Jimmy Buffett?"

"I always look like this, sir, and I am a Naval Officer."

"And then you cover the camera in their interrogation room, slip out of their secure facility and took over said facility. Hetty Lange was quite impressed with your disappearing act. In fact, they're making several changes to their facility after you were done with it."

"Further proof that I was well-trained and I'm ready to return, sir."

"Yeah, well, your medical results were sent upstairs."

"I passed." Deeks was jubilant but tried to sound professional.

"They're reviewing it."

"Add in what I did today. I took on three NCIS agents - you told me they're the best they have. An elite unit - your words."

"Yeah, don't cover yourself in glory with that. Davenport is pissed that NCIS gave you the business today but he's also wondering why one of mine feels the need to Harry Houdini himself out of a manageable situation and is playing games about a possible traitor."

"Not playing games, sir."

"Bring your friend in. Next time he calls, you bring him in. That's an order."

"I'll try sir but you know..."

"I know Davenport wants all of us to work well together. The best way you and NCIS can work well together is for you to turn Mr. Lin over to them. No matter what your physical says, you're not back here until this is all wrapped up."

"But it looks like I could be back?"

"How much pain are you in today?"

"After yesterday, not much at all. I was stunned when I woke up this..."

"After NCIS gave you the business, how much pain are you in, Deeks?"

Deciding that honest is the best policy, Deeks answered, "It hurt when Agent Hanna drove my hip into the table edge but I was still able to extract myself from their holding cell, swim to safety and put three federal agents in handcuffs and one of those agents was a SEAL. After that, I sought treatment and feel just fine now."
"Sought treatment," Bates mused. "Your acupuncturist, masseuse, aroma therapist, all the kings horses and all the king's men, kid are not going to be with you in Tawi-Tawi if you need to be put back together again."

"But at least I'm on the board for going back."

"We'll see. In the meantime, make nice with Lange's people and wrap things up with NCIS."

"Yes sir," Deeks said with a smile as Bates ended the call. He looked at his dog. "Hey Monty, looks like Daddy may be finally getting back to work. How's about a little fetch on the beach?"

Monty didn't have much of a reaction. He rarely did. He did, however, follow Deeks to the beach.

-30-

Any mythical, super-secret Naval Intelligence squads mentioned in this story are also super-fictional.
No More Rewarding Career

3. "I can imagine no more rewarding a career. And any man who may be asked in this century what he did to make his life worthwhile, I think can respond with a good deal of pride and satisfaction: I served in the United States Navy." - John F. Kennedy

April 8, 2010

The swell was anything but. The gulls were in but nothing was going on wave-wise. Nearly an hour in the water and he caught exactly four worthwhile waves. Deeks thought about coming in but then he saw Agent Blye walking down the beach. Sadly, she wasn't dressed for the beach - just jeans on those legs that seem to go on forever, a white henley tee-shirt and a black leather jacket. She was carrying something that he recognized as his grey hoodie. He remembered the last place he saw it was hanging on the surveillance camera in NCIS's interrogation room/holding cell.

Deeks caught a pretty good wave. By moving up and down his board, he milked what could have been a short ride into a near complete trip to the beach And waiting for him was a rather unimpressed Agent Blye. "I came to return this," she said as he neared, holding out the hoodie.

"Good morning," he said to her with a big smile as he planted his surf board in the sand and leaned on it. Taking back his hoodie, he said "I would have been happy to pick this up myself if my safety could be guaranteed. So where are Riggs and Murtaugh?"

"Who?"

He looked at her and shook his head. "Let me guess, fancy education, super-secret elite," he cleared his throat just before the word elite, "division of NCIS must mean all work and no play makes Kensi Blye a pop-culturally challenged agent."

She scoffed at that. "Are you always this humorous in the morning or do you just think you are?"

"Darling, the Marty Deeks experience is fun twenty-four/seven/365. So seriously, what am I saying - you're always serious, your NCIS chaperones aren't here to protect you from the big, bad, wounded and recovering Naval Commander?"

"You didn't look too wounded riding in," she said pointing to the surf board. "Did you really have a doctor's appointment on Tuesday or was that another lie?"

"There were no lies on Tuesday, Agent Blye, let's make that clear," Deeks told her. "You may not have been read in on some facts about me that weren't pertinent to my client's situation but you were told what exactly what you needed to know. Your team started snooping around in matters that were none of their business and, unfortunately for me, that lead to the complete overreaction on your side."

"We were wrong. And we heard that, in stereo, from both the SecNav and the Director of NCIS. You've got friends in very high places, Commander."

"It's Deeks. And yes, I had a full physical and fitness test Tuesday afternoon at Coronado. I need to re-qualify before I can return to duty. Now, why are you here?"

"It's a public beach."
"And one I will be leaving. Thanks for my hoodie back. You have a good day, Agent Blye," he told her as he picked up his board and started making his way home.

"It's Kensi. So, do you live here?" she asked as she followed him up the beach.

"Yes, I do. But you probably know that, don't you? The Admiral sent an e-mail advising me that he was sharing my service record with your people in the spirit of cooperation. A spirit I wasn't really feeling yesterday morning, by the way. Surely, you read it if you wound up here. I can't imagine your morning routine includes trolling the beach for handsome surfers to talk to before going to work."

"The Admiral's office did have your file sent over. Unfortunately, they sent the undercover file as Commander Deeks, JAG officer from Port Hueneme," she told him as they walked to a small beach house. "I guess there was a clerical error."

No, Deeks thought to himself, Jackie was expressing her displeasure for his treatment. The next time the Chief Petty Officer accidentally sends the wrong file anywhere will be the first time. "I'm sure they can send an encrypted one through a secure server." Deeks noticed the sun hit the buttons on Kensi's henley just so. So she wasn't alone. This could be fun. "Since you're here, I assume you want something. I want breakfast. You're more than welcome to come in."

"I don't need a warrant?" she joked as they walked up to a wall of shrubbery.

"No, but no hunting around in my stuff either. Besides, I really need some breakfast," he said as he put his hand into a small gap in the bushes. He typed his access code to into the hidden keypad and pushed his thumb onto the fingerprint scanner. There was a beep and a green metal gate opened just between the bushes.

"Very stealth."

"When I first moved in, Noah Hunter lived next door."

"The boy band guy?" she asked as they climbed the stairs to the back of his house.

"Riggs and Murtaugh are a complete mystery to you but Noah Hunter is in your wheelhouse. Good to know. Anyway, Noah was in the middle of his walkabout from sanity just before I got home from a tour about a year ago. Lots of drugs, lots of parties for the dreamy young Noah. Also lots of accidentally walking over, climbing the fence to my place and doing things the minder his mother hired would object to."

"He'd just break in here."

"He would. I don't think anyone told that kid 'no' since he made his first ten million. Anyway, I did have pretty good security cameras around the place and while I was fulfilling my duty to the Navy, he was schtupping, you should pardon my Yiddish, some little blonde on a Disney Channel show - Maddie Madison or something."

"Eww."

"When I got home after my four month tour in an undisclosed country and a week-long debrief at ONI, I went straight to bed since I was worn out. Around 5AM, I've got America's singing sweetheart befouling my old lounge chairs on the balcony outside my bedroom window. " He let a fake shiver go through him as he returned his surfboard to its stand on his back deck. He hung the hoodie on a hook near the beach shower. "After I go out with a shotgun and end their little love connection, I check through my security video and found this was a fairly regular thing. I
downloaded the assorted trysts onto a DVD and called his legal representation. For the DVD, my security camera feed hard drives and my promise I wouldn't sell any of this to TMZ, Hunter would never set foot on my property again, pay for an upgrade of my security system and buy me new outdoor furniture. I know a former Special Forces badass with his own security company so the upgrade was easy. I also told the lawyers if I caught the kid here again, he'd pay and not in security systems and lounge furniture."

"I bet Noah didn't like that."

"He played victim in all this. His mother demanded to meet me because her little darling was so traumatized by the mean man next-door having a gun. She was convinced he was being taken advantage of by me," Deeks chuckled at the thought as he started peeling off his wet suit. "Again, Kensi, commando,"

She quickly turned around and he was grateful for that. Much more fun to talk about that little shit next-door Noah than his assorted scars. He rinsed himself off under the his beach shower, "I don't think the kid was all that frightened living next door to me but Noah's mom was a piece of work. She called the Malibu Sheriff to tell him I was armed. The Sheriff's Department knows I'm Navy so that wasn't a problem. She was complaining to the lawyers about the cost of the security upgrades here the day I was dropping off the DVDs and hard drives." Deeks finished his rinse did a quick dry and threw on a pair of grey board shorts, flip-flops and an O'Neill long-sleeve shirt. "I walked in wearing my dress blue uniform since I was returning from a funeral. She was very quiet after that. Her lawyers just started spouting about how much they support the troops. That was about the only good thing about that day. Come on in," he told her as he opened the sliding door by the kitchen.

"Thanks," she said as he held the door.

Grabbing two mugs a cabinet, he poured them both a cup of coffee. "Milk? Sugar?"

"Almond milk?"

"Not really a staple in the Deeks household."

"Regular milk is fine."

"It's also all I have," he mumbled as he opened the fridge and pulled out a glass bottle of milk. "Farm fresh. Free-range cows, no antibiotics, no additives. Straight from the cow two days ago."

Monty came ambling into the kitchen. "Monty, this is Kensi. Kensi, that's Monty."

"Hello Monty." Kensi put her coffee on the breakfast bar and bent down to pet his dog. That reaction was a plus for Agent Blye in Deeks's eyes. "He's a cutie," she said, rubbing his ears.

"I think he considers himself more manly and handsome, just like his Daddy - but hey."

Deeks wanted to see his fancy security cameras. "I need to hit the head. Monty, keep Agent Blye entertained but make sure she doesn't go riffling around in our things. Can't let her find your secret stash of chewy treats."

Deeks jogged to his office upstairs. A quick look of the security camera feeds found Agent Blye's SUV parked just across the PCH. Inside, a man with headphones was sitting, looking rather uncomfortable to Deeks, in the back seat. Deeks printed a screencap and returned to his guest.

Kensi was sitting at the breakfast bar in the kitchen area sipping her coffee. Monty was looking just a little too comfortable resting at her feet. "I'm making egg white omelets with grilled vegetables," he told her as he returned to the kitchen. Slapping the picture of her SUV on the marble countertop in
front of her, he continued, "Should I make Dr. Getz's to go or does he want to come in and make this a more festive breakfast gathering? At least I think that's Dr. Getz. He had a bit of a beard in his file photo."

She looked at him a sighed. "I'll have to call him," she said as she pulled her phone out of her jacket pocket.

"I'm sure Dr. Getz heard. Unless your button cam isn't working," Deeks pointed to her henley top as he opened his refrigerator and took out a carton of liquid egg whites.

"You saw that," Kensi said incredulous. "How did you see that?" The security gate bell rang, interrupting her.

Deeks buzzed Dr. Getz in and made his way to the front door. "Naval Intelligence tried those button cams a few years ago. When you have a shiny button, I think our tech whiz called them pearlized, the camera doesn't really stay put so you have to use a plain button. It's not a problem unless all the other buttons are shiny. The top button you have buttoned didn't pick up the sun the way the others did when we were walking up the beach." Deeks opened the front door and let his guest in. "Dr. Getz, welcome to my humble home."

"Hi," Dr. Getz said kindly. "You can call me Nate and for the record, I know who Riggs and Murtaugh are."

"Oh thank God, I was beginning to wonder if you NCIS Agents were all raised in a biodome. I'm Deeks," he said, extending his hand. Unlike Agent Blye two days ago, Nate shook his hand. "Come, meet Monty. Of course, you know Kensi," he joked as they returned to the kitchen.

"Nate," she said dryly. She looked at Deeks. "You really recognized the button."

"I really recognized the button. Never spy on a spy unless you know what kind of cool toys they play with," Deeks told them as he returned to making breakfast.

Monty walked over to Nate, gave him a quick sniff and returned to the chair by Kensi. "Nice dog. What is he?" Nate asked.

"A Sumagip Aso," Deeks answered.

"I'm not familiar with that breed," Nate said.

"It is Filipino for rescue dog," Deeks said with a smile. "I use it as a test. Some of the frauds on the beach or at the dog park like to nod like they're familiar with the breed." He started pouring the egg whites into the middle griddle of his stove. He thought he had just enough to feed everyone.

"Do you lie to everyone?" Kensi asked as her phone chimed.

"No, but doing what you all think I do, and usually doing it alone, I like sizing people up. Helps keep me alive."

"We just got your file," Kensi said. "Your real personnel file."

"And my cover name is?"

"Another test."

"If you want to talk to me about my work while I'm making you breakfast, Kensi, humor me."
He watched her flip through her phone. "Your code name is Norrin? Really? What, they wouldn't like you use Radd?"


"So let me get this straight," Deeks pulled open the broiler of his oven and pulled out a tray of vegetables. He put them in just before he started surfing and they were slow grilled to perfection. Of course now he'd have to figure something else out for lunch. "You know Noah Hunter and Norrin Radd but not Riggs and Murtaugh. You are a fascinating woman, Agent Blye."

"This is a very nice house, Deeks," Nate said changing the topic. "Does your wife come from money?"

"No wife and no money. Just an awesome house. And I'm sure you were able to get the public records for the sale even when you were investigating me as a JAG lawyer."

"You got a buy on the house," Nate told him.

"Late 2008 was an excellent time to be house shopping. Probably half of the properties I looked at were in foreclosure. This place was a part of a divorce settlement and the mortgage was so far underwater that Jacques Cousteau couldn't even help. Add in that it is the smallest house on the beach in all of Malibu at thirty by ninety. It is perfect for me."

"You couldn't come close to buying this on a Commander's salary, so if you don't have money," Nate shrugged his shoulders, almost embarrassed to ask, "how did you afford it?"

Deeks started to spread the vegetables on the omelets. "The Iranians pay really well for nuclear secrets."

"Excuse me?" Kensi said.

He smiled at her, "Just seeing if you were paying attention. Julian paid for the house."

"I'll bite," Nate said, "who's Julian?"

"Tropical Storm Kammuri in the summer of 2008. It was also called Tropical Storm Julian. I spent the end of 2007 and the first half of 2008 in an undisclosed location. It was cold, miserable and no place I'd ever recommend for a visit. I got back home and was living in my 400 square foot dump of an apartment in Manhattan Beach. I had three months leave. A buddy of mine, TJ, is a SEAL - we've worked a bunch of operations together. He's from old shipping money from Galveston. He was on leave too and wanted to fly to Macau to surf in what was supposed to be a typhoon."

"You went what, seven thousand miles, to surf?"

"TJ and I were bringing someone to Gitmo once and there was a Tropical Storm, Beryl or something, off North Carolina. ZNN was showing the surf in the Outer Banks as part of their coverage and it was ridiculous. TJ and I made a pact that we'd surf something like that if we ever got a chance. Three weeks into twelve weeks off - it sounded awesome." Deeks pulled out three plates from a cabinet. He took the omelets from the griddle, folded them and served his guests. "MGM just opened a casino in Macau. We got rooms really cheap because of the storm and the fact that the hotel was new. Got there, rented surfboards and for two days nearly got ourselves killed. I've surfed everywhere - here, Gitmo, Uruguay, Bali, Morocco, Ireland, Spain, Kamchatka in Russia - and Macau was, by far, the most fun I ever had. It was awesome. And yes Kensi, I went seven thousand miles to surf."
"So how does that pay for the house?" Nate asked as Deeks poured him a cup of coffee. He also put out some ketchup and salsa in case NCIS liked their eggs spicy.

Hopping up one of the kitchen counters just across from the breakfast bar, Deeks started eating his breakfast and continued his story. "The region's security forces finally closed the beach for safety sake. TJ and I ate some nice casino food, slept and saw some Chinese pop band butcher Madonna's best of the 90's hits in the casino's main concert hall. Around midnight local time, the hotel set up these poker, blackjack and baccarat tournaments since we weren't allowed off the property because of the storm. TJ's a poker man, I like blackjack. TJ spotted me a thousand for the buy in. We've gambled together before and have one rule. Lose three straight hands, you're done."

"Everyone has a system," Nate said.

"They do. Mine was on fire that day. I didn't lose my second hand consecutive hand for nearly nine hours. The floor manager changed dealers twice but I was on a roll. TJ was out early compared to me but he did just fine, too. When he stopped by, I gave him his money back. He went to drink in the bar, then he went to bed, then he got a massage."

"This is really good," Kensi said pointing to her food. "So you kept winning."

"Winning and putting money aside. That's my other system. Every half-hour, cut my winnings in half and take that money off the table. Anyway, I had more two-straight losses as day went on but never three straight. And I never lost three straight."

"You walked away?" Nate was stunned. "And Kensi's right, this is good."

"Short order cook in college. And yes, I walked away. When I'm not in the water or just out of the water, I always have on my watch," Deeks held up his arm, showing his guests an Oris dive watch. "And there is a timer in the watch. No matter where I am, no matter what I'm doing, the watch alarm vibrates at midnight, LA time."

"The watch alarm went off."

