Bulletproof Baby Blankets

by Tkeyla

Summary

Stories of Steve and Danny and their life together. Including their children. (Not mpreg - not that there's anything wrong with that.) No particular order to the stories. I'll write and post them as my muses allow.
“Lieutenant Commander Steven J. Williams-McGarrett,” Danny said sternly as he followed Steve through the common area of the 5-0 offices. Steve’s long strides neither stopped nor slowed to indicate he was aware that Danny was calling after him.

Kono and Chin exchanged a look. They knew all too well that the more of Steve’s rank and name Danny used, the more pissed he was. The fully loaded rank and name bode ill for their boss and they edged closer to Steve’s door once he was in so they would not miss a word.

“No More Car Chases

“Do not walk away from me when I am talking to you,” Danny said as he followed Steve into his office, using the same door Steve had used, not the one where Chin and Kono were lurking.

“If I wait for you to finish talking, I’ll never get anywhere,” Steve pointed out, turning to face Danny when they were both in Steve’s office.

“Very funny,” Danny responded. “You cannot, I repeat, cannot engage in a high speed car chase when our children are in the backseat.” If Steve had ever had any concept of personal space, Danny had obliterated it when they first met. Now that they were married, Steve’s bubble of space had been evaporated - blown away by the bluster that was his partner.

“They were in their carseats,” Steve countered calmly. “They were fine.”

“They are eighteen months and three and a half. And if you don’t mind, I would very much like them to reach a ripe old age unlike their father who will be dead of a heart attack any day now.”

“My heart’s just fine,” Steve assured him with that patented smirk that was equal parts patronizing and placating, with only a little amusement thrown in to spice things up. His arms were crossed over his chest but in a loose, casual way, not in a get-out-of-my-face-before-I-hurt-you way.

“My heart, Steven, my heart is going to give out if you keep insisting on engaging in high speed car cashes through downtown Honolulu with our children. In. The. Car,” Danny said, finishing with a flourish of hand waving in an attempt to illustrate just how far up the scale of crazy Steve had climbed this time.

“They loved it,” Steve tried.

“They loved it? They loved it!!? That’s the best you can do?” Danny demanded. “Emma’s not even two yet. How does she possibly know what she does and does not love?”

“She loves us. And John-John,” Steve pointed out, a smile trying to ambush the nonchalant expression currently plastered on his face.

“That. That is not in question,” Danny huffed, loudly. “But you cannot say with any degree of certainty that when she squeals it’s not out of pure terror and not delight as you like to pretend every time she does it because you once again have chosen to ignore my warnings about the way you drive what is in fact still my car although you never let me actually drive it with or without our children in the backseat.”

Steve took just a few blinks to unscramble the words Danny had hurled at him. Once he was fairly sure he had them in the right order, he replied with soothing patience. “She wasn’t crying, Danno. If she’d been scared, you know she’d have cried.”
Danny took a deep breath and finally looked over Kono and Chin who were making no effort to not looked amused. “Do you see what I must endure? I only married him because you two insisted. *Insisted* it was my responsibility to save the rest of the world from him. I blame you two,” he told Chin and Kono who did an admirable job of not laughing.

“You married him because you are crazy in love with him, brah,” Kono corrected. “We got no part of this.”

Danny frowned at her before turning his displeasure back on Steve which was no more effective than usual. “What if the bad guys you insisted on chasing down, with our children in the car, had pulled guns? What then, Super SEAL? Huh? That ever occur to you and your over developed need to dispense justice no matter the circumstances?”

Steve just smiled - *that* smile. That smile that melted Danny’s heart every time he saw it. Worse, he knew Steve knew exactly what effect it had on him. It was, after all, that same smile that had convinced Danny to say yes when Steve had proposed. Damn him and his smile. “That’s why they have bulletproof baby blankets, Danno,”

There was no response Danny could make to Steve’s ridiculous argument or his even more ridiculous smile. Without admitting defeat, he turned and left Steve’s office. He only wished his office had a real door so he could slam it once he was inside.
This - This is My Ohana

“So,” Mary said as she settled on the coffee table, facing her brother and her brother-in-law. She was in Hawaii for another visit, visits that had become more frequent since Steve and Danny had gotten married. Steve speculated that she felt more grounded with them married and Danny brought a sense of stability to her sometimes upside-down life. Whatever the reason, they were both happy for her to come and stay as long as she wanted. “I have an anniversary present for you.”

Steve and Danny exchanged a glance, a little surprised that she actually remembered the date. Their actual first anniversary wasn’t until Monday but they were fine with her bringing it up on Saturday, her first full day back with them.

“You got us a present?” Steve finally asked, the smile on his face as silly as it ever got. It was one only his family saw and would have shocked his enemies to their bones if they had ever glimpsed it.

“Well, sort of,” Mary said with a smile.

“Sort of?” Danny repeated, studying her. He knew how the McGarretts operated well enough to know she was up to something. His detective-sense wasn’t tingling so he was pretty sure that her sort-of present was not of the explosive kind although he figured Steve would prefer it.

“Actually, I’m your present,” she said.

“Thank you,” Steve said, smiling at her and starting to get up.

“No, wait,” Mary said, reaching out her hand to stop him. “That’s not exactly what I meant.”

“Okay,” Steve said, settling back by Danny, thighs rubbing together.

“I know you guys want to have kids. I’ve seen the way you are both with Gracie. So I’m offering to have Danny’s baby,” she said, watching their faces carefully. Just as she expected, first was disbelief then skepticism then… well, she wasn’t entirely sure what either of those expressions meant.

“You’re kidding, right?” Danny finally said in a choked voice.

“No I’m not kidding. Not even a little bit. I haven’t smoked in six months. I haven’t touched drugs or alcohol in five months. And I’m taking folic acid. It’s supposed to help your baby grow strong. Or something,” Mary said with a shrug, her eyes behind her overly long bangs wide and sincere.


“Yes. But try to focus, bro. I am willing to have Danny’s baby. Not have sex with him but have his baby,” Mary said, waiting for one of them to respond.

“This is… I have to admit… we weren’t expecting this,” Danny said, rubbing his palm over Steve’s jeans covered thigh, needing the reassurance that they were still in this universe and not an alternate one that included alien abductions of female McGarretts.

“I know. It’s a big deal. But you can’t have babies and I can. And I’m willing to have your baby, sign over all rights, and be Aunt Mary,” Mary explained patiently.

“Wow,” Steve said, looking from Mary to Danny and back to Mary. “You’re serious.”

“Of course I am, Steve. I didn’t quit smoking for my health,” she said, making Danny smile. “I knew
you would refuse if I was still smoking. I also gave up drinking. At least temporarily.”

“When did you decide you wanted to do this?” Steve finally asked, studying her with his patented I’ll know if you’re lying so don’t bother trying stare, the one Danny was sure had to be classified with every military agency in the entire world. It was the scariest weapon he’d ever seen and he’d seen some doozies even before he met Steve.

“Right about the time you got married,” she said with a warm smile and far-away look in her eyes. “I’ve never seen two people so much in love. Except when you’re with Grace. It took me a while to work up the nerve to admit I wanted to do it. Then I had to research the laws and the procedures.” She shrugged, waiting as the two men silently communicated with each other. She wasn’t much of a believer in ESP but if any two people were ever telepathically linked, it was Steve and Danny.

“We’ll need to think about it,” Danny finally admitted. “It’s not that we aren’t grateful. You know we are. We’ve just never considered it.”

Mary nodded. “Of course. I understand. I’ll be here for two weeks. I have an appointment with a obstetrician on Tuesday. She’s apparently a big deal here and specializes in … you know, donated sperm and stuff.”

“You already have an appointment?” Steve asked, wishing his brain would hurry up and catch up with his mouth.

“Yeah,” Mary said with a shrug. “If you decide you want to accept, I need to be checked out first. You know, make sure there’s no reason I can’t have your baby. Then she can help with the next steps.”

Steve nodded slowly, looking over at Danny before focusing back on his sister. “If we do this, are you moving back here?”

“Absolutely not,” Mary said. “I’m not living with you as a constant shadow for the next nine months. I’m going back to L.A. I’ll come back a month before the baby’s due so it will be born here. Then I’ll leave as soon as I have permission and we’ve signed the forms.”

“And you won’t miss any school,” Danny added with a nod.

“Nope. Due date will be during summer break,” she agreed. “Speaking of which,” she said with a smile for Steve. “What would you say if I decided I wanted to go to law school?”