"It did. Usually, it reminds me that no matter where I am in the world, what I'm doing and what's going on, I am from this place. LA is my true north. That day, it was a reminder that in Los Angeles I drove an '84 Jeep, had dump of a studio apartment and that watch, which was a gift from my Mom's old boss after he first saw me in my dress whites, and cost about two thousand dollars, was probably one of the most expensive new thing I ever owned. So Cinderfella took his winnings and left the ball at midnight. Of course, it was like three in the afternoon in Macau."

"If you don't mind me asking," Kensi inquired.

"It is in my service record since I was investigated a hundred ways to Sunday to make sure this wasn't some payoff from the Chinese government. After taxes it was just over three quarters of a million. TJ and I got comped much better rooms - he won nearly a hundred thou himself - and spent our final two days there surfing in the post Tropical Storm South China Seas, seeing a show or two - you really haven't lived until you've seen "Les Miz" in Chinese - and eating the MGM's excellent food. When I got home, found myself a real estate agent and while I was on the East Coast waiting to deploy to another undisclosed location, this place became available. Paid cash and took a small five year mortgage to furnish the joint. Surprisingly, the furniture for a 400 square foot apartment bought at Ikea or grabbed off the street before the garbage truck took it away looks really small and cheap in a 4,500 square foot house." Deeks smiled, "And before you ask, I've never step foot on a casino floor since."
"Not giving them back their money," Nate noted, "Smart."

"I come from a long line of people who've made bad decisions. I'm trying to break that family tradition." Deeks finished his eggs and took a sip of coffee. "Very long line."

"Why'd you join the Navy?" Nate asked.

"Am I getting my head shrunk? Should I lie down on a couch?"

"Only if you're tired. I'm just confused as to why a self-proclaimed poor kid who grew up to be a lawyer and thinks Los Angeles is his true home and terra firma winds up in the most elite unit of Naval Intelligence."

Deeks jumped down from the counter. Refilling his coffee, and then Nate's and Kensi's, he answered, "I never said I was in the most elite unit of Naval Intel, you did."

"Even if you're not in the mythical NEIT, Naval Intelligence is a long way from Moot Court and an even longer trip from Reseda's Boys and Girls Club."

"My mother died when I was in college. Dad was out of the picture before I was twelve. Scholarships, grants and financial aid, along with a bevy of crummy jobs including working as a short order cook paid for college. I had enough left over from my mother's insurance policy, I thought, to pay for an average law school. Then I got into Pepperdine, which is more than an average law school. And about three times the money I had. Add in books and a new place to live since the woman I was renting a bedroom from died and her kids wanted to sell the house, I needed money. There was a job fair at Pepperdine and I was hoping to get a summer legal gig to at least keep me living indoors for a while."

"The Navy had recruiters there," Nate figured.

"Yes they did. I figured I was going to need about $75K to finish law school, buy books, live indoors and eat. I managed not to have any student loans before that but was going to owe the feds money for twenty years to pay off my final two years of school. The Navy said they'd pay for everything, give me a monthly living stipend and all I'd owe them is seven years of my life. I figured I'd be out of law school just after my 24th birthday, I'd be a free man at 31. A lot better than writing rather large checks into my forties for student loans."

"That all makes sense but how do you wind up as an Intel Officer," Kensi asked. "And you're awfully young to be a commander, Commander."

"What can I tell you? The Navy recognizes talent."

"But your talent obviously isn't being a lawyer," Nate said.

"Law school is different than college. If, say, in the second semester of your second year of law school, you realize you really hate it. You can't really switch majors and you really can't ask for your money back to pay for something new. Plus, it wasn't my money. The Navy was paying. There was a nice guy out of the recruiting office who told me to stick with it, I was probably just a little overwhelmed midway through the second semester and things would be fine."

"But they weren't."

"Look, I went to law school because I think my Mother would have wanted that. She worked for a lawyer who became a judge. She wanted the life being a lawyer could give me and it seemed like a really good idea at the time. But the decisions you make at twenty aren't always the ones that work
out. I hated law school by my second year there and really didn't want to be a lawyer. My recruiting officer said give it another year. I didn't but it didn't get better in my third year of law school. Took the bar, showed up to basic two weeks later but told the Navy I wasn't interested in JAG."

"So what," Kensi asked, "they just put you in Intelligence?"

"They sent me through basic training as if I was an 18-year old E-1 to be and not an almost lawyer soon to be officer. Had no problem with it. In fact I liked it. When the Navy realized I was the Great Lakes king of the 18-year olds, they decided to teach me a lesson by sending me out on a mission. I guess they thought one trip into the field and I'd long for a desk job with JAG. Long story short, one of the dozens of jobs I had in college was a bank teller. I got sent to Afghanistan to work with a team that was buying information as someone to handle the money and make sure the Intel Officer was making fiscally wise decisions," Deeks threw air quotes around the last three words. "Winds up he was really bad at negotiating. You can offer a nineteenth generation mountain goat farmer the equivalent of fifty thou and he has no idea what you're talking about. Show up with a cow and three dozen sheep, he's very interested in sharing all he knows. After that, I was in."

"Can't be that easy," Kensi said.

"This is an asymmetrical war we're fighting, Agent Blye," Deeks took his plate to the sink and rinsed it off. "I'm an asymmetrical warrior. The Navy taught me all the skills I need to be an officer but they quickly figured out I can work an operation or an assignment for months at a time with little guidance and supervision. Give me a job and I'm good." Turning back to her, he pointed to his face. "This is not the first thought someone has when the enemy is thinking US Military. Look at your Agent Hanna - not really stunned he's a former SEAL. Callen's background doesn't include military but he could pass for it. Put me in the field looking like this with some narcoterrorists and nobody is thinking 'uh oh, here comes a Navy man.'"

"And NEIT?" Nate asked.

"Urban legend," Deeks lied with ease as he took away both Kensi's and Nate's empty plates. If he didn't get back into the field, he could always run the mess at ONI.

"We've been told otherwise."

"Well, it's kinda hard to be a super, secret, black-ops team if people are chatting it up every five minutes." Deeks refilled their coffee cups. He pulled a juice mix out of the refrigerator - romaine lettuce, kale, celery, chard and fennel which tasted awful but kept his healing insides working properly - and all but held his nose as he drank a quarter of it.

"What about your injury?" Kensi asked. "Admiral Bates was livid that you were touched by any of us."

Probably not you, Deeks thought, but he kept that to himself. "The mission was cursed from the day it started. Asset wound up dead, his wife and daughter were in a lot of danger. The Marine detailed with extracting the asset's widow and daughter got his foot blown off by a roadside IED going to Camp Leatherneck. I filled in, got hurt and got the family out with the help of a Marine AH-1 Cobra. Some changes were made in the village where the family was living once we were out safely but the mission was a disaster from day one."

"Rather generic account," Nate noted.

"If what happened is in my service record, you'll know. If not, that's all I'm comfortable sharing."
"You're not a trusting person, are you?" Kensi asked.

"And exactly how many people know everything about you, Kensi? Fancy Ivy League education, multilingual. How are you not in the diplomatic corps or the Agency? They like you Ivy League types in Langley yet you're on the West Coast with NCIS."

"Thank you for breakfast, Commander, but I think Nate and I need to return to the office," Kensi told him as she stood.

And he hit a nerve. "It's Deeks."

"Have a good day, Deeks," Kensi said as she and Nate walked to his front door. "You got a cute dog."

"Handsome dog," he said as he watched them leave. Deeks walked over to Monty, who was still on the floor by the chair Kensi just vacated. "Hear that Monty, Kensi thinks you're cute," he said as bent down to rub the dog's ears. Under the breakfast bar, he saw a small listening device. He gave Monty's collar a gentle pull and the dog stood. Deeks got the animal away from the breakfast bar and ran his finger along the collar. There was a small tracking device right by the buckle, which he quickly removed.

Deeks picked up the remote and turned on his TV. It was just a little before ten. He clicked on "Sports Center" and started rinsing his the dishes, leaving the tracking device on top of the breakfast bar. Once he finished his vile juice and loaded the dishwasher, Deeks filled a small Ziplock bag about half way full of water and picked up his cellphone.

"Yes, Deeks," Kensi said as she answered her phone.

"You forgot something when you left."

"Excuse me."

"You dropped something," he told her as he pulled the listening device from under the breakfast bar. "I'm sure the listening device attached to the breakfast bar and tracking device on my dog accidentally fell out of your pockets while you were here. I've got them someplace safe." He opened the Ziplock bag just a little and dropped both devices in. Closing the bag, he placed it in his freezer. "They're completely safe and I'll be sure to return them to you next time we meet."

"Look..."

"No, Kensi. You just bugged a lawyer's home and I'm guessing you may not have the paperwork for that."

"We need to hear from your client."

"And you will when we deem it appropriate. Pull anymore crap like this and I'll FedEx your listening devices to Leon Vance." Deeks hung up. He walked out to the deck and beach shower to start his bug and tracking device sweep.

x-x-x

Deeks sat down with his backpack and his dinner on the patio of Neptune's Net. At ten after four, he had the place largely to himself. He pulled out his Kindle and started reading the Hall of Fame chapter of Bill Simmons's basketball book when he gained a dinner companion. "Kensi, as a lawyer I feel the need to advise you that California has some of the country's most strict stalking laws."
She was sitting across from him. While he had the clam chowder and fish tacos, Kensi had a plate of crab cakes. "You eat here four nights a week."

"Not really nights, late afternoons. Still stalking."

"You charge your meals, you're easy to track."

"I charge my meals because I'm out of the country not using my credit cards for months at a time. While I can charge gym memberships and keep the card active, it is a lot easier to charge everything when I'm home. Still not an excuse to have you following me."

"I read your file. The Afghanistan mission. I'm sorry about what happened yesterday. Sam pushing you into the table, holding you down...that had to hurt."

"Nope. Just helped set my mind straight. I thought we were working together. I know better now."

"Look, we got off on the wrong foot. You weren't honest with us and we took that as..."

"I told you everything you needed to know about the case. The fact that I didn't provide a full background on myself does not mean I wasn't honest. And how you and your band of unmerry men reacted to that now has me on my guard. Lessons learned and all that."

"There have been," Kensi searched for the right word, "problematic dealings with both JAG and with sleeper agents involved in this spy ring that caused us to use caution."

"And showing up here is using caution? Who do you have hidden in your Caddy now? What, your watch is the recording device this time?"

"I came alone and I'm not wearing a wire."

"Said every cop with back-up and wearing a wire to every suspect they've ever met."

Kensi sighed. "I am alone. Are you going to be difficult for the rest of the meal?"

"No, I'm going to eat my dinner and then go home."

"I didn't see your Jeep in the lot."

"Walked here."

"You walked here? What that's like six miles from your house?"

"Six point four miles, actually. And I plan on running back. I'm shooting for a time under forty-five minutes, with this," he said as he passed her his backpack.

Kensi nearly dropped the backpack. "What do you have in here?"

"Forty pound weighted vest. I wear that running home."

"Mimics what you might have to carry in the field."

"Smart, Ivy League," he said as he took back the backpack and started digging into his meal.

"Dr. Vadwa and her daughter said you saved them several times during their extraction."

"It wasn't an extraction. It was a complete and utter failure. An extraction means I get them out
quietly and without incident. A shootout at Dr. Vadwa's brother-in-law's house, getting blown up by an IED fleeing their village and holding off the local Taliban until the Marines could pick us up - that's what my extraction turned into. My interpreter was killed, I made a lot of enemies for the US military in that small town and oh yeah, got myself good and injured. Complete and utter failure."

"They were waiting for you. It was a trap."

"Which we should have known."

"You kept those women safe."

"And I'm sure a fourteen-year old seeing me gut the man her uncle wanted her to marry while he tried to do the same to me is one of Ameena's less than positive lasting memories of her father's village."

"That man was the leader of the Taliban in..."

"Oh, I knew who he was. Got an earful from the locals about all the things they were going to do to me once they got me because I killed their wonderful leader - a man who at nearly forty was going to marry a girl who would be, what, a freshman in high school here. Mercifully, they were speaking in Pashto dialect I didn't know so I only got the highlights from Dr. Vadwa."

"The file says that area is free of the Taliban."

"Nicely put, you don't mess with my organization." Falling into a reasonable Sean Connery imitation, Deeks paraphrased the actor's "Untouchables" speech. "They send one of yours to the hospital, you send one of theirs to the morgue."

"You're no Frank Malone."

"So you know Noah Hunter and Frank Malone but not Riggs and Murtaugh." Deeks shook his head.

"Lethal Weapon."

"Dr. Getz told you."

"Maybe."

"So why are you really..." Deeks was interrupted by a ringing cell phone. It was Tommy's burner phone ringing in his backpack. "Hold on." Deeks told Kensi as he pulled out the phone. "This is Deeks."

"Where are you, man?" Tommy sounded desperate.

"Out, where are you?"

"They're here."

"Who? And where's here?"

"Four Seasons in Westlake Village."

"And who is there?"

"Wendy's brothers."
"They're at the hotel?" Deeks saw Kensi was paying attention big time.

"I saw them in the lobby."

"Tell me you didn't go to your room."

"Don't tell the Justice Department but I may have hacked my room keycard and it opens every door in the hotel."

"Where are you?"

"Room 324. It's vacant for the night. I may have hacked into the reservation system too."

"I'll be there. I'm bringing NCIS. You're coming in."

"I'll be waiting."

"Don't make a sound until you hear me, got that."

"I'm sorry man."

"We'll be there as fast as we can," Deeks said before disconnecting. Turning his attention to Kensi, he asked, "Wanna give me a lift to the Four Seasons. Tommy wants to come in."

"I'm guessing Tommy is Kim," Kensi said as she stood, taking a bite out of her crab cake before tossing it in the trash.

"Yes, and his not in-laws are there too. He's hiding until we get there." Deeks chugged about half his clam chowder before tossing it. He grabbed his bottle of water and started following Kensi to her car. Agent Blye's stalking wound up having great timing.

-30-

Author's notes:

To see Deeks's fictional house, Google Rockefeller Partners Architects, 33rd Street Residence and just put it on the beach.
"Spy' is such a short, ugly word. I prefer 'espionage.' Those extra three syllables really say something." - Howard Tayler, "Schlock Mercenary: Emperor Pius Dei"

Agent Blye was in contact with her office as soon as they got in the SUV so Deeks pulled out his phone and called ONI.

"Manannan Industries, this is Kelly, how may I direct your call."

"Kelly, this is Derek Martin," Deeks answered. "I have a problem with order number 2010-CMAD-02." That earned Deeks a world-class eyebrow lift from Kensi.

"I'm sorry about that Mr. Martin. I'm going to transfer you to customer service. Are you on your Manannan Industries issued cellular phone."

"Yes, ma'am."

"Would you like District Manager Rogers conferenced-in on the call?" Kelly asked.

"Not at this time, but I would like him to be aware of the call," Deeks was in no mood to deal with Bates, especially with a now very attentive Kensi Blye an arm's length away.

"Of course, I'm transferring you now." Several clicks later, "Lt. Rollins."

"Catherine, it's Deeks."

"Hey, so glad to hear from you. Everyone was so worried last fall. I'm pulling up your status report right now, Commander. What's the problem?"

"Tommy Lin's location has been compromised. I'm with NCIS Agent Kensi Blye right now on our way to Lin's location and I'm bringing him in."

There was another click. "Deeks, what's going on?" Admiral Bates joined the conversation.

Both Deeks and Catherine said "Evening, sir," before Deeks updated the pair on the situation. Bates wanted a full report once Lin was in protective custody. He'd be waiting at home in his study. Bates's study was as wired and secure as his ONI office. Catherine updated and activated a number of the field apps on Deeks's phone before ending their call. Deeks thought that move boded well for his return to duty.

As Kensi left the Ventura Freeway, she asked "Derek Martin?"

"Calling in from exotic locales as Commander Marty Deeks, US Navy is probably bad for keeping my operations, oh, covert," Deeks told her. "Are Agents J and K on their way to the hotel?"

"It's G, not J. Or K."

"Add "Men in Black" to the list of movies you need to see. Callen and Hanna, are they going to the hotel?"

"They'll meet us there. We're not to do anything until they arrive."
"You can do nothing, I'm getting Tommy out of there."

"They said..."

"Nothing I'm interested in hearing. They're your bosses Kensi, not mine. If you want to help, you're more than welcome to. Otherwise just drop me off and I'll contact you once Tommy is secure."

"First, they're not my bosses, we're a team. Second, what are you going to do, just walk him out of the hotel?"

"Now that sounds like a plan," he said as she turned the SUV off the highway. "Hotels have cameras, lots of cameras. Fancy, expensive hotels have even more. A hotel like this probably has both uniformed and undercover security throughout the facility. Add in the usual assortment of upscale tourists and business-types, when I get Tommy out in a crowd, the two of us are good to go."

"When we get Tommy out in a crowd," she corrected him as she pulled into the hotel's entrance. "And it will be the three of us who are good to go."

As a security officer jogged up to the SUV, Deeks rolled down his window. "Dude, can we just leave the car here for a second. My buddy is a day early drunk for his bachelor party and..." Deeks pulled a fifty out of his backpack. "We just need to load him into the..."

"Right over by the fence. Ten minutes or I'll call for a tow," Dave the security guard instructed.

"Thanks man, you're the best," Deeks said as he rolled the window up as Kensi pulled into the spot Dave indicated.

"I could have shown him my badge," Kensi said as she got out of the car.

"And if he took a fifty from the guys looking for Tommy wanting to know about any law enforcement being nearby?" Deeks took his backpack as they walked to the hotel.

"Good point." They walked into the Four Seasons through the hotel's main door and made their way to a bank of elevators. "Are you armed?" Kensi whispered.

"Devastating wit, cutting sense of humor and my knife which is in my backpack since the straps chafe when I run," he answered.

"An image I don't need. So no gun"

"I was going for a walk, an early dinner and a run home. Didn't think I'd need one," he told her as the elevator door opened. Once in, Deeks hit the button for the third floor.

"But you brought your knife. And a fifty dollar bill."

"A gentleman always carries a pocketknife. I carry the money because early into my rehab I had some problems making it all the way home. I could usually flag down a town car or a limo and get an off the books ride back," he told her. "I'm guessing you're armed."

"Of course."

"Then we're fine. And if we do this right, no need for guns," he said more to himself than to her. As the elevator door opened on the third floor, Deeks saw housekeeping attendant knocking on a door. The attendant was Chinese and his uniform did not fit. "Follow my lead," he whispered in Kensi's
ear as he draped his arm over her shoulder and pulled her close. "Ready to start the honeymoon a little early, darling?"

"Oh baby, you take me to all the best places," Agent Blye said with a smile as she wrapped herself around him. "I'm so glad your Mom is letting you use the family credit card again."

"Nothing but the best for you, Fern. You've spent your last night in that trailer park, baby girl," he told her as he pulled out his phone. They got to room 304 and put his phone over the key card slot and hoped Catherine's update worked. The door beeped and they were in.

"Thank God you're here," Tommy said as got off the bed.

"Fern, you called me Fern?" was Kensi's complaint when the door closed.

Deeks took Tommy's arm and walked him to the bathroom. "Lock yourself into the bathroom. The only person you open the door for is me, got it?"

"Should we have a secret code?"

"No."

"What's going on?" Tommy asked as Deeks closed the door. Worry about him later.

"What is going on?" Kensi asked. "And I hate Fern."

"Vamping. Take off your jacket," he told her as he pulled the bedspread off the bed.

"What are we doing?" Kensi took her jacket off as Deeks went to the hotel room door.

"Fern baby, I have missed you so," Deeks looked out the peephole as he took off his hoodie and running shirt in one pull and tossed them on the floor. He also dropped his cargo shorts and kicked off his sneakers.

"What are you..." Kensi's question was interrupted as he walked over in his running compression shorts and socks. Deeks saw her react to his scars.

After pulling her jacket off the bed and dropping it on the floor, he picked her up and tossed her on the bed. Grabbing the bedspread around him, he jumped on top of her and put his hand over her mouth. "Trust me," he whispered.

There was a light tap on the door followed by someone saying "Housekeeping."

"Oh baby, you feel so good," Deeks said as he heard the lock on the room door beep to open. He pulled his hand way from her mouth and put his head in the crook of her neck. "Just play along," he whispered.

"Oh, I'm so sorry," the housekeeping attendant in the badly fitting uniform said when he saw the two of them in bed. "Excuse me," he said smirking as he backed out of the room.

Kensi and Deeks feigned outrage at the intrusion. Deeks pulled himself off of Kensi and mumbled an apology. Picking up his cargo shorts, he made his way to the door. "Cover me," Deeks told her as he put on his shorts and exited the room. Waiting in the hall outside of room 303, Deeks put the housekeeping attendant in a sleeper hold as the man left the room. The attendant was out cold in less than a minute. Deeks dragged him back to Tommy's room.

Kensi held the door opened. "What are you doing?"
"Do you have handcuffs?" Deeks asked as he started unbuttoning the man's shirt.

"In the car, I can get them."

"Not enough time. Can you tear up the pillow cases into ties? We need to..."

"We need to wait for Sam and Callen."

"Again, something you can do. I need to get Tommy out of here." As he pulled the man's shirt off, Deeks saw he was covered in tattoos. "You're more than welcome to spend some quality time with this fine specimen. Looks like Tommy's fiancé's family may have farmed out his capture. And this guy may not be the only person looking for Tommy."

"He also might be part of the housekeeping staff," she said as Deeks removed the man's shoes.

Deeks started unzipping the man's pants - thank God this guy was wearing underwear. As he pulled off the pants, Deeks found an ankle holster with a Kel-Tech P3AT. "What do you think he uses this for, stopping towel theft?" Deeks took the holster from the man's lower leg and put it on his own after he took his cargo shorts off.

Kensi started ripping a pillow case apart. "What's the plan?"

"I'm going to make sure nobody else on the floor is looking for Tommy. I give you the all clear, you walk Tommy out the front door and I'll meet you at your car. Callen and Hanna can pick up Basil Fawlty here," Deeks said as he put on the man's uniform.

"How did you know he was coming in?" Kensi asked as she sliced through the pillowcases with her knife.

"I would have. Make sure the new people on the floor were just a happy couple on their honeymoon and not a threat," Deeks said as he pulled on the man's shirt, grateful Kensi couldn't see the scars on his side any more. "I would have waited outside the door to make sure the happy couple stayed in the room." He walked over to the bathroom door. "Tommy, open up."

"How do I know..."

"Open the damn door Tommy or I'll give you to the guy who's looking for you."

"Alright," Tommy said as he opened the door. Looking at Deeks in a housekeeping uniform and the heavily tattooed man in his underwear on the floor, he asked, "What the hell?"

Deeks pointed to Kensi, who was giving him the strips of pillowcase material. "This is Special Agent Blye from NCIS. You're going to go with her in a minute to her SUV. I'll meet you down there and we'll take you someplace safe. You do exactly what she says, you got that."

"OK."

"Gimme your phone," Deeks handed Tommy his clothes, slipping his cellphone from the pants pocket, "and put these on."

"Dude?"

Kensi asked, "Is that necessary?"

"Tommy, how typical are the clothes you're wearing to your everyday gear?"
"Hey, this is my look." Tommy pretended to be a model, displaying his white and blue checked shirt, black jeans and custom-made chartreuse Chuck Taylor All-Stars. "Everyone knows that."

"Put his clothes on," Kensi told Tommy as she pointed to the bathroom. Tommy did as he was told.

Deeks slipped his weight vest on the unconscious man before flipping him over and tying his hands and feet. Kensi's phone rang. As Deeks pulled the man into a sitting position, Kensi was speaking to either Callen or Hanna. Deeks tied the man's hands tightly and his neck loosely to the frame of the bed and his feet to bed post. Pulled one of the velcro straps from the weight vest and attached that to the frame as well. Out cold tattoo guy wasn't going anywhere. Deeks pulled his phone from his backpack and took a picture of the man.

"What are you doing?" Kensi asked as she ended her call.

"Sending it to my office and have them run it through facial rec."

"Catch," Kensi said as she tossed him her phone. "Take a picture for me and we'll run it through our database."

"We're probably working the same databases," Deeks said but did what she asked. With the final pillowcase strip, he gagged the man. Satisfied with that, Deeks put on his socks and then slipped on the unconscious man's shoes. They were uncomfortably tight.

"Do I have to go surfing with you when this is done?" Tommy asked as he returned to the room in Deeks's clothes, carrying his own.

"No," Deeks pulled his knife, keys, wallet and a Nike white dri-fit cap out of his backpack. Putting the cap on Tommy's head, Deeks said, "But you owe Agent Blye and me dinner. Put your clothes in the backpack and get ready to go."

Deeks walked into the bathroom, removed the battery from Tommy's cellphone and flushed it down the toilet. Returning to the bedroom, Deeks said, "I'm going to clear the hall and once I do, you go with Agent Blye and do exactly what she tells you. Keep your mouth shut. I'm telling you that as your friend, as your lawyer and as someone who will kick your ass if I hear anything different from Agent Blye." He hooked the knife inside the waistband of the borrowed pants, tucked his wallet and keys in the back pocket and held on to the Tommy's battery-free cellphone.

"Callen and Sam are about ten minutes out," Kensi told him.

"I'll clear the hall. When I knock on the door and say 'Neptune,' you go right to the elevator. I'll meet you at the SUV. If you're not there when I get there, I'm coming back in," Deeks told them as he picked up Kensi's jacket. He made sure he guaranteed his ride with Agent Blye and Tommy as he handed the jacket to her.

In the hall, Deeks checked the housekeeping room, trash and laundry closets and the ice machine area - all clear. He made his way down the hall, knocking on their door and calling "Neptune" before walking with a purpose to the stairwell. While Kensi and Tommy waited for the elevator, he checked the second floor hallway and found it was empty. He left Tommy's now dead cellphone in the ice machine room since there was no fake attendant searching the floor.

Racing down the fire exit steps carrying the borrowed shoes since they were just too tight and his socks or he would have killed himself running down the stairs - he left barefoot through the back exit and made his way to the SUV. He arrived just as Tommy and Kensi were making their way across the hotel's driveway. Deeks tossed Kensi her keys.
"You stole my keys!"

"Didn't want you to leave without me," he pointed to his feet. "Tough walk to your place." Getting in the SUV, he ordered Tommy to crouch down in the back. As they left the hotel property, a blue van started following them. "On your six," Deeks told Kensi.

"Eric, I need a plate checked," Kensi said after she called in to her office. "2-George-9-4-8-Charlie." There was a pause and Deeks heard her say "OK, we're on Lindero Canyon Road...I see them, we're good. Thanks Eric."

"You see who? How are we good?" Deeks asked as Kensi slammed on the brakes. "What the?" he said as the SUV now blocked the blue van.

"Stay here, don't move," Kensi ordered as she got out of the vehicle, weapon drawn.

"What's going on?" Tommy asked.

"Stay down, shut up," Deeks whispered in reply, pulling the tied-up fake-housekeeping attendant's gun from the ankle holster. Deeks saw Agents Callen and Hanna each walking down one side of the van. The driver and a front seat passenger had their hands out their respective window. Deeks watched as Callen open the door and pull a rather tat'd up man out of the passenger's front seat. Hanna did the same with the driver.

Reholstering his borrowed weapon, Deeks provided Tommy with a play by play on what was going on. He pulled out his phone and took pictures of the men in the van as Hanna and Callen were putting them in handcuffs. He sent the photos to his office. Once the men were in cuffs, a black GMC van pulled up. Several agents dressed in tactical gear including bulletproof vests with NCIS on the chest, placed the handcuffed men in the black van. One agent remained with the blue van. Kensi returned to the SUV.

"Callen and Sam are picking up the guy in the hotel and we're all going to the boat shed."

"Boat shed?" Tommy asked as Kensi pulled back into traffic.

Deeks saw Hanna pull the blue van to the side of the road. "Pre-safe house," Deeks answered as his phone chirped. The text was from Bates: 'Find a secure line and call immediately.'

"What's up?" Kensi asked as she turned onto the Ventura Freeway.

"Do you have a SCIF or a secure line at your cool little hang out?"

"We can get you in contact with anyone you want. What's going on."

"Well, a text from an Admiral requesting a secure line means probably nothing good."

x-x-x

Deeks knew it was bad when they walked into the boat shed and Hetty Lange was waiting for them. "Commander," she said as she looked him over head to toe, 'I'm sure there is a delightful story to explain that particular uniform."

"You do look funny, man," Tommy commented.

"Really, Tommy?" Deeks looked at Hetty. "Do you have a room where Tommy can change?"

"Mr. Lin, please come with me. Miss Blye, you can stand guard outside the restroom. Commander,
Admiral Bates will be on the plasma screen shortly. He's asked for the room and he shall have it."

"Thank you," Deeks said as the three walked down a hallway. The door was shut behind them just as the plasma screen came to life. "Good evening, sir."

Bates was in his study wearing a checked shirt and a sweater. He looked more like a TV dad than an Admiral. "What have you stumbled on...what the hell are you wearing?"

"Housekeeping uniform from the Four Seasons. The guy in the picture I sent in was wearing this. Tommy got out of the building in my clothes, I got out in this."

"What's the former occupant of that uniform wearing right now?"

"My guess, handcuffs. Oh and my weight vest. Still training, sir. Back to the suspect, NCIS was picking him up."

"Well, they're going to have some company. I had my third conversation with Hetty Lange in two days after your picture nearly burned down the NSA database. Your guy is Wang Yong Pan."

"Okay. Should I know him?"

"No. His father, however, is Li Ho Pan."

"The former head of Chinese Intelligence."

"Li Ho Pan retired in 2002 after he and several other Chinese officials were caught in a sex trafficking sting in Hong Kong. The other officials were fired but the senor Pan had enough dirt on his accusers to orchestrate his own exit. A year later, he and his family were visiting Hawaii when Pan, his wife and two of his three children defected. Pan provided our government with some useful intelligence so he was set up with a home in Hawaii and asylum for his family."

"Was my guy the one who didn't defect?"

"No. Pan's oldest son is actually his brother's child. The brother died when Pan's wife was pregnant with twins. Ming-hua Pan is an up and comer in Chinese intelligence. Wang Yong Pan and his twin Shen Ru Pan defected with their parents and are listed to the world as college students Will and Sean Pan."

"They're not students."

"Technically they are, grad students, actually. But there are others who think there is so much more to the Pan family defection. People inside the intelligence community - and ONI - believe Li Ho Pan orchestrated everything from the sex scandal to the defection to his oldest still being inside Chinese intelligence."

"I don't..."

"The information we got from Li Ho Pan about China was useful but it showed the Chinese government as a somewhat backwards and benevolent band of dotty old grandpas just a little behind the times."

"I've met enough prisoners of that regime to disagree."

"The intel was clever. A lot of the people who heard Pan's story liked it - it confirmed their beliefs that China wasn't a threat or that America was still miles ahead of another world power."
"We didn't believe him."

"As you said, we've all met enough people on the wrong side of that government to know that they're not a group of kindly old men. ONI's official belief was that Pan told us what we wanted to hear and was setting up something in the states. Will and Sean are both getting their Masters in computer science at U Cal Berkley."

"What's Will doing down here?"

"He and his brother have year-long internships at Capital Flow International in their computer department. Capital Flow handles private equity transfers for dozens of West Coast banks."

"And he was dressed in a hotel housekeeping uniform looking for Tommy."

"Your man Tommy must be a big deal. We've got an alert out for the other Pan brother. A team from Pendleton just landed in LA and is going to pick up Sean Pan. We've had unofficial reports that the Pan brothers have been more than just dutiful interns while in Los Angeles. They've been doing some money laundering and using their computer expertise to get in with several of the Chinese gangs in Los Angeles. Not sure if that's on orders from the old man or if they're just industrious."

"You think the old man is in on this?"

"Based on what we've been able to put together since Lt. Commander Lee's suicide, ONI believes Pan arrived in Hawaii just as the first group of trained since childhood sleeper agents would be entering positions of power in the workforce. While Pan was monitored somewhat by the FBI, it's possible that he was here to run the program. He could be running it in conjunction..."

"With the non-defecting son," Deeks finished. "That's smart."

"Very smart. I've got a team from Pearl going to check out old man Pan and see what's going on there."

"Is the FBI going too?" Deeks asked.

"No. I've got enough civilian alphabet agencies involved in this as is. As part of our cooperative agreement with NCIS," Bates nearly spit out that line, "the brothers Pan and whoever else was or is picked up will be brought to their off-site location until Morales and company can move them to Coronado."

Deeks was stunned by what was going on. "Morales is out here? I thought he was in his parents' basement studying for the bar."

"He was but he said he could study for the bar anywhere so he's been in San Diego for a bit. Play nice with NCIS until we have all our targets in custody. Once we do, shut them down. I've spoken enough to Henrietta Lange over the last few days to last a lifetime."

"Yes sir," Deeks answered.

"And good work, kid. You may have stumbled into this assignment accidentally but you do seem to be rounding back into fighting form."

Deeks smiled. "Thank you sir." And then the screen went dark. Sick leave was over. He was sure of it.

Walking over to the closed door, Deeks knocked twice before yelling "clear."
"What's going on?" Kensi was out of the side room in record time.

"Navy Intel is picking up a few more suspects and we're waiting here for further orders. Do you have some place on site where we can store Tommy that isn't your interrogation room? He's still very much a civilian and probably won't react well to being held somewhere official. I'm going to contact the Marshals after everyone is in custody."

"We have a place," Hetty said as Tommy walked into the main room. "Miss Blye, if you'll show our guest upstairs. It isn't as luxurious as the Four Seasons, Mr. Lin, but I can assure you it is a good deal safer," Hetty said.

"Thank you ma'am," Tommy said as he and Kensi started up the stairs to the boat shed's second level.

"Commander, what did the Admiral have to say?" Hetty asked.

"The person Agent Blye and I encountered at the Four Seasons is the son of a former Chinese Intelligence Official. There's a lot of people working late right now at the CIA, NSA and ONI looking into this." Deeks looked down at the ill-fitting housekeeping uniform. "Did Tommy leave..."

"Your clothes are in the restroom. I wouldn't mind keeping what you're wearing, however. A good janitor's or hotel staff uniform always comes in handy."