“I’d say you were making the best choice possible,” Steve said with a proud smile.

“Okay. Good. I was hoping you’d feel that way,” she said with a nod. “Will you pay for it?”

Steve laughed, the corners of his eyes crinkling. “Of course.”

“Wait. Don’t you think you should ask me first?” Danny said with some indignation.

“Why? You can’t afford to help her pay for college,” Steve pointed out.

“No. But she’s asking you to spend money we could use to pay for our children to go to college,” Danny said.

“We don’t have children yet,” Steve laughed. “And if we do, they’ll get assistance from the Veterans’ Administration.”
“That’s how I’m paying for school now, Danno,” Mary said. “Dad’s benefits.”

“Oh. Okay. That’s fine then. Not that I don’t want you to go to law school. Because I do. You’d be a natural. You already have that McGarrett sneer down to a science.”

“Thanks,” both McGarrett’s responded, making Danny shake his head.

“I’m in so much trouble,” Danny decided.

“Totally,” Steve agreed. “We need to start dinner before the gang shows up.”

“Yeah. Okay,” Danny said, following him into the kitchen. Mary made her way out to the beach, knowing the guys needed to talk about her offer without her around.

“What do you think?” Steve asked as he watched Mary sit in one of the beach chairs.

“I don’t really know,” Danny admitted. “It’s really generous of her to offer. How do you feel about it?”

“I want to have a kid with you,” Steve said, his hands on Danny’s hips as he stared into the blue eyes that held the secrets of his universe. “This is the next best thing.”

“You only say that because the baby will get half of its genes from the McGarrett House of Crazy,” Danny said with a smile.

“Yeah,” Steve agreed, leaning down far enough to kiss Danny. “I have to say I’m surprised that she offered.”

“But she quit smoking for us. You know she’s serious,” Danny told him with a smile.

“Clearly,” Steve had to agree, forcing himself to move away from his station pressed up next to Danny, the only place he ever really wanted to be.

~o0o~

“So,” Danny said that night when they were in bed, their warm, bare bodies tight up against each other. “Two o’clock feedings. Diapers. Check-ups. Colds, snot, fevers. First dates. Drivers license. You ready for all that?”

“Yeah. Pretty sure,” Steve confirmed, kissing Danny’s nose despite all of his protests that it made him feel like a dog every time Steve did it. Which may have been one of the reasons Steve kept doing it.

“Okay. What will we do when we go to work? Not like we can take an infant on stakeouts with us,” Danny reminded him.

“I don’t guess you want to semi-retire, huh?” Steve asked, only half joking. But it would solve a lot of the potential problems of having a child together.

“Don’t think I haven’t considered it, Super SEAL. It would increase my life expectancy by several decades. But I am not unwilling to unleash you on the unsuspecting citizens of Hawaii by yourself. I know better.”

“Hmm… so that’s a no?”

“I don’t know why I ever married you when I hate you as much as I do.”
“You don’t hate me, Danno. You love me,” Steve corrected with a bone melting kiss.


“If you worked part-time it would be easier,” Steve tried, hoping to convince Danny. “It’s not like we really need both our salaries.”

“Why am I the mom in this? Why aren’t you considering working part-time?” Danny demanded. But there was no true heat in the words. He hadn’t moved one inch away from all the skin that was pressed tight to his.

“Because I’m in charge.”

“We just let you believe that,” Danny told him with a yawn. “We’d have to replace me.”

“You are irreplaceable,” Steve assured him.

“Yeah. I bet you say that to all the guys you marry,” Danny said in a sleepy voice.

“So far,” Steve replied.

“When the baby goes to school, I’m coming back to full time, boss,” Danny told him firmly.

“Fine by me,” Steve agreed, kissing Danny’s forehead and following him into sleep.

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“Well?” Steve and Danny said simultaneously when Mary entered the waiting room. It was their third visit to Dr. Keilni, and the second time they were trying to use Danny’s ‘donation’ to the cause.

“She thinks it worked this time,” Mary said with a somewhat watery smile. “We’ll know for sure in three or four weeks. I wish we would know sooner but….”

“I know. We can wait,” Danny said, studying Mary. “You okay, sis?”

“I’m fine. I’m just…you know.” She waved one hand in an attempt to demonstrate the various emotions warring for first place.

“Yeah,” Danny agreed, hugging her and looking up at Steve. “You all right there, big guy?”

“I’m fine,” Steve said with a broad smile. “Three or four weeks, huh?”

“About. Maybe a little longer. She said I need to go home and lay down. Just to give my body a chance to absorb it all.”

“Of course. Danno’ll take you home. I’m going back to work,” Steve said, kissing Mary’s head then kissing Danno on the nose.

“Is it okay if we pick up Gracie on the way?” Danny asked Mary as he walked out next to her.

“Yeah. I just have to take it easy,” Mary said, getting into Danny’s car after hugging Steve who got into his truck, a big smile still on his face. “You are very good for him.”

“You’re only saying that because he’s still alive,” Danny laughed as he started his car, glancing over at Mary with a warm smile.
“He might not be if it weren’t for you,” she said sincerely, one tear spilling over. “God. I can’t be hormonally already.”

“You’ve got a lot going on,” Danny reminded her, holding tight to her hand as they drove to pick up Gracie.

~o0o~

Exactly three weeks later, Mary called from LA. “It worked. I’m knocked up,” she told them, her smile beaming at them from the screen in the outer office. Everyone was there, high fives and hugs all around.

“How are you feeling?” Kono asked, smiling at the image of Mary and feeling a surge of kinship with her.

“Great. My doctor here says everything is going just the way it should. I’ll fly back there as soon as summer break starts. That should be five weeks before the baby’s due.”

“Thank you, Mary,” Danny said warmly.

Mary shrugged, as if carrying her brother’s husband’s baby was all in a day’s work. “I know you’ll take good care of him or her.”

“I will. I’m not so sure about the nutjob I married,” Danny said, making Mary laugh.

“I hear that. I have class so I need to go. I’ll call soon.”

“Thanks for calling, Mar. I love you,” Steve said, smiling at her.

“Love you too, you ninja freak,” she teased, disconnecting.

“Why am I always being insulted?” Steve asked no one in particular.

“All part of your charm, boss,” Jenna told him with the smile that made everyone think of her as perky a term she especially despised.

“Being insulted?” Steve asked.

“Come on, Super SEAL. Let’s go chase some bad guys,” Danny said, his smile still only a little shy of giddy.

“This. This is what I am talking about. I am a decorated war…. The rest of his tirade was cut short by the doors that closed behind him and Danny as Danny dragged him out of the 5-0 offices.

“Finally,” Kono said, smiling at Jenna. “Baby shower?”

“Oh definitely. You come back here, Chin Ho Kelly. You aren’t getting out of it so easily,” Jenna informed him as Chin tried to sneak into his office. He sighed but resigned himself to helping, not that he really minded. But it wouldn’t do for the women to think he was too anxious to help plan a party.

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“Steve. Danny,” Mary said from the doorway of their bedroom. She hated waking them in the middle of the night but it wasn’t like she had any choice.
“What?” Danny asked, turning over to blink up at her. “It’s time.”

“Yeah, I’m pretty sure,” Mary said, rubbing her belly. “I know, baby. I know you want to meet your fathers.”

“I’ll get your bag,” Steve said, leaving the bed and pulling on a pair of black cargo pants and tee shirt. Danny managed to find a pair of his jeans, a clean shirt and sneakers. He helped Mary down the steps, holding steady to her.

“Ohhhh…” Mary said, nearly doubling over. “That was a big one.”


Steve nodded, following Danny’s instructions as Danny helped Mary into the front seat of the car. Once she was strapped in, Danny climbed into the backseat behind the driver’s side, for once glad for his shorter legs. Otherwise, he would have never been able to sit behind Steve with the driver’s seat pushed all the way back. He would have preferred to drive but no way could he justify squeezing Steve into the backseat. He’d have to hang his freakishly long legs out the window.

“Hang in there, Mary,” Steve said as he turned on the police lights, pulling into the street. “Hang on.”

“Didn’t they teach you how to deliver babies in the Army?” Danny asked, leaning forward to study Mary’s pinched face.

“Navy. And no, that wasn’t covered, surprisingly,” Steve said, looking over at Mary, his face in nearly as much pain as hers.

“It won’t be necessary for either of you to,” Mary promised. “I can wait until we get there.”

“Sure you can,” Danny said. “What about the baby? He is half McGarrett after all.”