"I've got enough uniforms. As long as I don't have to wear it again, consider it yours," Deeks said as he heard a door open. In walked Agents Hanna and Callen with the two agents in tactical gear. Each man had a suspect in handcuffs. Hanna was stuck with the only in his underwear Wang Yong Pan. He was also carrying Deeks's weight vest.

"With that hair, that uniform looks more appropriate on you than your summer whites," Hanna said as he steered his charge through the room.

"Since Miss Lang...Hetty is taking the uniform, I'm sure you'll be seeing a lot of it," Deeks replied as he left the room to change. "And I want my vest back. It was nearly a hundred bucks from Amazon."

Once back in his own clothing and passing Pan's gun to Kensi to have it run through a ballistics check, Deeks gave a briefing to Kensi, Sam and Callen. Hetty was returning to her office to see what she could get from her contacts in the intelligence community.

As she was leaving through one door, a rather muscular Hispanic man named Morales according to his name tag walked in another wearing a Marine combat uniform. "Is there anything you California types do that isn't beach themed? Look at this place," he asked as he sized up the room. "Where's David Hasselhoff and Pam Anderson?"

Deeks smiled and offered introductions. "Major Miguel Morales, this is NCIS's Office of Special Projects. NCIS, this is Major Morales."

"Migs. Call me Migs." Morales said as he removed his cover. After Kensi, Sam and Callen identified themselves, Morales updated them all. "The other Pan brother hit the road just before we got there. A neighbor saw him leave in a hurry so you have to think he knows what went down at the Four Seasons."

"What's the plan?"

"We've got a transport coming down from Point Mugu and we're going to fly them to Coronado
"Shouldn't we question them here?" Callen asked.

"The Admiral wants them moved away from the civilian population as quickly as possible. The three non-Pan brothers are all here on expired Visas and by expired I mean they showed up here when they were high school age and forgot to go home nine years ago," Morales said. "A contact Admiral Bates has at LAPD thinks they're all muscle for the Zhulong street gang, who have been having their money laundered by the Pans."

"Admiral Bates has connections with the LAPD?" Kensi asked.

"The Admiral has connections everywhere," Deeks and Morales said in unison. Morales continued, "Bates wants Deeks to run the Gitmo hustle on them before they're packed up for Point Mugu."

"Gitmo Hustle?"

"They're going to pit them against each other," Sam answered Kensi. "Explain the future to them."

"And make it awful," Deeks said with a smile.

x-x-x

The transport from Point Mugu arrived as Sam and Migs were making fast friends. While Migs denied any connection to the military intelligence community in general and NEIT in particular - "I'm no secret squirrel, just a jarhead following orders," he said with an easy smile - he and Sam knew a number of the same Special Forces members and even passed each other in Iraq in 2003.

Will Pan, now dressed in dark green tee-shirt and matching pants, and his three accomplices were put in leg and waist irons in their interrogation rooms by four large and well-armed MPs. They were led, shuffling, to the boat shed's main room and placed next to each other on the couch with each suspect's MP standing behind couch. Callen, Sam and Kensi all had their weapons pointed at the men while Migs stood behind Deeks. Deeks had his feet up, relaxing at the table.

"Hello, fellas," Deeks started. "While your buddy Will here was enjoying the Four Seasons earlier, you boys won't be going back there. Or anywhere really in California. Nope. These rather large men," Deeks pointed to the MPs as he took his feet off the table and sat up straight, "they're going to take you to an airplane for a nice long trip."

Deeks stood and pointed to the three Zhulong gang members. "You boys are going to get that island vacation most Americans dream of. Sun, beach, ocean. I love Guantanamo Bay. The beaches, pristine. The water is crystal clear. Sure it's warm but when you spend your whole day in the water, who cares. Am I right?"

The three didn't respond.

"But I forgot, you guys aren't going to the beach part. You're going to the barracks. Since you boys aren't citizens, you have no rights. You'll go there, we'll get some intelligence from you. If you're good, we'll let you come back to L.A and face whatever crimes the LAPD Gang Unit has on you - and you will be pleading guilty. If not, you'll be part of some trade for dissidents or prisoners the US wants from China. Nobody is going to bargain just for you boys, unlike Mr. Pan over here, you'll just be throw-ins. China never wants an even exchange. If we're getting five, they want six. You boys are throw-ins."

Deeks saw the trio largely unmoved by his chat. He continued. "Now, I know what you're thinking.
"I'm a major badass, I can do two years in a neat little prison cell.' Well, maybe you can but you're not getting just that treatment. I told you. I love Gitmo. Even though I live here, I love their beaches. And the beaches here are a bitch Memorial Day weekend. Everyone is starting their summer, everyone is back from school, whole bunch of newbie surfers in the water. Awful. You know what's not busy - Hidden Beach in Gitmo. I'll be down to see you boys around Memorial Day. Show up in my shiny white uniform. Bring a couple of Marines with me, make sure your fellow prisoners see me walking down the hall and having you boys picked up and brought in for individual questioning. By then, our psych guys will figure out which one of you is the tough one, which one is the weak one and which one is the follower."

The men looked at Deeks, still unmoved. He continued. "And then you'll be returned to your barracks and some other prisoners will be dragged out and never seen again. We'll probably just move him to some other quarters or maybe ship him off somewhere but he will be gone. And I'll show up with a carton of smokes for one of you. Probably the tough one. See how long you last once the others think you're a snitch."

"You can't do that," one of the men said.

"Sure I can. You dudes were trying to steal Navy technology. I'm Navy. You're ours to do with as we please within reason."

"No, he just told us..." a second man said.

"Shut the fuck up," Will Pan ordered.

"Yeah, shut up," Deeks told them. "You're not citizens. You have no rights. You're going to Gitmo with the fine MPs behind you and unless you confess to all your gang activities and make plans for Pelican Bay, this is your last day in sunny Cal-i-forn-i-a."

"I have rights," the first man said.

"Not a single one," Morales told him. "And I just finished law school. You're done. And we'll make sure the Chinese know you losers squeal like pigs."

"And then there's you, Mr. Pan," Deeks turned his attention to the real prize of the three. "Your old man probably has his own little detail of MPs searching his home."

"I have rights."

"No, you don't. Your asylum deal, all asylum deals, include no spying, no criminal behavior clauses. Once our computer forensic guys go through your desk at Capital Flow, once your parents are packed up and brought into custody. You, your brother, Mom and Pops are going off..."

"To Gitmo, I heard the speech."

"You're not going to Gitmo. You are so much more valuable. Nope, we'll find some country that's friendly to the US but that maybe worries China. They'll get some intel out of you and share it with us, that's the usual deal, but you'll be theirs to do with as they please. And while we'll show these loser some basic rights - three hots and a cot - some of the people we trade with aren't nearly as hospitable."

"You can't..."

"Yes I can. And I give you about a week before you fall apart like a twenty-dollar suitcase. Geez, I'm a Navy lawyer and an injured one at that and I took you out with my girl Fern there," Deeks
pointed to Kensi, "in like nothing flat. Wait until some pissed off interrogator from some country that
doesn't like your old homeland gets his hands on you. Once you've dime'd out your parents, your
friends, the Zhulong dudes here, some US intelligence agency will pick up what's left of you and
trade your miserable ass back to the Chinese. We'll get some human rights activist and a ton of
positive press and the Chinese will get your family of lousy spies. And it will all be leaked to CNN,
the Washington Post - complete with pictures. Win, win for America."

As if on cue, two of the MPs said "Hoo-rah," and the men were all marched to the transport.

"How much of that is true?" Kensi asked once it was just NCIS, Deeks and Morales in the room.

"Well, I'm probably not going to Gitmo anytime soon but my fine friend Migs or someone like him
will do the visits. No rules against messing with their heads."

The transport horn blasted. "I'm off to Mugu then San Diego. We'll talk," Morales told Deeks as he
shook his hand. "Agent Hanna, Agent Blye, Agent Callen, nice to meet you all," he said as he left
the room.

"Now what?" Kensi asked.

"I think the Admiral and your Director will probably want us to find the missing Sean Pan. In the
meantime, if we can get Tommy to some sort of safe house, I'll pass him off to the Marshals
tomorrow."

As Kensi started up the stairs, Deeks cellphone chirped. The text message from Morales read "Please
tell me you're making a run at Agent Blye because that is one fine looking fed."

"Anything we need to know?" Callen asked.

Deeks smiled. "Major Morales was impressed with the look of your team, Agent Callen."

Tommy came bouncing down the stairs. "All good?" he asked.

"So far. We're gonna find you a safe house tonight and I'll have the Marshals pick you up in the
morning."

"I owe you, man," Tommy said sincerely. "I owe all of you."

Deeks just nodded and looked at his watch. If he could get a lift home, he could ride his bike to
Neptune's Net and try dinner again.

"Can I borrow your phone?" Tommy asked Deeks.

"Why?" Deeks, Callen and Kensi replied simultaneously.

"I need to call Lenny," Tommy answered.

"Who's Lenny?" Sam asked

Deeks sat down and put his head in his hands. "Don't answer that yet, Tommy. Answer this, what's
your IQ?"

"Huh?"

"Your IQ? What is your IQ?"
"Why?" Kensi asked.

"Because when he answers Agent Hanna's question, you won't think he's a complete moron." Deeks looked up, Tommy seemed completely confused. "IQ Tommy," Deeks said.

"143."

"Now answer Agent Hanna's question," Deeks told him. "Who is Lenny?"

"Lenny is my cousin."

"Oh my God," Kensi said.

"What, what do you guys know that I don't. Is Lenny in trouble? He was supposed to bring in a pizza - the food at the Four Seasons is boring - and watch the Twins-Angels game."

"Tommy, what did you just find out about your parents?" Deeks asked gently.

"That they were sent to America to be spies, which is crazy. They were normal people."

"And who is Lenny and how is he related to ..."

Tommy interrupted Deeks. "Oh my God, Lenny is in on this too."

-30-
5. "You were sick, but now you're well again, and there's work to do." - Kurt Vonnegut, "Timequake"

x-x-x

Tommy was shaken when he sat down on the boat shed couch. "I told him where I was, I told him..."

"Tommy, was he the one who asked you to talk to Deeks?" Sam asked. Deeks looked at Sam and couldn't mask his surprise.

"Yeah. I told him that Ju's family wanted me to give them Navy secrets and I told him I couldn't."

"Why would Tommy asking for me be an issue?" Deeks asked.

"Because you'd wind up talking to us. Callen and Sam had an unpleasant encounter with Lt. Commander Lee's spy connections. We have several Chinese spies and sleeper agents in custody. You want to bet this is about Xue-Li," Kensi said.

"Xue-Li?" Deeks asked.

"She was allegedly Lt. Commander Lee's fiancé but she really was supposed to be his handler," Callen answered.

"Good to know I wasn't the only love stuck dope," Tommy mumbled. "Lenny told me to contact someone where I was working but I told him I knew a Navy lawyer."

Callen, Hanna and Kensi all shared a look that told Deeks there was more to all this and he planned to figure that out. "Now what? Tommy needs to go with the Marshals now."

"Agreed, but we need him to make that phone call to his cousin," Sam said.

"What?" Tommy and Deeks said in unison.

"Tommy, call your cousin. Say you got away from the people looking for you at the hotel but there as a fight and Deeks got his ass kicked," Sam continued with a smile.

"Hey!" Deeks complained.

"Deeks told you to run and you did," Sam continued. "Now you're looking for someplace to hide. You got cash, you just need a ride to a hotel."

"I can't go."

"No you can't," Deeks agreed. Turning to the NCIS Agents, Deeks told them, "I'm not letting him go anywhere. He's a civilian." And a rather clueless one, Deeks thought.

"No, I'll go," Callen said. Callen and Tommy were about the same height and build. "I can put on a hoodie, borrow your rather unique sneakers and I'll wait at some bus stop or corner with my head down and hood up. When your cousin Lenny or whoever he sends goes to get you, they won't know it's not you until it's too late."
"I like it," Deeks said. "Do you have a burner phone?"

Callen pulled out his phone. "Untraceable. Where does your cousin live?" he asked.

"He's normally in San Francisco but he came down to stay at my place while I've been on my hotel tour."

"Which gives him access to all of your personal and financial data," Kensi said.

"He had the financial data. Lenny's a vice president at Commerce China, the investment firm. He's been taking care of my money for years."

"I'll call it in to Eric," Kensi said as she pulled out her cell.

"Tommy lives in a house in Hermosa Beach. It's a small place. If he's there and not at the meet, Lenny won't have too many places to hide there," Deeks told them. "I saw a storage unit place near the hotel. Agent Callen as Tommy could be there. See who Lenny brings with him, if anyone. With rush hour traffic, Tommy calls now and we've probably got 90 minutes or so before Lenny and whatever crew he has gets there."

"Make the call," Callen handed Tommy his phone. "Sound scared."

"That's not going to be hard."

x-x-x

A US Marshals team in Los Angeles from the Lexington office took custody of Tommy. The two were returning from Mexico, chasing down a mob accountant turned dentist. She was beautiful, he wore a cowboy hat. Neither of them believed Deeks was a lawyer let alone a Navy lawyer. Kensi, who was returning with dinner, agreed but said that looks were deceiving.

She brought him a second try at fish tacos - the good salmon ones from Jerry's Deli - while he watched her destroy a Cuban sandwich and a black and white milk shake. He was pretty sure there wasn't much Special Agent Kensi Blye didn't do with the volume turned to eleven.

Major Morales and three other Marines were pulled off prisoner transport duty to provide support to Sam and Callen while Agents Nassir and Thompson took the tact team to Tommy's home to see if Lenny stayed behind or if any unplanned guests were there.

As Deeks cleaned up his dining area and took away both his and Agent Blye's trash, the plasma screen flashed to life. "Kensi, the Lin house in Hermosa Beach is secure. The place was empty but it was completely trashed."

"Tommy is as neat as a pin. That's just wrong," Deeks told Kensi as he sat back at the table. "Can you get someone there to access Tommy's home computer?"

Eric on the screen looked at Kensi who told him "Just do it."

"What am I looking for?" Eric asked.

"Check his internet usage, web searches, browser use."

"He hasn't been there," Kensi stated but realized "but the cousin has been there."

"I've got searches for tides and boat rentals. There are also searches for the Final Exit Network and Compassionate Choices in the last two days."
"They sound like..."

"They're suicide support sites, Agent Blye," Deeks told her. "Can you open up any sort of word processing or e-mail program?"

"No problem."

"Suicide note?" Kensi asked.

"Heartbroken Tommy's engagement fell apart. He ran off from work, treated himself to some fancy hotels before ending it all. Tides and boat rentals - probably going to have someone who looks like Tommy rent a boat..."

Kensi picked up Deeks's theory. "Have it crash into the rocks or a pier. Tommy's missing and assumed dead. The fiancé can explain how she broke it off because he was becoming erratic."

"Lenny gets access to Tommy's cash and is no doubt listed as next of kin after Tommy to his father. Tommy's shipped off - probably literally - to some worker's camp in the middle of Bumblebuck, China where if he wants to live and eat and make sure his father is safe, Tommy starts telling them what he knows about US military computers and writing code for them."

"Sorry to interrupt," Eric broke in. "Sam and Callen just called in. They picked up Leonard Lin and four men at the storage facility. They're bringing in Leonard Lin and Major Morales is coming with them. The team from Pendleton took the four men. They were all carrying QBZ-95's"

"Chinese military's rifle of choice," Kensi said.

"The Marines are taking them back to Point Mugu. I'm running pictures of them through facial rec but so far, nothing."

"MSS?" Kensi wondered.

"Probably Chinese military," Deeks said. "Chinese Intelligence sleepers live as locals like Tommy's dad or your Lt. Commander Lee. That's MSS's mission. I'm guessing those four are Chinese special forces. The Admiral is going to love them." Turning his attention to Eric, Deeks asked, "Can you contact the Marshals Service?"

"Sure. What do you need, Commander? By the way, no note in Tommy Lin's computer."

"Probably waiting for the Chinese to have Tommy in custody. Back to the Marshals, just give them the head's up that the people looking for Tommy may include members of an elite military unit. They may want to beef up security on both Tommy and his father. Especially with the cousin having access to Tommy's financials."

"Of course," Eric said and was suddenly gone.

"He's helpful," Deeks noted.

"He's the best. Everyone on this team is. Do you have someone like him at NEIT?"

"What is the NEIT of which you speak?"

"Do you really intend to keep up that ruse? I think we've proven that we're all on the same side."

Deeks smiled and leaned back in his chair. "Well, we were in bed together..."
"As part of the case!"

"You don't have to be that offended, Agent Blye," Deeks chuckled.

"Kensi."

"Kensi," Deeks said kindly. "Naval Intelligence has more than its share of very highly skilled computer and data analysts. Bates runs a tight ship."

"As an Admiral, I hope he would," Kensi offered with a snort. She was awfully cute.

"So if you don't work out of here, where do you work out of - failed B&B? Converted factory? Old hanger near LAX?"

"Facility not far from here."

"Based on the decor here, it is probably something nicer than a facility. I got my butt rescued from a facility in Afghanistan. Bet your place is a lot nicer than a heat-free halal with slabs of beef hanging from the ceiling."