“He’ll wait,” Mary said with a pained smile. “He promised.”

“Let’s hope he keeps it,” Danny said, reaching forward to rub over his unborn child. “We don’t need him making an early appearance in the front seat of my car just because he’s too impatient to wait to be born in a real hospital because really why would a McGarrett need a hospital when they could be born anywhere including the front seat of my car?”

“Was there a question in there somewhere?” Mary asked Steve with a pained smile.

“Possibly. It’s best to ignore him when he gets like this. That’s what I do,” Steve said, looking over his shoulder at Danny who was frowning back at him. “Oh dear. No sex for me for at least a week,” Steve joked.

“TMI bro,” Mary said, clutching her stomach. “I know baby, I know.”

It wasn’t much longer until they pulled up to the emergency room entrance, Kono, Chin, and Jenna arriving together. No one wanted to speculate why they were all in the same car because really there were some things you just didn’t need to know.

“Hey brah,” Kono was saying as Steve helped Mary out of the car. “We were having dinner when we got your call.”
“It’s 2 o’clock in the morning,” Danny said when he had finally extracted himself from the backseat with no help from his partner who was solely focused on getting Mary inside.

“Yeah. Well,” Kono said with a shrug, smiling at Jenna in a mysterious way.

“I’m sure I don’t want to know,” Danny said, shaking his head. “Thanks for being here.”

“No place else we could be,” Chin assured him, going with Kono and Jenna to the waiting area as Steve and Danny followed the orderly who was pushing Mary toward the labor and delivery area.

It turned out that Dr. Keilni had contracted the flu and would not be able to be present for the delivery. She wasn’t worried about Mary giving birth without her since everything was picture perfect. The on-call obstetrician would handle it without a problem.

The doctor showed up to the labor and delivery room about the same time as Mary, Steve, and Danny arrived. “Wait,” he said, studying the three of them and preventing them from entering the room behind him. “You can’t all be in here.”

“We can,” Steve said firmly.

“Who are you?” he asked with a frown.

“I’m the husband. And the brother,” Steve informed him.

“I’m the father. And the husband,” Danny said because this man was obviously a prick and deserved to have his head messed with.

“Whose husband?” the doctor asked. “Her husband?”

“I’m not married,” Mary said. “I’m the mother. And the sister.”

“Whose sister? His sister?” he asked, pointing at Danny.

“No. He’s the father. And the husband,” Mary said.

“Whose husband?” the doctor demanded.

“My husband,” Steve said. “He’s the father of her baby.”

“He’s the brother of the mother of the baby, married to the father of the baby,” Danny said, trying hard not to laugh.

“You people are not well,” the doctor finally decided, moving out of the way so they could all enter the labor and delivery room. If the conversation hadn’t already confused the hell out of him, he wasn’t about to argue any longer with the tall, angry looking man with all the tattoos. The doctor had some sense of self preservation after all.

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Steve and Danny were in Mary’s room, Danny holding the baby against his chest as he slept. Mary was asleep as well, worn out from giving birth to a perfect baby boy. She had looked at the baby when he was finished kicking his way out but had requested not to hold him. She didn’t want to risk any bond forming between her and the baby because really, she was not his mother. He was the child of Danny and Steve. And she was okay with that.

Danny and Steve smiled over at the door as Gracie tiptoed in. “Hey Monkey,” Danny said from
where he sat in the rocking chair, Steve hovering like a protective shield over them. “You want to meet your little brother?”

Grace nodded and tentatively came over, leaning against the arm of the chair. “Hey,” she whispered, studying the tiny baby in her father’s arms. “He has your hair, Steve.”

“He does,” Steve agreed. “He has Danno’s eyes.”

Grace nodded at that, looking up at Steve who seemed so far away.

“What is it, Gracie?” Steve asked, squatting by her so they could see each other eye to eye.

“Are you going to teach him to surf?” she asked in all seriousness.

“Of course I am,” Steve said with a smile. “Will you help me?”

She nodded at that, turning her focus back to the baby. “What’s his name?”

“John Williams-McGarrett,” Danny said, smiling at Grace. “Is that a good name?”

“A really good name. Was that your daddy’s name?” Grace asked Steve.

“It was. Danno thought the baby should have it,” Steve said, Grace nodding.

“Aunt Kono and Uncle Chin know?” Grace asked, still studying the baby.

“They were here until just a little while ago. They went home to get some sleep,” Steve said.

“They took Jenna with them?”

“They did. Kamekona was here for a little while too. This weekend we’ll have everybody over for a party. We already have your mom’s okay for you to come,” Steve told her with a kiss on her head.

“Where will I sleep? The baby has my room,” Grace said.

“Mary is temporarily in your room, Monkey,” Danny said. “You can sleep in the baby’s room. We’ll have the baby in our room with us.”

“Okay,” Grace agreed with a smile. “As long as I still have a room.”

“Of course you do,” Steve said, hugging her to him. “You will always have a room in our house. It’s your house too.”

“Okay,” Grace said, relaxing against Steve who only then realized that Grace was worried that the baby was going to replace her in their lives. He would never allow that to happen and would make sure that she knew it too. When he stood, she was still in his arms, her arms wrapped firmly around his neck as though she would never let go. And he was fine with that.

Danny looked up at them, a warm smile on his face. This was his family, his ohana.
Steve Shaped Hole in My Heart

Danny had just fallen asleep after finally settling down John-John. He’d had a nightmare – at least that was Danny’s best guess. Since John was still non-verbal at 8 months old, it was a little difficult to determine exactly why he had woken up screaming. A warm bottle of milk and all the songs Danny could remember seemed to soothe John’s fears and he finally, finally went back to sleep.

Danny’s sleep was all too brief before being disrupted by the ringing of Steve’s cell phone. It wasn’t a ring tone he recognized which made him both very awake and very nervous. He frowned at Steve as he reached blindly for the phone, sitting straight up after glancing at the screen.

“Yes sir,” Steve said in his best Commander voice. “Right away, sir.” He listened for a minute before responding one last time and hanging up. If Danny hadn’t already known the content of the phone call, the look on Steve’s face told him everything he needed to know but didn’t want to.

Steve was already getting out of bed, not even trying to explain. Danny understood. He didn’t like it. In fact, he hated it. But he understood. That did not stop him from needing to rush over to their bathroom and lose everything in his stomach. He was glad now he had missed dinner because the vomiting could have been a lot worse.

“Hey, hey,” Steve said soothingly, caressing the back of Danny’s sweaty head. “I’ll be back as soon as I can.”

“How long?” Danny asked, squinting up at him, not sure he wanted the answer.

“Three weeks?” Steve said, hoping Danny wasn’t going to be sick again at the news. His hopes were in vain and Danny returned to hugging the toilet. “So much for your streak, huh?”

“Do NOT make jokes right now, Steven. You are going God knows where to do God knows what and I may never see you again. This is not the time for jokes.”

“I’m sorry, Danno,” Steve said when he was on his knees next to Danny. “I’m really sorry.”

“I know, babe. You have to go. I get that. It doesn’t mean I have to be happy about it,” Danny said, unable to meet Steve’s worried eyes.

“I understand,” Steve said, kissing the top of Danny’s head.

“Will you be able to call me?” Danny asked, hoping he didn’t sound as pathetic as he felt. He was a big boy. He could survive without Steve for three weeks that would no doubt turn into a month. Only a month if he was lucky.

“I don’t know. You know I will if I have the chance. If there’s an emergency and you have to reach me, call the base CO. He’ll know how to contact me.”

Danny nodded, sitting heavily on the floor. “I’ll call the governor first thing in the morning. And I’ll find someone to watch John full time.”

“It might be better if you stayed part time, Danno. I’ve never left him before. I don’t want him to be without both of us,” Steve said reasonably.

“Yeah,” Danny agreed, not sure that’s what he wanted. But he did think Steve had a point as much as he didn’t like it.
“Do you want me to call Chin to come over?” Steve offered.

Danny shook his head, reaching for Steve’s arm and squinting at his watch. “It’s 2:30 in the morning. No need in waking Chin too.”

“All right,” Steve agreed reluctantly. “I have to go. I love you, Danno. Remember that, okay?”

“I will. I love you too. Now go kick ass, take names, and come home safe.”

“I promise,” Steve said, kissing him on the nose. “Remind John-John and Gracie that I love them.”

“You can count on it,” Danny said, staying where he was and watching Steve leave him. If he stood up, he knew he would chase his goof-ball of a husband and beg him not to go.