"A little nicer," Kensi told him. Her tone turned serious. "The incident report didn't say how long you were in the butcher shop. Just that the rescue was at zero three hundred local time."

"Four of the longer hours of my life were spent in a suburban Balkh butcher shop. When Omar Salib came looking for his barely teenage and not voluntary fiancé Ameena things sped up but once he wasn't a threat, time slowed down again."

"Did Salib do that to you?" Kensi asked gently as she pointed to his side.

"Yes and no. Salib was a wanna-be. Saw himself as the next great Taliban leader. What am I saying, the next great leader would be the first. Anyway, the town outside Balkh where Dr. Vadwa lived made a small mint weaving rugs and making other household knickknacks for a couple of British and American companies. Salib thought he could take over the village, control the cash and then start building his own empire."

"How would he do that?"

"He brought in radical clerics, bought some businesses out - he was from Saudi Arabia, Daddy was a prince - installed his own people and some radical business practices. Salib barely got out of Eton and failed out of both Cambridge and Oxford. Tried an American college or two before getting an office job with the family's oil business. Got tired of being a junior executive since he saw himself as so much more. Took some cash from a trust fund and set out on his own. Which is ironic, really, when you're funding your independent future with Daddy's money. Anyway, it's not hard to buy some officials these days so Salib was set up and ready to go."

"You stopped that."

"No. I stopped Salib. Permanently. Dr. Vadwa tried to stop it. His brother was the elected mayor of their village but Dr. Vadwa ran the town. He had the education, had the smart American wife who was also a doctor. They kept the town from having any use for radicals. They just wanted to treat sick people and make sure the village thrived. Dr. Vadwa was in Salib's way."

"Did Salib kill him?"

"On the record, Dr. Vadwa died of a bad flu. Off the record, he was poisoned. When a team went in
to clean up after my mess, Dr. Vadwa was secretly exhumed and examined." Deeks shook his head. "Parsa Vadwa had more antifreeze in him than I have in my Jeep."

"Salib?"

"His brother, Nasar, we think. The brothers had lunch together three or four times a week. Nasar probably slipped it in his brother's tea."

"Was he charged?"

"No. Nasar was, well, the stereotypical jealous little brother. There's value in that. Salib saw that. Others did as well."

"I don't..."

"You can make any situation work for your side with just the right pressure," Deeks answered cryptically.

"So he was involved with Salib."

"Oh yeah. When it all went to hell and Salib rounded up some angry locals, Nasar confirmed that an American soldier was kidnapping their women and charged that we probably killed Parsa Vadwa. Before and after my dealings with Salib, I had to stop a few attempts to get Ameena and her mother Lina away from me."

"During the four hours?"

"They probably didn't discover us for the first hour but with my blown to hell Corolla Fielder a block away with my dead translator inside, it wasn't hard to figure out where we wound up. Especially since there was a field behind the butcher shop where a helicopter could land in a pinch. There were attempts to break into the store - we were in an two room office on the make-shift second floor. With my night vision goggles, the men trying to get in were easy to stop. Someone started making Molotov cocktails. Took them out too."

"Sounds like some night."

"Oh just your typical fun night out in a war-torn foreign country. I get to Nasar Vadwa's house - he moved his sister-in-law and daughter there to offer them protections but really to control the two of them as he prepared to marry Ameena off. Just as I get the two women in my vehicle, Nasar comes out with a gun, screaming on his cellphone. He fires wildly. I clip him, we get into the SUV and try to get away."

"IAD?"

"Got near the edge of the town when I saw a dead dog on the road. It was too late to make any real evasive move," Deeks looked down, took a deep breath and looked at Kensi again. "Boom goes to the dynomutt, Arif the translator is dead and I'm running with two very frightened civilians covered in blood and glass."

"You kept them safe."

"That I did. I also got into a knife fight with Omar Salib."

"You won."
"My intestines and very scarred right hip would profoundly disagree."

"The women are safe and you're alive. That's winning."

"The women are safe and that's what matters. They have a nice life in San Diego. Dr. Vadwa is a pediatrician, trained at UCSF - that's where she met her husband - so the Admiral made some phone calls and the Navy helped get her set up near Coronado. She has a practice that works with the families of the young sailors stationed there."

"That was good of the Admiral."

"Her husband provided a great deal of intel over the years. It was the least the Navy could do."

"What about you?"

"Oh, the Navy provided me with an education, all this is the least I can do."

Kensi rolled her eyes. "No, I mean what happened to you."

"I got stabbed, I survived, I'm recovering."

"Those scars aren't typical."

"Dr. Vadwa, Lina, tried to stop the bleeding and she did but Salib's going away gift to me - and supposedly this was his signature move in a knife fight - was to take a leak on his knife before finding some animal feces to smear on the it. All those extra ingredients made the knife wound a little more annoying."

"Oh God."

"Yeah, Omar Salib was quite the guy. A local told one person from the post-mission clean-up team that Salib liked to gut his enemies and leave them to die in agony as their insides rotted away. Even if they survived being stabbed, they'd be sick until they died from an infection."

"That's what happened to you. I mean not the dying part but…"

"It was over two hours before I got on the QRF helo and another hour before I was being operated on at Bagram. There were post-op infections at Bagram, Landstuhl and finally Bethesda that all required new operations. The one at Bethesda was the worst."

"Did you think you were going to die?"

"Everyone dies."

Kensi looked startled by his answer. "Did you think…"

"I never thought in the butcher shop that I was anything more than just wounded. I've been shot, I've been beat up, I survived other IADs, hell, I was in a helicopter crash and walked away. I've been in my fair share of rough spots too, though never with a female civilian and her child, but I figured once help arrived I'd be fine. All the time in the hospitals, I just never got feet under me, you know. I was rehabbing in Bethesda and just had no strength. Next thing I know, I'm in ICU with a dozen tubes running in and out of me and no memory of the prior five days."

"You look fine now."

"See, you do think I'm a fine looking man," he joked, not wanting to talk about this anymore. "The
California sunshine and the beach were the best medicine."

"What happened to Nasar Vadwa?" Kensi asked, hopefully figuring they were done with his medical history.

"Well, the locals ran out the radical clerics once they knew Salib was dead. They were like Dr. Vadwa - religious but more interested in having independent and successful lives. A member of a team sent in to clean up my mess had a long sit down with Nasar Vadwa. There was proof he was on Salib's payroll and a decent case to be made he poisoned his brother. Nasar was a petty, jealous, little man who saw Salib as a way to get some power."

"Was he arrested?"

"No, he's on a different payroll now and responsible for keeping the village free of the Taliban. Bates's wife is on the board of an NGO that works in countries needing medical aid. A few phone calls and an anonymous donor gave half-a-mil to open the Parsa and Lina Vadwa Medical Center. It is staffed with a full-time medical team. The Seabees improved the local school and dedicated it to Ameena. Now everyone in town gives credit to the legacy of Parsa Vadwa. A little shot to Nasar's ego since now his brother and his brother's family are seen as a local heroes and the family who took a stand against the Taliban."

"How long have you been back in California?"

"Once the doctors were really sure I had no infections left, I pushed hard to be home for Christmas. Didn't make Christmas but was back just around New Year's. As I said, the sunshine and surf were good for what ailed me."

"And now you're trying to get back on duty."

"I am. Based on my little David Blaine act here yesterday and bringing in the bellboy spy, I think I may be off sick leave and on my way back."

"And you think the sunshine and surfing..."

"I know the sunshine and the water did it. There are restorative powers in the sun and since we all come from the sea..."

The door opened and in marched Agent Hanna with Leonard Lin in plastic handcuffs. Callen was just behind him in a hoodie and Tommy's ridiculous sneakers. Morales brought up the rear. Agents Hanna and Callen brought Lenny to the interview room Deeks broke out of the day - with Callen tossing Deeks the hoodie before entering the room. Morales sat at the table with Kensi and Deeks. Kensi turned on the plasma screen so they could watch the interrogation.

"Any trouble with Lenny?" Deeks asked.

"The four assholes in the van he drove up in were more the problem. None of them allegedly speak English but the Admiral is getting translators to Mugu to debrief them. Nothing from facial rec. They gotta be Chinese military. This guy," Morales pointed to the screen, "screamed when he saw Agent Callen under the hoodie, nearly wet himself when he saw Agent Hanna. Spent most of the ride here trying not to cry. He's not exactly Jason Bourne."

"You do know Jason Bourne, don't you Kensi?" Deeks teased.

"Did he say thing in the car?" Kensi ignored him.
"Just that he was in so much trouble and he wanted a lawyer."

Their attention turned to Callen and Hanna. "We're going to need a list of all your foreign contacts here in the States and your superiors in Beijing," Callen plopped a legal pad and pen on the table as he sat across from Lenny. Sam stood behind Callen--more towered over him, actually.

"I want to make a phone call. I want a lawyer," a tearful Lenny demanded.

"It doesn't work that way," Sam told Lenny. "It goes like this. You help us bring down the spy ring and we don't send you back to Beijing as a failed spy. I gotta tell you, that million dollar condo you're living in right now as the big successful finance guy, that's just going to be a memory when you're in some little hut back home."

"I am home. I was born in California. Lawyer. I want a lawyer."

"And your gig at Commerce China, wait until the assets of every client are frozen until we can confirm that none of their funds are going to finance either terrorism or espionage against the U.S.," Sam explained. Turning to Callen, he asked, "How long do you think that money will be frozen? Weeks? Months?"

"I'm thinking it is the fourth of July before a single dollar moves. Of course, with the FBI and SEC looking at every transaction, every form filed, Commerce China is out of business, they just don't know it yet."

"You can't do this," Lenny complained. "I have rights. I want a lawyer."

"Sam, he wants a lawyer," Callen said with a touch of humor in his voice.

"I'm an American citizen, I have rights."

"You have the right to shut up," Sam told him with a touch of menace in his voice.

"No, you do need a lawyer. Just wait here a second," Callen said as he stood. "We'll be back."

Callen and Sam joined Deeks, Morales and Kensi. "So?" Kensi asked.

The video feed of Lenny in the interrogation room moved to the corner of the screen as Eric popped up. "Commander, Admiral Bates needs to speak with you. I'm going to patch him in."

Bates filled the screen. "Is NCIS there?"

"Yes sir," Sam answered. "Do you need the room?"

"No, this update is for everyone. Li Ho Pan is in custody. He's talking and a bit more truthfully about what's going on. Agent Hanna, Agent Callen, you arrested a woman named Xue-Li in connection to Lt. Commander Lee's case, am I correct?"

"Yes, sir. She's in federal custody, has been for six weeks."

"Xue-Li is the daughter-in-law of Li Ho Pan. We've confirmed that."

"Which son is she..." Deeks started to ask.

"She's married to the oldest Pan son, isn't she?" Sam asked. "The one still in China."

"She is. Pan is willing to spill all he knows if she's returned to China. She was given a physical after
"She was in custody."

"She's pregnant," Kensi guessed.

"She is. Since Lt. Commander Lee wouldn't be the father, her husband in China is likely the proud papa. Her pregnancy, however, would give the Lt. Commander a reason to leave the sub during their time at sea to be present for the child's birth. He'd leave with the stolen technology. They had quite the plan in motion for Lt. Commander Lee."

"We're not trading her back, are we?" Morales asked.

"Eventually but not for this. We're looking more for a Pan family reunion. Bring in the missing brother - Sean. Once everyone is in custody, very public accusations about sleeper spies are going to make the diplomatic rounds."

"Isolate the brother still in China."

"We'll have his wife, two brothers and parents in custody. Oh, his pregnant wife. He could be offered a chance to see them and perhaps share what he knows about China's intelligence operations here and abroad for asylum."

"How did that work out last time?" Deeks asked.

"With everyone looking, probably a whole lot better this time. But we need the other brother in custody."

"What if we could get both brothers in custody, sir?" Migs asked. Everyone in the room turned to the Marine. "Hear me out. We got someone involved in all this right now in custody. Deeks's unknowing sleeper spy's cousin is in NCIS's interrogation room right now."

"OK," the Admiral said. "And by the way Morales, make sure Deeks walks out the front door when he leaves this time.

Deeks and Morales chuckled, Callen, Sam and Kensi did not. Morales continued. "We tell the stockbroker spy here that he needs to arrange a meet between someone who knows where both Tommy Lin and Xue-Li are."

"Xue-Li is in special segregation in Victorville," Callen told them. "She's in a secure unit where she's the only prisoner."

"But if she's having a rough time with her pregnancy, she could be moved to a hospital unit closer to LA," Morales said. "And I'm sure the father-to-be would want to guarantee the safety of his wife and unborn child."

"I like this," the Admiral said.

"She can't be allowed..." Kensi started to object.

"She's staying in Victorville. But she can be listed as a patient somewhere else," Deeks told her, beginning to see what Migs was planning.

"Oh, and any medical records created need to reflect that the unborn child is male. Jane Lee made it clear that sons are treasured. But how do we sell this to the Pan brothers?" Callen asked but was obviously on board.
"I know a Naval Commander who won a lot of money in China a few years ago and was investigated for taking a bribes," the Admiral said.

Deeks smiled, it was official - he was back. "I was cleared."

"And that Naval Commander maybe got himself hurt in the field and figured he'd be out of his final post-law school year's commitment to the Navy," Bates continued.

"I re-upped," Deeks told the NCIS Agents. Oh yes, he was back.

"But instead of an honorable discharge, not only does he still owe the Navy a year, he got himself hurt doing something stupid. He's going to be retained an extra year to make up for the lost service time and medical expenses," Migs added.

"I have to do something stupid to get hurt? I couldn't do something heroic and figured my time with the Navy should be done?" Deeks tried to defend himself. It didn't matter. He was back.

"Stupid is going to be an easier sell for you," Bates said. "Arrange this with NCIS. Deeks, don't get yourself hurt or reinjured. Morales..."

"Make sure Deeks doesn't get himself hurt or reinjured, sir," Morales finished the Admiral's thoughts.

"You all have done this before," Kensi commented.

"You have no idea Agent Blye," the Admiral sighed. "Deeks, Morales, I want a sit-rep tomorrow at zero nine hundred my time," Bates said before the screen went dark. The image of Lenny Lin in the interrogation room now filled the screen.

"Can your computer guy set up a medical emergency for Xue-Li?" Deeks asked.

"Of course," Kensi answered.

"Move her into the prison ward of a local hospital."

"They might try to break her out." Kensi thought aloud. "We have to watch out for that."

"Not if she's on complete bed rest for a week or so," Sam said. "They'll wait until she's being returned to Victorville."

"And I can offer to sell them the day, time and the route from the hospital," Deeks told them. "I'm sure a good husband would like to be there to see his wife released."

"We can lojack the free Pan brother living here."

"Lojack?"

"Super-secret spy stuff," Deeks said, figuring NCIS knew nothing about Overwatch. "Naval Intelligence can track brother Sean while setting up Mr. Xue-Li."

"Tommy is out of this. He's so far in over his head he'd never stand a chance with the level of spy-biz going on here," Deeks told the group.

"Agreed," Callen said. Pointing to his feet, "Any man who thinks these sneakers are a good idea should be in protective custody. We can dangle Xue-Li and the Pan brother in custody."

"What about him?" Sam pointed to Lenny on the screen.
"He wanted to see a lawyer, Deeks, you're a lawyer," Callen answered.

"Yes I am," he said as he stood and made his way to the interrogation room. "You won't be locking me in there again?" he joked.

Callen opened a drawer on an end table near the couch. He pulled out an ear wig set and handed it to Deeks. "We can hear you, you can hear us, got it?"

Deeks held up the earwig to Morales and said "Remember these?"

"Make do." Morales joked as Deeks put the earwig in.

"Once you have Lenny working for us, you can come out," Sam advised.

"Don't worry, talking his way in and out of trouble is what Commander Deeks does best," Morales added.

Walking into the interrogation room, Lenny Lin asked Deeks "Who are you?"

"You wanted a lawyer, I'm a lawyer. Tommy may have mentioned me. I'm Commander Marty Deeks."

"You're Tommy's Navy lawyer friend? You look more like one of the guys he works with making video games."

"Yeah, well, we're all not what we seem to be," Deeks said sitting across from Lenny. "You look to the world to be a stockbroker and American success story. First generation American and already living the dream. Too bad you're a sleeper spy."

"I'm not. I don't..."

"You told the people looking for Tommy where he was hiding."

"They can't prove that."

"Why, because you made the call on a burner phone you think you're free and clear? The Navy has known about Tommy for weeks," Deeks lied. "They've had his house under surveillance, every phone call, every cell phone ID, every internet search - all recorded and available to make a great case against you. While the country still technically can execute traitors, mostly they just get really long sentences at supermax federal prisons. You're going to love Colorado. You're only going to see it from outside a cell window but..."

"The Navy didn't have Tommy's house under surveillance. He didn't tell anyone but you about what was going on. Lawyer/client privilege. You could lose your license if you told..."

"Dude, you're assuming I'm a regular lawyer. I'm not. Believe me, I'm not. And the rules for military justice are very different than the rules for the average lawyer. The only one losing anything in this room is you. You've lost your freedom, you're going to lose all your money, your job, your fancy apartment - all gone. Also gone, that company you work for. They're about to get about every alphabet agency in the US looking at them. The FDA may drop by to see how much sugar your coworkers use and if the office kitchen provides enough healthy snacks."