~oOo~

Danny didn’t bother going back to bed. When he heard Steve’s truck leave the driveway, he went downstairs, too awake and too keyed up to go back to sleep. He had the baby monitor in his pocket as he went into the laundry room and put in another load. Even with a neat-freak of a husband, there were always more clothes to wash – the baby’s, Steve’s, fewer of Danny’s. Getting the blood out of Steve’s shirts was a seemingly futile goal but it kept his hands busy and his mind off all the things that could put blood on Steve’s shirts while he was away.

“Governor Jameson, please,” Danny requested. He managed to wait until 8 a.m. when he was certain she would be in her office. John was settled on his hip as he warmed the formula, the baby chatting happily to Danny’s hair. Danny wondered if John knew what he was saying or if in true Williams fashion was in love with the sound of his own voice, not that he’d ever admit to Steve that that particular fact had any truth to it. “Yes, this is Detective Danny Williams-McGarrett.”

“Danny?” Governor Jameson said in greeting. “Is everything okay?”

“I hope so. Steve was deployed last night,” Danny said, trying hard to not choke on the words.

“Oh dear. I’m so sorry.”

“Me too, Governor. But we know it can happen at any time,” Danny said regretfully.

“Do you know how long he’ll be gone?”

“He said three weeks, ma’am. But that could mean a month or two months or….” Danny sighed.

“I understand, Danny. Do you want me to make some phone calls? See what I can find out?” she offered kindly.

“To be perfectly honest, ma’am, I think I prefer not knowing. If I don’t know he’s been sent to the middle east, I can worry less,” Danny admitted.

“I can understand that,” she agreed. “If you need anything, anything while Steve’s gone, you know you only have to call.”

“Yes ma’am. Thank you,” Danny said. After the necessary pleasantries, Danny hung up with her. He didn’t bother to call Chin, Kono, or Jenna. They would be by any minute for breakfast. He couldn’t remember exactly when it became their custom to stop by their house on the way to work which was really out of the way for them all but stop by they did. Once they had eaten, they would all leave for work, Danny most days staying behind with the baby.
“Mnnmmnn…” John was telling Danny’s hair.

“I agree,” Danny said, testing the temperature of the formula before giving the bottle to his son. “It does suck.”

“Watch that language, brah,” Chin warned with his ever present smile as he strolled into the kitchen. “Or the baby’s first word will be the four-letter kind.”

“Don’t I know it,” Danny agreed.

“Where’s boss-man?” Kono asked, taking John when he held his arms out to his favorite Auntie.

“I have no idea,” Danny admitted, sitting heavily in one of the kitchen chairs. He told them about Steve being recalled, their unhappiness palatable.

“No, no,” Jenna said, shaking her head.

“Do you know something?” Danny asked, studying her closely.

“I don’t, Danny. I just hate that he had to go.”

“Me too. But…” Danny shrugged, smiling up at John as he happily sucked from the bottle Kono was holding from him.

“I’ll bunk with you while he’s gone,” Chin decided, the women nodding in agreement.

“I can’t ask you to do that,” Danny protested.

“You aren’t asking, brah. I’m telling. First, Steve’s gone and that’s enough of a load on your mind. You don’t need to try to take care of John alone while pretending you aren’t worrying sick about Steve.”

“Well. When you put it that way,” Danny said wearily. He looked up at Kono and Jenna who were exchanging glances. “What? You want to stay too?”

They shrugged innocently, Kono kissing the baby on the head.

“Fine. Good thing we have extra bedrooms,” Danny said. “I have Grace this weekend so you’ll have to sleep together while she’s here.”

“That’s no problem, brah,” Kono assured him a little too happily.

“I don’t need to know anything else,” he said, holding up one hand.

“What’d the Governor say?” Chin asked as he started preparing the pancake batter.

“She offered to make some calls. Find out where he was sent. I asked her not to. I’d rather live in ignorance, frankly,” he admitted, rubbing his hand over his face and ideally scratching his stubble.

“You look beat,” Kono said. “And I mean that in the nicest way possible. Go up and take a nap. We’ll watch the baby.”

“You need to get to HQ,” Danny said, shaking his head.

“There’s nothing going on right now,” Jenna said, reaching down for his hand and pulling him up. “And if they need us, they’ll call our cell phones.”
“All right,” Danny agreed reluctantly. “But only for an hour. And if John needs me, promise me you’ll wake me up.”