"I got this scare job from the guy who pretended to be Tommy and the big dude."

"Yeah, well the big dude and the guy pretending to be Tommy are federal agents. You can be held
for 72 hours without being charged. And then they can lose you in the system. Would hate for you to get confused with one of the Chinese military commandos who were picked up with you. They'll likely be shipped back to China. We could slip you in for one of them and you could enjoy some time back in the homeland."

"America is my homeland."

"Then start acting like it," Deeks turned serious. "You have an opportunity here to cooperate and have your sentence reduced or you have an opportunity to spend lots of time in jail. Your choice."

"I have demands."

Deeks sighed. "Don't we all."

"No prison."

"Yeah, good luck with that," Deeks stood and started to the door.

"I know where Sean is. I know who the main handler in San Francisco is for half a dozen sleeper cells."

"We have Will Pan in custody," Deeks turned around at the door. "I'm thinking he'll spill his brother's location and a whole lot more."

"I'll do what you want if I get to keep my money. I made it legally. Short sentence, minimum security facility."

"You get to keep the money you can prove you made legally. You get a reduced sentence, not necessarily a short one. Medium security, no club fed for you. If you're setting us up, if you're not being completely honest and forthcoming, I will make sure you do a life sentence in a hole so awful the best thing that could happen to you is an early death. You got me?"

"What do I have to do?"

"You give me Sean Pan's phone number and we got a start."

x-x-x

Two hours later, Deeks was officially sick of Lenny Lin. All the things that made his cousin Tommy fun - a goofy sense of wonder mixed with a brilliant mind - were sadly lacking in Lenny. He was mostly what he appeared to be - a finance, numbers guy and a boring one at that. The sideline as a sleeper spy was really only a part-time job. He moved a little money and kept an eye on his cousin. Tommy was the prize, Lenny was a worker bee.

Eric built a medical history for Xue-Li at LA's women's prison hospital. Morales suggested and the team agreed to have Xue-Li listed as Li-Xue since it looked covert but was poorly done - feed the belief that nobody in U.S. intelligence knew what they had in Xue-Li.

According to Lenny, Sean Pan ran a gambling room for his friends and money laundering clients every Friday. Capital Flow was expanding their offices in a downtown high-rise. The Pans rented the space just below the firm's reception floor. Guests would come up to Capital Flow only to be walked down a floor past an basic office set up to hidden black jack, poker, baccarat tables. Dealers, bartenders and wait staff entered the building looking like construction workers. Add in the building security being on the Pan payroll - it was a highly successful business endeavor.
Lenny made a call to Sean Pan - with NCIS listening - explaining that he was in custody but keeping his mouth shut. He told Sean that he was making the phone call on the cell belonging to Tommy’s lawyer and then Deeks got on the line.

"I have nothing to say to you," Sean told him.

"That's good, then I'll just tell you want you need to know. Tommy's gone. The Marshals have him and he's never working for you guys," Deeks started the conversation.

"Great, are we done?"

"Nope, I do know where they're keeping your brother and will be advised when he's being moved from facility to facility. I also know about your sister-in-law."

"Who?"

"Xue-Li. Your brother's wife."

"What do you know about her?"

"She's pregnant. She's married to your brother, cousin, not really sure how you guys deal with each other."

"Mike's my brother. We're blood."

"Yeah, well, blood is her problem. She nearly miscarried two days ago at Victorville."

"No she didn't. I would have heard."

Deeks saw Kensi pick up her phone and start talking. The Pans had someone at Victorville. That lead needed to be chased down right away. "Oh, you guys aren't the only ones able to do covert things. My source at the hospital says she was moved night before last just after lights out. They got her to a hospital in time to save the baby. She's in a prison ward at a hospital right now. And I'll know when she's going back to Victorville. So you know, I think we do have things to say to each other."

"Come to my..."

"Off the books casino, I'd love to."

"No, I want a private meeting, tonight."

"And I want a public one. I saw the squads you sent today twice to pick up Tommy. I'm thinking you're far less likely to do anything shall we say rash in front of your clients. Besides, I like to gamble."

"How do I know this isn't a set up?"

"Surely you had me checked out before you let Lenny tell Tommy to contact me."

"And if I did."

"You saw how I got my house. Since the Navy already thinks I'm on the Chinese payroll and just can't prove it, maybe I need to think about my future."

"We require some of our newer guests at the casino to bring a date. Makes everyone a bit more
controllable when they're not the only ones who can get hurt. You come alone, you go home."

"Not a problem."

"See you Friday. And if this is a set-up, I'll find you and kill you myself."

"The only thing I'm setting up is the Marty Deeks life on the beach fund. Friday night."

"You got a pretty dress, Agent Blye?" Deeks asked as he disconnected the call. "I think I need a date."

-30-

Since I'm bad at shutting up, it looks like this is going one more full chapter and one short wrap up chapter. This has been fun. Thank you all for your kind feedback and nice notes. They are a joy to read.
“I wanted a woman who could get me out of a Third World prison. Life’s too short to hang out with people who aren’t resourceful.” - Jeff Bezos

April 9, 2010

“That little woman is here,” Morales said as he walked into Deeks’s bedroom. Deeks was just out of the shower, wearing a bath sheet around his waist as he towel-dried his hair.

“Miss Lange?”

“She wants me to call her Hetty. She’s taken over my bedroom.”

“You mean my guest bedroom, which you’re using. It isn’t actually your room.”

Morales continued as if he didn’t hear Deeks. “Bates called her NCIS’s elfin enforcer. I thought he was saying effin’ but it was elfin and he’s...”

“Believe me, I’ve had three phone calls worth of Batesism. Why is she here? Does Kensi need a chaperone?”

“Miss Blye is more than capable of taking care of herself,” Hetty answered as she walked into Deeks’s bedroom. As he fumbled to throw on a tee shirt, Hetty continued, “She’s changing in your guest room. And this is a magnificent home. My more immediate concern, however, is more focused on you, Commander Deeks. I have several suits downstairs I feel would be appropriate for your time tonight in the casino.”

Morales started to laugh. "Oh, Ms...Hetty, you got the wrong sailor. I'll leave you two to peruse Commander Clotheshorse's closet." Morales waved as he left the bedroom.

“If you just come with me downstairs, I brought a number of shirts that were ordered for an agent who is currently not working with our team...”

"Miss...Hetty, thank you for the offer but I have my own clothing. Not everything I own is a uniform or beach gear."

"And I’m sure you think what you have is..."

Deeks waved her over to his closet and opened the double doors. "I have five custom suits made by Elevee, three from Alton Lane,” Deeks said as he pointed to the suits.

Hetty walked over to the closet. "There are two Turnbull and Assers and is this a Leonard Logsdail?" she asked as she held out a blue pinstripe jacket sleeve.

"Yes," Deeks said with a smile. "I have a nice assortment of custom shirts along with ties, belts and shoes purchased specifically to work with all these suits. I was thinking a little more California casual tonight. Art Lewin white dress shirt, the charcoal grey pinstripe Alton Lane vest and pants with no jacket and the John Varvatos shoes. I'm back to my fighting weight so everything fits."

"Commander, you are full of surprises," Hetty said as she took a step back from the closet. "Your
choices are excellent. Do these all belong to you or..."

"Like me, they are the property of the U.S. Navy. To make this," Deeks pointed to his face, "work as a businessman of questionable ethics and ever-changing morals, a good wardrobe is key."

"Yes it is. But there is a difference between a good wardrobe and a custom-made suit from one of the finest bespoke tailors in the world."

"The suits may have spent about a year on a joint task force, splitting their time between Miami, Los Angeles, New York, Boston and Bogotá, traveling with the top U.S. legal advisor to Diego Gomez."

"Andres Gomez's son?"

"Yes. Diego was the public face of taking the family business legit. They were buying nearly bankrupt legal businesses in a number of struggling American cities in the Southwest and Florida and putting them back in the black with the help of said top U.S. advisor. Of course, Diego was doing this while running and expanding his family's drugs, human trafficking and coyote business in all these places. The towns were so indebted to Diego's rescue plans that they rarely asked questions about the new hero in town."

"Diego Gomez disappeared about two and a half years ago. His family claims he was killed in a shootout with the DEA."

"Because it may be bad for business to tell people Diego's in custody providing intel to ONI, DEA, ICE and maybe even NCIS."

"Were you the top U.S. legal advisor wearing the suits?"

"Hetty, you know better than that. I'm just a radio operator," he smiled, giving her the standard Navy Intelligence dodge.

"Yes I do. Though if you were involved, it would explain how someone so young could be moving through the ranks so quickly. I'll leave you to change." Hetty started to make her way to the door. "Commander, what would you have done if you were not medically cleared to return to ONI?" she asked as she turned back to Deeks.

Deeks looked at her, confused. "I'm pretty sure I've been cleared to return, although not officially."

"I believe that, too. If for some reason, however, the Navy offers you a medical discharge, do you have a plan? Surely during your recovery you must have thought that could be a possibility."

"I really did re-up last year. Being a lawyer and able to walk and talk, I don't see them offering me a medical discharge. I suppose I'd be really assigned to a JAG office and finish my time there."

"But no thoughts if you were honorably discharged for medical reasons."

"Ma'am, as much as the following statement would shock 20-year old Marty Deeks, I'm a sailor. It's more than what I do, it's who I am. I never expected this career and I can't imagine my life without it."

"And that's what drove your recovery."

"That, the sun and the surf. Hospitals are miserable places," he told her with a chuckle. "Too many sick people."
"Yes they are," Hetty agreed. "But if you ever give a thought to life outside of the Navy, I think NCIS would be fortunate to have you," she told him just before leaving the room.

"Thank you," Deeks was surprised. Somehow he thought telling the Admiral that Hetty Lange offered him a job wouldn't end well for him.

x-x-x

Deeks saw Kensi as he walked down the stairs. He'd been wrong. She wasn't kinda cute or adorable or good looking – all the things he was telling himself over the last few days. No, she was stunning. Her outfit was some sort of form fitting beige sleeveless short dress with a black netting sheath over it. Her hair was down, blown straight with very expensive looking earrings. The black pumps had at least a four inch heel and were peep toe. A man might do something he'd regret for a woman who looked like that.

"You clean up nicely," Kensi said when she saw him.

"Right back at 'cha," he told her as he walked into the living room. Morales had a briefcase opened, as did Hetty.

"The Pan brothers casino obviously does not hire temporary bartenders or card dealers so we were unable to embed an agent in the casino," Hetty advised. "Agent Hanna, however, is working as part of the building's legitimate security team. He's in the loading dock area. Agent Callen is working as part of the building's maintenance crew. Has been since this morning. He'll be washing interior windows at Capital Flow's 35th floor when Commander Deeks and Miss Blye are making their way to the casino on 34."

Morales took over the briefing. "Your boy Tommy's blubbering cousin gave me the casino set-up rundown. You'll go to Capital Flow's offices on 35 and then immediately be taken into a security room right off their reception area. They'll take your phones. They have a metal detector you'll both have to walk through, you'll be patted down and Agent Blye's purse will be thoroughly searched."

"So no weapons," Kensi said.

"I've got a ceramic knife set up in my belt. I've gotten it through security in a number of places - we should be fine," Deeks told her.

"Agent Callen was able to get down to the 34th floor earlier today after an unfortunate plumbing failure," Hetty said. "While the camera and bug he tried to plant failed due to the building's design, he was able to plant two items for Miss Blye. There is a ladies room just behind the roulette tables. In the third stall from the door, you'll find an HP-22 and a phone. Your dress does not allow the usual holsters but the weapon should fit easily in your clutch with the phone."

Kensi nodded. "Ear wigs?"

"It's a glass tower," Morales said shaking his head. "Too much steel supporting that glass for regular comms. A friend in the CIA helped us set up these pieces. We hear you, you don't hear us." Morales opened a black jewelry box. He pulled out a platinum necklace with three diamonds as a pendant and passed it to Kensi. "The diamonds are real so don't lose the necklace. It's got a GPS but Bates will hit the roof if its lost even for a while. The settings for the diamonds work as a bug. Audio but no video. The clasp," Morales showed Kensi "will vibrate if there is a problem. One blast - and you will feel it - is to keep on your toes because we don't like something. Two is to get ready, Agents Callen, Hanna and I are coming in with the tact team." Morales put the necklace on Kensi. Showing her the remote for the necklace, he gave her a blast.
"Oh, I can feel that," she said with a smile.

"Make sure the clasp stays at the nape of your neck. If it slides, you may not feel the vibration." Morales returned to his briefcase. "St. Brendan is the mike for you," the Marine tossed a small black case to Deeks. "Cuff links vibrate independently of what's being sent to Agent Blye. Bates will be listening."

"Stunner there. What is Kensi's backstory? I don't think I can introduce her as my NCIS Agent girlfriend," Deeks said as he hung the St. Brendan medal with the Navy insignia on the back around his neck.

"I am Inez Peres," Kensi said with a heavy accent. "I am a swimsuit model from Rio. I met my handsome sailor while I was shooting a Babes on the Beach calendar right by his house. I told him I could not understand why they would not photograph me topless since that's how I work at home. Marty told me I could sunbathe at his place topless and we've been together ever since. Marty is so funny and we're having so much fun."

Morales had a big smile on his face. "She's good."

"I must be better since she's took me up on my weak sunbathing offer," Deeks replied as he put on the cuff links.

"And you Commander?" Hetty asked.

"I've served my country, nearly died and now I want out. Uncle Sam won't discharge me after being wounded on a mission but unless I want to buy out my remaining time with the service, I'm not only in for another year, I'm owe them an extra six months for being wounded in a knife fight in an off-base card game after successfully negotiating a deal for the Navy in Mosul."

"You should have become a Marine, they'd have washed you out years ago," Morales joked. "So while you're being disgruntled and NCIS has their people working the building, I'm with the Marine tact team from Pendleton in a pair of FedEx trucks just outside the loading dock. If everything goes as it should, you'll get bribed by the free Pan brother. Once your business is done, Agent Hanna will bring the tact team in. NCIS has control of the service elevator which will bring us into the casino's kitchen."

"If it all goes as planned," Hetty said, "the tact team will wait until you're in the building's main elevator leaving..."

"I'd rather be picked up in the raid," Deeks said.

"I agree," Kensi said.

Hetty shook her head. "Commander, you're unarmed except for a small knife. Agent Blye has a small caliber weapon. The room will have a number of businessmen whose businesses includes murder and mayhem. The tact team is going to have their hands full."

"But it wouldn't hurt to have someone considered by most of the murder and mayhem guys to be a fellow suspect working against them and with the tact team," Morales offered to Hetty.

"I usually get myself arrested with targets of my assignments. It keeps my cover viable in case suspects get away or others aren't at the take down."

"Which is all well and good but Commander, this is going to be your first time in the field in months," Hetty said.
"Ma'am, with all due respect to you and your team, I got myself away from your holding facility and was able to get the smaller, stupider Pan son neutralized..."

"Will Pan being 'stupider' as you so generously put it gave you an advantage. My team would also not likely kill you unless in an act of self-defense and you had no intention of harming them. The men you're dealing with have been doing this for years while you've been here working on your recovery for months."

"Agent Blye, are you concerned going into the field with me? Miss...Hetty is correct, I haven't been in the field for a while and I won't take offense if you..."

"No," Kensi said quietly. "I think I can take care of myself and I think you can take care of yourself."

"Miss Blye, if anything goes wrong..."

"Nothing will Hetty," Kensi said taking a deep breath. "Inez is going to distract, Deeks is going to be bribed and we're all going to be arrested as part of the casino raid."

"Safe word?" Hetty asked.

"Cristiano Ronaldo," Kensi purred in her Inez voice.

"Safe words," Deeks noted.

"Not the way she says it," Morales quipped. "You'll get the double tap on the buzzer when we are in the elevator going to the 34th floor. If we're not going in for you, you'll have about a minute to find someplace comfortable to be arrested. The team will be advised that Agent Blye has a weapon. Anything else?"

"Do you have any scars? Tats? Birthmarks other than the Nevus of Ota? Piercings?" Deeks asked.

"Excuse me?" Kensi asked.

"Yeah, that's right. Anything your boyfriend should know about you?" Morales asked. "Trust me, it's come up in the past when operators have been sent in as a couple."

"I thought you were a radio operator, Commander. And you a simple jarhead, Major." Hetty noted.

"I thought you said you knew better than to ask, ma'am," Deeks replied. "For the record - scars on my hip from my last adventure in the field, a scar from a bullet wound on my bicep, an assortment of small nicks and cuts, nothing major and nothing a grown man who grew up in a bad neighbor would have. Closed hole where I had my right ear pieced when I was sixteen, tattoo of a wave on my right ankle I got when I was 21, my blood type on my right arm when I got back from my first field assignment. O-positive."

Kensi shook her head and recited dully. "Obviously pierced ears, both double piercings. Belly button ring that doesn't work with this dress. You noticed my eye, that's it for birthmarks. The Japanese symbol for father is a small tattoo behind the back of my right ear."

"Belly ring, ear tattoo. We're good and we're off."

x-x-x

It was a short ride in the NCIS provided 2010 BMW 335i. Seemed Inez liked the fine German
engineering and not the well-made luxury American SUV, Deeks thought as Kensi drove. At the Commerce Tower, the front desk security guard gave Kensi a long once over before pointing out the correct elevator bank. Distraction as strategy for the win. Once at Capital Flow, a rather attractive female receptionist warmly greeted them before pointing to the security room, just as Lenny said. A rather thorough pat down for him, the same with a female security officer for Kensi and the two were escorted to the 34th floor.

After being buzzed passed a generic 34th floor reception area, Deeks was amazed by the size and scope of the Pan brothers' illicit casino. There were several rows of craps, blackjack and roulette tables in the center of the gambling floor. A row of glass enclosed offices lined the window side of the floor with private tables mostly hosting poker games. There was a heavily guarded teller's office along the interior wall with a bar and a table with some chafing dishes. Finally, a long office with smoked glass lined the short far windowed wall. Deeks figured Sean Pan was there. Kensi excused herself as she made her way to the ladies room. With her hopefully fetching her weapon, Deeks gave Morales a rundown of the hostiles in the room as well as confirming Lenny's layout. A few minutes later, Kensi returned with a smile.

"Let's get something to drink Inez," Deeks said aloud. Putting his arm around her, he whispered, "Got your gun?"

"Yes," he said in a breathy whisper that could make a man sell out his country.

At the bar, he ordered a Corona. When the bartender didn't know how to make a Caipirinha, Inez settled for a white wine spritzer. Deeks leaned to her and whispered in her ear, "Assume everything is bugged." Kensi let loose with a delightful giggle and nodded her head.

"Mr. Deeks," a rather large Asian man said he walked up behind Kensi. "Mr. Pan will see you now."

Deeks tossed a twenty onto the bar and took Kensi's hand.

"Mr. Pan only wants to see you."

"I was under the belief that Mr. Pan liked beautiful women since he wanted Inez to accompany me tonight. And since Mr. Pan insisted I bring Inez, I plan on bringing her everywhere."

"That's not how it is done."

"It is now. If Mr. Pan wants to meet with me, Inez is coming," Deeks told him. "Don't worry. Inez's English isn't why she's been so successful as a model. Of course, I have no interest in her starting a career as a hostage."

"Mr. Pan will guarantee your date's safety."

"I'd prefer to guarantee our safety," Deeks said with a smile. "Or I can leave and maybe find someone else interested in the location of brother Will and the mom-to-be."

The security guard took out his phone and after a short exchange in Chinese, he was walking both Deeks and Kensi to the smoked back office.

"I could have taken care of myself," Kensi whispered in his ear as they neared the office.

"Maybe I wanted my back-up a little closer by," Deeks whispered back.

Kensi, not Inez, looked at him before she gave an Inez-like laugh as they walked in the office.
"You're in the Navy?" Sean Pan asked as the security guard brought them into the office. The office was probably the combination of two offices on both sides of a corner. There were several screens offering security feeds of the gambling floor as well as some sort of basketball game on another - Mavericks-Trailblazers maybe. Two average-sized middle age men sat in guest chairs across from Sean Pan's desk. "Because you don't look like you're a sailor to me," Sean said.

"For now," Deeks answered. "Since I'm on sick leave, I'm reverting more to my typical look. Saving a fortune in razors and haircuts. Beautiful views you have here."

"Not a bad way to spend a Friday," Sean answered as the security man left the room.

"Where is Beverly Hills?" Kensi asked as Inez. "Everything here is so confusing. Big sign for Hollywood but none for any other village. I do not understand."

Sean Pan pointed to the older of the two men sitting across from him. "Heng, show our guest some of the sights..."

"But show her from where I can keep my eyes on her. I'd hate for Inez to be hit on by someone in your casino."

Heng stood and took Kensi's arm. "Let me show you a few places, Inez," Heng said in perfect English as he walked up to her.

Kensi did a wonderful job of looking confused as she looked to Deeks. He nodded his head - as if he could ever give permission to a woman like Agent Blye to do anything - before she took Heng's arm and walked to the window.

Sean pointed to the available guest chair. "We have much to talk about Mr. Deeks."

"We do," Deeks said as he took the guest chair. Sean Pan was good. Deeks could see Sean as well as Kensi seeing the sights at the window.

Sean picked his phone and said "We're ready to begin," to the person on the other end. The door opened and in walked Michael Pan.

"Your cousin is here, Mr. Pan?" Deeks asked.

"As I told you yesterday, Mike is my brother. And you need to understand that family means everything to us."

The middle age man sitting at the guest chair next to Deeks stood and left the room as Mike Pan took the seat. "How is my wife?"

"Stable. She's on bed rest right now."

"Our man at Victorville..." Sean started.

"David Saunders?" Deeks interrupted. "Really, if you're going to have a guy on the payroll, pay him. Mr. Saunders thought his bribe money was so insignificant that he just made five hundred dollar a week deposits into his checking account without worrying about being caught. You didn't even buy an important guard. He works video room because he's proved to be too stupid to be out in prison gen-pop." Deeks laughed when Bates sent him the rundown on Saunders earlier that day. Talk about paying the wrong man.

Mike turned to Sean. "You bought Xue-Li's safety on sale?"
"Saunders said he saw her daily."

"Not to tell you fellas how to do your business," Deeks joked, "but you get what you pay for. Me, I'm expensive. If you get me my phone, I can show you just how valuable I can be."

As Sean called down to have Deeks's phone delivered, he turned to Mike Pan and said "Since the entire intelligence community probably believes you're in China, did you come when your parents were arrested or have you been here since Xue-Li was arrested."

"That's really none of your business," Mike sniffed.

"Respectfully, sir, I'm about to make all of this my business. If I'm putting my future at risk, I'd like everyone to share in the risk."

"Your phone is on the way up and Mike's been here since this morning. Private jet from Beijing with a stopover in Hawaii," Sean said as he hung up. "Mike thought he could get into my parent's compound."

"Oh, no, the FBI is going to be moving in there," Deeks told the two. "That house is done."

"He was growing too comfortable in his position," Mike snapped. "My concern is about the future of this family. Father has once again proven that he is the past."

Deeks was surprised by the rift that sounded like it existed between the generations. Li Ho Pan's story was that of a family working as a team. Mike Pan sounded like the team wasn't so unified. The door opened and the security guard brought Sean Deeks's phone. Sean passed it to Deeks. "You're so interested in the future," Deeks told Mike as he opened the photos folder - as well as the secure video camera. "Here's yours," Deeks said as he passed the man his phone.

Mike Pan looked right at the screen and that up at Deeks, amazed. "Is that..."

"That's a sonogram of your son. Xue-Li is getting excellent care. She's on bed rest now until everything is stable. Then, she'll be transferred back to Victorville. She won't be going anywhere anytime soon - she's in a secure hospital ward but as soon as she's cleared to return, she's going back."

"Where is she?" Mike asked.

"Nearby hospital is all I'm offering right now. That little smudge on the bottom of the picture, that's the hospital name," Deeks said as he took his phone back. "The hospital doesn't know who she is. She's being treated under a false name but they know she is a special case patient. Now that I've been helpful to ease your worries about your future, I think it's time we discuss my future." Kensi let out another delightful laugh as Inez. Nearly perfectly timed. "As you can see, I'm as invested in my future as you."

"You can give us the day and time Xue-Li will be transferred from a hospital," Mike was just a bit too anxious.

"I can. Even the route the Marshals will be taking."

"And you can tell us when my brother Will is to be moved."

"That's going to be a lot sooner than you all think. He's being sent to a friendly foreign country for some, well, extreme interrogation. I'll be honest with you. I'd get him before he's sent. He's been rather chatty and that was with very little pressure. You may want to get your cash out of Capital..."

Sean made his offer. "$100,000 for where Will is, $100,000 for Xue-Li's transfer route. Paid after Xue-Li is safe."

Deeks laughed. "Now that's funny. Gentlemen, my gig with the Navy is negotiating contracts and business deals. And I know a bad one when I see it." With his tone turning deadly serious, "Try again. And there best be some upfront money. I'd hate to tell the Navy about what Lenny approached me with and how brother Mike is in-country. And I'd like Inez back here. I'm feeling a little outnumbered."

"$250,000 upfront, $250,000 for where Will is, $250,000 for Xue-Li's route and $250,000 when she's safe," Mike said as he waved Heng back to the group.

"Double it and we have a deal." Deeks said, earning three quick blasts to his cuff links. The Admiral never liked second counter offers.

The two brothers looked at each other. "I assume you don't have an easily tracked checking account like my brother's employee at Xue-Li's prison," Mike said.

Deeks fiddled with his phone. "Here's the account," Deeks showed Mike his phone before passing it to Sean. Sean took the phone and started working on his laptop.

Kensi walked up. As Inez, she said, "Marty, as much as I like the house at the beach, maybe we can get someplace like this to see the city. It is so pretty when it is lit up in ..."

Mike Pan stood and tried to grab Kensi. Tried, being the important word. He got an elbow to the face. Heng, Kensi's escort, tried to intercede but Deeks made quick work of him with a punch to the gut. Deeks pulled Heng's weapon from a shoulder holster - Heng obviously saw too many mob movies - and turned to Sean. The middle Pan brother had a gun pointed at Kensi. Kensi, however, had her gun out of her purse and pointed at Mike. Deeks's cuff links were blasting the breach warning. He needed to get this deal done now.

"Well, this turned ugly fast," Deeks offered to break the tension and to get the tact team to hang back so he could get the bribe money. "Mike, crawl away from Inez. That's the trouble with being with a beautiful women. So many other men try to take advantage."

"Don't go anywhere, Mike," Sean said.

"I don't take orders from you," Mike said to his brother.

"We sure as hell don't take them from blondie, here."

"OK," Kensi said in her regular voice. "Mike, you do what Deeks says and maybe you'll live long enough to see your son. Sean, you move that money right now and nobody dies." Deeks thought Agent Blye was much better at holding back the tact team with orders to the Pan brothers than he was with humor.

"Do it," Mike issued as an order to his brother as he crawled away from Kensi.

"Not too far away, Mike," Deeks warned.

Sean started to lower his weapon.

"Pop the mag," Kensi warned.
"You're no swimsuit model," Sean complained as he complied.

"Oh, but she could be," Deeks smiled at Kensi. "Beautiful and deadly is such an attractive combination. Transfer the funds now or Xue-Li's son grows up an orphan. You can do it standing up Sean and keep your hands where I can see them. That door opens, I shoot you, Sean, Inez takes out the father to be."

"Do it," Mike said from his sitting position on the floor.

"Oh, and this little display of mistrust just upped my price. $750K per installment," Deeks said as he took his phone back from Sean.

When Sean hit enter on his laptop after a minute of typing, it took about ten seconds for Deeks's phone to ping. $750,000 had been moved to his Navy set-up Cayman Islands account. "And we're on our way to being rich, Inez."

"I think it's better if we're just..." Shots rang out before Kensi could say they should leave. Deeks figured Migs waited until the money was transferred.

"What the hell?" Mike asked.

"Nobody moves, this is a raid gentlemen," Kensi told them.

Mike lunged at Kensi's leg but a well-placed high heel to his throat had the man grasping for air. Sean jumped over his desk and threw himself at Deeks. The two hit the ground and struggled for the weapon Deeks was using. There was a gun shot fired which Deeks was positive wasn't from the gun in his hand. He suddenly felt Sean Pan stop fighting. "Get off him," Kensi said as she had her gun pushed into Sean's back.

Deeks saw the serious look on Kensi's face. "She's really a lot more than your typical swimsuit model," Deeks said as Sean Pan rolled away. A second later Agents Callen and Hanna broke through the office door and show time was over.

x-x-x

The FBI arrived about a half-hour after the NCIS and Marine tact team secured the casino. The people at the casino, along with the bribed security guards, were divided among the different organizations. The plan was for the FBI to take custody of those working for the Pans at the casino and the gamblers of no interest to military intelligence. Most of the gamblers were high ranking gang members or money launderers out for a night on the town. Instead, they were in for a night or two in a cell. The casino employees would be given a chance to cooperate since this wasn't likely the only floating casino operation in Los Angeles.

Shen-Ru "Sean" Pan was a nice catch for NCIS and Naval Intelligence but Ming-hua "Mike" Pan, a top Chinese intelligence official illegally in the U.S., was now in custody for trying to bribe a Naval Officer into helping break his pregnant spy wife out of U.S. custody - oh, that was the big prize.

Deeks sat behind the bar and watched as Mig's Marine team packed up the computers from Sean Pan's casino office while NCIS helped the FBI sort through the casino patrons and employees.

"You sure know how to show a girl a good time," Kensi said as she joined him at the bar.

Deeks opened a bottle of Perrier water and pour Kensi a glass before opening one for himself. "My name's Marty and I like to party."
Kensi fingered the necklace. "This really does vibrate when they send the signal."

"This is sort of the upscale version of some of the places my St. Brendan's medal and cuff links have been. Usually the problem is the exact opposite. A lot of old buildings have steel reinforcements holding up tons of marble. It is where signals go to die. Migs's rabbi in the intelligence business, and it could be literally since the guy's Jewish, is an old school spook who could put a listening device in Putin's breakfast nook if given the opportunity. We have the inside track to all the CIA's best toys."

"I thought Navy Intel had all the best toys."

"I've heard they pick up things as they go along. Of course I'm just a poor Navy lawyer, I don't know about such things," he said with a smile.

"Of course," Kensi smiled and took a sip of her water. "You really are never going to admit to being NEIT, are you?"

"NEIT? What's..." Deeks started but saw Kensi's reaction. It bothered her he wouldn't talk. "Agent Blye, whatever your suspicions are about my position in the Navy, and they may be correct, just as I told Miss Lange she should know better about asking, I would think the highly educated daughter of a Marine would know better too."

"I do," Kensi said quietly. "I do."

"But this was fun tonight. Six months of doing nothing but being hurt and trying to get better - this was great. And the company was too."

Kensi was about to say something Agents Callen and Hanna walked out. "You taking orders?"

"Bartended in law school. What can I get you fellas?" Deeks asked.

"We're good," Sam said. "There's quite the collection of the LA underworld here. Mexican cartels, Asian gangs, Southland Kings, couple members of the Bloods all had high ranking officials here tonight. The FBI loves the Navy right now."

"They've been told I'm JAG, right?" Deeks asked.

"Your old JAG legend, complete with your ruptured appendix recovery, is being given to the FBI. They're going to cut deals or use these guys against their organizations so you won't be involved in any court cases," Callen told him.

"Excellent. As much as I love being home, the last week made me miss going to work. I don't need the FBI messing with my background."

Sam smiled, "We gave you your first test, don't forget that."

"And I passed, Agent Hanna."

"And you passed this one, too. Good work," Callen said. "Admiral Bates told Major Morales he expects a full debrief tomorrow at zero seven hundred his time."

"I probably need to get home since the Admiral really isn't into time zones," Deeks said looking at his watch. It was just after midnight and the ride to the SCIF at Port Hueneme even on a Saturday morning would have him leaving in three hours. "That and he's playing golf with the SecNav. I'll make us all look good."
"I'll drive you back," Kensi said.

"Major Morales will be taking the Commander back," Sam advised. "He's expected on the debrief call to Admiral Bates. Besides, Kensi, we could use some help with the Pan brothers. Sean seems especially smitten with you."

"Sorry the date ends just after midnight Cinderella but it sounds like you have your next Prince Charming lined up," Deeks told her. "I'll give you a call in a day or two." Kensi looked a little disappointed. Actually, he was too.

"Why do all the bad guys always go for me?" Kensi sighed.

"Because they have a pulse," Deeks mumbled as he came out from behind the bar. "I'll contact Agent Blye if anything changes. Gentlemen, it's been real," Deeks said as he walked away. Morales was waiting near the casino door. "Real what, I'm not sure but it's been real."

x-x-x

One shorter chapter to go. Thank you so much for all your kind support!
A Story of Two People

7. "...I told him a story of two people. Two people who shouldn't have met, and who didn't like each other much when they did, but who found they were the only two people in the world who could possibly have understood each other." - Jojo Moyes, "Me Before You"

x-x-x

April 13, 2010

"You got a 2008 Ford F-150?" Morales asked as he walked up to Deeks, who was leaning on his Jeep outside his home, bags packed and ready to go.

"I can get what you need," Deeks said with a sigh.

"Automatic V6?"

"No. The V6 is only a five speed. V8 gets you a stick or automatic. Migs, I'm a salesman, not a trivia guy."

"Some buyer asks you for something you should know and don't..."

"I'll tell him I'm a middle man who sells cars, not makes or repairs them. Bates got one of those new iPads and he's loading up the trucks we've stolen," Deeks threw air quotes around the word, "lojacked and are moving them to our scumbag friends in Abu Sayyaf." Deeks smiled. "Besides, if you really want a workhorse truck that takes a licking and keeps on driving, the F-150's are good but I got some 2007 and 2008 Tacomas for you and while they're a V6, they're in-freaking-destructible. You can't wreck 'em. I also have some Yukons..."

"OK Willy Loman," Morales up his hands up in surrender. "If your girl doesn't get here soon..."

"OK, first, she's not my girl."

"You had a date Friday night and if I looked at your phone right now, what are the chances I'd find a copy of that picture I took of the two of you all dressed up for your date."

"We worked a case undercover, not a date. And why did you take that picture?"

"So that's not a denial about the picture."

"Just because you found true love on an assignment in Thailand doesn't mean we're all looking to make a love connection."

"You could use a love connection."

"Why is it that every engaged guy's first goal is to get all his buddies engaged?"

"Besides the fact that you're assuming we're buddies maybe I want you to be as happy as I am."

"I just need to give Agent Blye some paperwork. Then I get to go back to work and that's all I've wanted for months."

"All work and no play makes Marty a dull boy."
Deeks shook his head. "No work and all rehab made Marty a bored boy. I had this assignment set up for weeks and was waiting for the funding to come through. Then I get myself gutted in Afghanistan hours after the assignment is approved and if I wasn't ready for the May 1st start date, they were assigning it to Reardon, who has been riding a desk for two years with his super-secret spy spray project. He looks like a freaking boy scout. I look like a stolen car salesman."

"He said with pride," Morales joked. "Nobody thought you were faking it and you know as well as I do that Bates would have figured out a way to move the money for the mission into June or July. This was always your assignment."

The Silver Caddy made its way to Deeks's drive way. "Oh good, your girlfriend is here."

"Agent Blye is here. Speaking of girlfriends, is Vita definitely coming this weekend?"

"Meets with her advisors tomorrow because her internship is done. She has to have her thesis in by April 28th. She can write it here or in her shitty room in Suitland. She's writing it here."

"While I'm always pleased to have the lovely Lt. Figueroa stay in my home, I expect you to be a gentleman and allow her to sleep in my room while you remain in the guest room."

"Oh Deeks, you're funny," Morales chuckled. "Agent Blye, good to see you," he waved over to Kensi as she got out of the SUV. "I'll leave you to make a love connection. And while you're gone, Lt. Figueroa and I will enjoy your hospitality, take care of your dog and make sure no teen pop idols befoul your possessions with their barely legal girlfriends. We plan befoul your possessions instead."

Kensi walked up. "Major Morales, you're still here?"

"Studying for the bar, ma'am. I'll be here until late July when I fly home to take the exam. Then off to wherever they send me. I'll leave you with this guy. It was a pleasure working with you, ma'am. If you and Agents Callen and Hanna need a hand, well, there's only so much contract law a man can study."

"Thank you Major for the offer and your help Friday. And we may take you up on that offer."


"You're nuts," he said before turning serious. "Don't make anyone come get you this time. Semper Fi, my brother," Morales said, beating his chest twice.


Deeks watched Morales walk to his house before turning his attention to Agent Blye. "Sorry about that. Rituals, what can you do?" he said to Kensi, "Thank you for coming."

"You said you needed to see me," she pointed to his uniform. "You're a Seabee now?"

"I get sent uniforms by the Admiral and that's what I wear. I'm just back from Afghanistan and on my way to DC, according to my uniform and paperwork."

"You're officially back on duty?" Kensi asked.

"Yes ma'am. Tommy is talking to "60 Minutes" Thursday with a DoD PR expert helping him out, the Pans have been very cooperative since they want access to Xue-Li and her child. The FBI and NSA are rounding up spies in sixteen states and the District of Columbia. Chinese Intelligence is in
full meltdown because Ming-hua "call me Mike" Pan is willing to tell all for his wife's freedom and asylum. You're getting the Navy Meritorious Civilian Service Award, I'm getting a ribbon for the real uniform I never wear and America is just a little safer. A good week's worth of work."

"So you brought me here to say goodbye," Kensi said quietly.

"No, well, yes but first, if you need anything related to this case, call Chief Petty Officer Jackie Thompson in Admiral Bates's office. She actually runs Naval Intelligence. She just allows the Admiral to think he's in charge," Deeks joked.

"CPO Thompson, got it."

"Second, I got you this," he said as he reached over to a gift bag sitting on his Jeep's front passenger's seat.

"For me?" Kensi smiled as she pulled the tissue paper out of the bag.

"For you."

She pulled the gift out of the box. "A box set of the four "Lethal Weapon" movies and a "Men in Black" DVD...gee, thanks."

"I didn't get you "Men in Black II" because it was awful."

"Thanks. I'll be sure to clear my calendar for these."

"I also got you this," he said in a much more serious tone. He handed her a thumb drive. "This is everything Naval Intelligence has on the disappearance of Agent Vail." Deeks was surprised to hear Kensi gasp. "There isn't much. Major Martin Vail, awesome first name by the way, is well liked in the Intelligence community and a good guy even if he is Army. He was the go-to logistics genius at the Pentagon until he retired two years back. Agent Vail's mother has worked for Senator Lockhart since he got to DC. CIA, FBI, DEA, ONI, MCIA, DIA, every agency is looking for him. This is what they have. Honestly, it isn't much."

"Thank you," Kensi was nearly breathless.

"I've put an alert in my portfolio. If any agency I have direct contact with hears anything about Agent Vail, I'll be sent the info on a secure server. I'll make sure someone calls you if I can't."

"Command...Marty,"

"Deeks," he corrected her.

"Deeks, thank you. I don't know what to say."

"Tommy owes us a meal when I get back. Maybe we can share it with Agent Vail."

Kensi flashed a big smile. "That would be nice. When are you leaving?"

"Now. There is a transport landing at Edwards about noon. I'm off to Suitland and then to locations undisclosed."

"How long are you going to be gone?"

Deeks just looked at her.
"Yes I know better. I was just wondering when Tommy will take us to Neptune's Net."

"You and I can finish our meal at Neptune's Net some other time. Tommy is taking us to the Palm or Studio. We earned it."

"Yes we did," Kensi looked down and took a deep breath. "Well, be safe, thank you for the DVDs and really thank you for the files on Dom."

"If you haven't heard from me when you find Agent Vail, call CPO Thompson. I want to hear how you saved the day," he said.

"Be safe Commander," Kensi said quietly as she turned to walk to her car. His phone chirped with a one word text message from Morales - "Schmuck."

He took a look at his phone and at Agent Blye as she was walking away. He walked briskly behind her, closing the gap before she got to her vehicle. "One last thing," he said as she turned around. He leaned in and gave her a long kiss goodbye. When he finally pulled away she just stared at him. "Don't worry Fern," he said with a smile and a wink. "I'll be back."

x-x-x

October 5, 2010

The ping of his alarm clock woke him up. Clean up days when an assignment was over always made him antsy. The vehicles were all online and Bates was pleased with how Deeks spread around Reardon's Overwatch spray. Two of his clients showed up in North Korea which was the talk of the U.S. intelligence communities. He packed his suits and had them FedEx'd home two days earlier. The Navy's tech whiz was coming to pull out all the special secure wiring in his undercover apartment.

And then the building exploded. He was in a pile of rubble when he felt someone shake him. "Mr. Martin? Mr. Martin? We've landed," the attractive flight attendant with Alma on her name tag told him. "We're in L.A."

It took Deeks a second to get his bearings. He slept for the entire five-hour flight from Hawaii. Unreal. And the pain kicked in as he moved. Great, all beat up and now stiff - it would be a glorious walk to the cab stand. "Is it alright if I use the restroom?"

"Of course. The plane is empty. We waited until everyone deplaned before waking you. It was the least we could do," Alma said.

"Thank you," he said making his way to the lavatory. After relieving himself, he saw his reflection in the restroom mirror as he washed his hands. He hoped it was the shitty lighting because the man he saw looking back was terrifying. Stepping out of the lavatory, the pilot was waiting for him.

"I just wanted to shake your hand, sir," Capt. Anderson said extending his hand. "It takes a brave man to run into a pile of rubble to save children he only saw a few times jogging." The Captain gave Deeks a hardy handshake before handing the gym bag with Deeks's few belongings bought in Hawaii - including the gym bag. "I don't understand how anyone could blow up an apartment building where innocent civilians live."

"I don't understand how anyone could park a car bomb next to an apartment building, sir, innocent civilians or not. I'm just glad the children were safe and only the building was lost." Well, the building, his new fancy iPad, five months' worth of field notes and a rug he found that would have looked awesome in his bedroom.
"Sadly, fifteen years in the Air Force showed me that people do terrible things to one another in this world. People like you remind us all that there are good and decent souls out there."

"Well thank you for your service to our country, sir," Deeks said, playing civilian with ease as he walked to the plane door. "And thank you for getting us safely home."

"Are you sure you don't want a wheelchair Mr. Martin? It's not a problem for us..." Alma started to ask.

"I walked through this airport to go to Davao City, I'm walking home," Deeks said with a smile. Of course, he was going to flop into a cab and then his own bed. His own bed sounded awful good.

Deeks slowly walked down the gangway to the terminal. Taking a deep breath, he stepped into the terminal and returned to life as Marty Deeks. He saw Special Agent Kensi Blye standing with a wheelchair and a sign reading "Derek Martin" in the waiting area.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Martin, I thought you could use a lift." Kensi's smile hadn't changed in nearly six months, that was for sure. And it was glorious.

"Am I under investigation for something?" he asked, hoping it would be a joke.

"No," she said quietly, getting serious. "I saw the name Derek Martin in an intelligence report two weeks ago. He's an L.A.-based pharmaceutical salesman working in the Philippines. He was jogging past a luxury apartment complex, waving to three kids waiting for a school bus when a car bomb exploded."

"Really? I've been out of the country, this is all news to me."

"Well, if you sit down, I'll be happy to tell you what I know."

"The bag can go on the chair," Deeks dropped the gym bag strap from his shoulder to the wheelchair seat, "but I'm walking."

"Are you always this difficult?"

"No. But if I can walk, I walk." The two started to walk through Terminal Two slowly. Of course, the plane landed at the furthest gate. "Listen, uhm, I'm sorry about Agent Vail."

"You heard?" Kensi asked with a small hitch in her voice.

Deeks could have told her he was at ONI when the video of Agent Vail showed up; how Bates had everyone related to Naval Intelligence on alert in six continents to offer aid to anyone who needed help rescuing Agent Vail; how they all watched the failed rescue - with Deeks himself pointing out NCIS's main players - and were sickened by the outcome. He could. But he didn't. "We heard, I heard, just before I left. I am sorry."

"He died a hero. He was a good man."

"After working with your team a few months ago, I have no doubt."

They walked a few steps quietly before he heard Kensi take a deep breath. "So about this Derek Martin."

"Great last name but it works better as a first name," Deeks said with a smile.

"And a good man. Staying at a five star hotel on a long business trip. Jogged in the area near the
hotel every day."

"Dope. There probably was a gym in that five star hotel and trust me, it is hot and humid every freaking day in Davao City."

"Dope, maybe, but good man. Use to wave hi to some kids waiting for a school bus every morning outside their parents' luxury apartment building. Running by one morning a car bomb took out the backside of the building where the children lived."

"Terrible people in this world."

"Mr. Martin ran right into the blast area and jumped into the rubble. Found the kids, passed them up to first responders. When he was pulled out of the rubble, he noticed an unattended ambulance."

"Gee, it was as if he knew how terrorists acted in times like that."

"He did - use to sell pharmaceuticals in Bali. And that was a good thing since he noticed the ambulance driver run away from the vehicle and got the first responders to safety. Local military is taking credit for noticing the ambulance but those at the explosion mentioned the American civilian."

"Good man, that Derek Martin. I think I heard there was one death."

"A Dale John Sully. He was a marginal businessman. Seems he was connected to a luxury SUV theft ring in Los Angeles that was selling stolen cars overseas."

"Karma, man, karma."

"So, were you Dale or DJ?"

"Marty Deeks, USN. And seriously, do I look like a Dale or a DJ?"

"No, but you could sell a Sully."

"I could," Deeks said shaking his head. "Besides, the only guy I know with initials for a first name is your Agent Callen. So riddle me this Special Agent Blye, why are you here?"

"I was reading the intelligence report about the Davao City bombing. The name Derek Martin jumped off the page."

"Why are you reading intelligence reports about a random bombing in the Philippines? Don't you have an intelligence analyst for that?"

"Hetty doesn't like intelligence analysts," Kensi replied cryptically.

"OK."

"We divide the intelligence reports among ourselves based on areas of expertise. Callen does Russian and Europe, Sam has the Middle East and Africa. I have Asia and the South Pacific, Renko has North and South America."

"Renko?"

"Special Agent Mike Renko works long term undercover operations for the agency and is temporarily assigned to us. Hetty still hasn't found a replacement for Dom. She said she was close on someone but they stayed with their agency."
Or branch of service, Deeks thought. "OK, so you see Derek Martin, which isn't an exotic or rare name by the way, and think it's me."

"Yes. I heard you as Derek Martin. But I've also spoken to Chief Thompson several times after the Pans were arrested. She's great."

"She runs that office."

"She does. I knew she wouldn't confirm or deny but I asked if ONI knew Derek Martin. She said she could confirm that Mr. Martin was flown to the USS George Washington once he was stabilized before returning to Honolulu. Then there was an undercover operative in the intelligence report. He was in Davao City for months, 36-hours on the George Washington and ten days in in Honolulu to supervise the bombing of the terrorist camps and provide after-action reports. Then Derek Martin shows up on a flight manifest."

"And a little NCIS investigative work got my flight."

"Even got Mr. Martin bumped up to first class."

"Ah, so that's how they knew," Deeks said. He wondered why he got the attention of the flight crew and a hero's bump up to first class would do that.

"Hetty made a call. Seems she knows someone at Hawaiian Airlines. Once she mentioned your name, he was familiar with the news out of Davao" They walked passed security and exited the airport. Kensi left the wheelchair with an airline official who told her she could still push Deeks to her car. Deeks declined politely. He figured he did look as bad as he seemed in the plane lavatory.

"Were you in the hospital in Hawaii?" she asked once they were in the parking lot.

"A day. Then the assignment I was on had its payoff so I watched that and then did video conference debriefs because I'm in no shape to go to DC right now," Deeks told her as they got to her SUV.

"So you set up the attacks on the Abu Sayyaf camps in the Philippines?" she asked as he got in the car. After he gave her a look, she said, "I've read the intelligence reports. An undercover operative was in Davao City from May until mid-September selling microchipped vehicles to terrorists in the Philippines. When more than five of the vehicles were in one place at one time, the US military would bomb those locations. There were seventeen attacks in three days."

"Fascinating. Do you tell everyone you pick up at the airport about your work reading material?"

"Only the people who are major players in the reading material. Was the car bomb for you?"

"It served two purposes. The Davao City apartment complex where Mr. Sully was killed had mostly wealthy US expats living there. That's always a place that would be on a terrorist's greatest hits list. A terrorist organization could kill a loose end and make a political statement in one fell swoop."

"You weren't there."

"Went across the street to get some coffee and an American newspaper. I was due back in Los Angeles September 30th. I figured I needed to know about pennant races and other truly American things."

"You could have died."

"Not that day. Any assignment where what was needed to be done was done and you walk home –
"big win."

"You're walking slowly."

"But I'm walking...And you just missed the exit to my place. If you..."

"I know where I'm going."

"Agent Blye, I'm not..."

"Hungry? I'm hungry."

"I remember you eating before I left. Are you usually hungry? Is that why there are Kit Kat wrappers in you cup holders?"

"We had a long surveillance a few days ago. I didn't have time to clean up."

"A few days ago?"

"So you're a neat freak?"

"You've seen a Naval uniform, haven't you? White is rather unforgiving." He looked out the window and saw Neptune's Net in the distance. "We're going for dinner?"

"I figured you'd...it would be a nice welcome home."

"Please don't tell me Tommy's there."

"No, but he's taking us someplace expensive. Did you know he sold his life story to a movie producer? The guy who made the "Lethal Weapon" movies bought the rights. Archie Kao from CSI is up for the role of Tommy."

"Please tell me they got Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie for you and me"

"Yeah, right."

"I'm just grateful you knew who they are. Did you watch any of the "Lethal Weapon" movies?"

"Really liked the second one, thought the first and third were OK. Hated the last one."

"Second one was the best. Apartheid-era South African villains with diplomatic immunity – best bad guys ever. And Riggs lived in Malibu."

Deeks smiled as the pulled into the parking lot. The place was empty but it was barely 4PM. Kensi offered to bring him his food – fish tacos with fries, clam chowder and Blue Moon Harvest Ale. He eased himself into a table on the balcony.

Kensi returned with the food. She had a seafood plate that he had no doubt would be clean in minutes along with a bottled ice tea. He opened his beer and raised a toast, "To quote Dorothy Gale, 'there's no place like home.'"

"'The Wizard of Oz,'" she said as she lifted her ice tea bottle.

"Someone signed up for Netflix," he said with a smile. "I told you, Fern, I'd be back."

"Shut up and eat your dinner," she returned his smile. "Welcome home, Commander."
Thank you all so much for your kind and comments for this story. You are all so generous.

Thank you again to callmesandy/lightedwindows for the AU idea of Deeks in the Navy.

Hopefully the program will provide a better cliffhanger next summer and we can all go AU with that. In the meantime, I have so much reading to catch-up with, I am going to be entertained by these character no matter what.

Thanks again!
Tess
August 10, 2014

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!