“Of course,” Kono promised. “He has his Auntie Kono. What more could he need?”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah,” Danny said, allowing Jenna to pull him upstairs. Now that they had offered, all he could do was think about going to sleep for three days. He wasn’t sure he’d be able to actually sleep without Steve’s overly hot, overly large body taking up too much room in their bed but the idea of trying was very appealing to his tired body.

~o0o~

He squinted at the clock when his eyes finally decided they would stay open, surprised to see that it was 11:30. So much for sleeping for only an hour. Well, he needed it and he knew John was fine with the gang amusing him.

Danny took a shower, lingering under the hot water and enjoying the fact that he felt no need to rush through it. He finally made himself leave, needing to see John, to hold him tight, to feel his squirming baby in his arms.

He made his way to the back of the house, sitting in one of the beach chairs and gazing out at the ocean. Kono, Chin and Jenna had John in the water, the three of them forming a protective circle around him. He was gleefully splashing the water and Danny thought it looked a little like he was actually propelling himself through it.

Kono spotted Danny and waved up at him, John squealing in delight. Danny knew that sound was solely for him and went into the water to reach down for his happy, naked little boy. “Hey baby. Are you swimming?”

John babbled up at Danny, his hands holding tight to the front of Danny’s tee shirt. That John was so happy loosened something tight inside Danny’s chest.

“He’s a natural, brah,” Chin told Danny. “He’ll be surfing as soon as he can stand up.”

“Great,” Danny said trying to sound put-upon. “Just what I need. Another aquaman in the family.”

“He’ll be an aquababy for a little while,” Jenna pointed out with a smile.

“Yeah,” Danny said, smiling at them. “Thank you guys.”

They shrugged off his thanks, Kono and Jenna going inside after saying something about finding some lunch for their men. Danny and Chin exchanged a look at that, deciding silently not to question it.

“How are you really, Danny?” Chin asked when they were settled in the chairs, the umbrella protecting John from the sun as he lay against Danny’s chest.

Danny stared out over the ocean, considering the question, one he had avoided thinking about until Chin went and asked it out loud. “I don’t know,” Danny finally decided. “I think I’m pissed. That they had to deploy Steve. How many SEALs are there? He’s the only one who could handle whatever this is he’s having to handle? By the same token, I get it. They spent a lot of time and money training him. They still own him. I don’t really have the right to be mad that they are asking him to fulfill a commitment he made before he knew I ever existed.”

“Doesn’t make it any easier,” Chin said.
“No. We …or I hoped they’d forgotten about him. Which was stupid, I know. But it’s been almost three years. Why now? Why this time?” Danny asked, knowing neither he nor Chin had the answer.

“He must be able to handle the situation when no one else can,” Chin suggested.

“That hardly seems likely does it?” Danny asked. “Don’t SEALs get the same training?”

“Yeah but some have specialties. Like Steve’s languages. His love of explosives. You know.”

“Yeah,” Danny had to concede. “Maybe I should ask the Governor to make some calls. Maybe knowing would be easier.”

“I wouldn’t do it, brah,” Chin said, sounding all too wise and knowledgeable for Danny’s comfort. “Not knowing is way easier.”

“Yeah,” Danny sighs, wishing it was all just a little easier.

~o0o~

Danny managed to survive the first week with the giant Steve-shaped hole in his life. He would never say it was easy but he could say it got a little less hard. The worst was the rewiring he had to do to make his brain cooperate. He didn’t bother keeping track of the ridiculous number of times he automatically turned to tell Steve something before he remembered there was no Steve to tell. How John had said what just might have been Daddy or Danno or maybe they were only random syllables but he was so cute doing it. Or how Grace was going to finally take ballet lessons, with a tutu and everything. Or that the refrigerator stopped working and who could blame it since he was pretty sure it was purchased well before Steve was even a gleam in his parents’ eyes. Buying the refrigerator was almost more than Danny could handle by himself, not because it was an overwhelming task but simply because it was something you did with your husband.

Bless Chin Ho’s kindness for going with Danny to the giant box store and asking all the right questions. The saleswoman cooed over John while Chin compared the display models, making sure the one Danny thought might be the best choice was the correct dimensions for the space allocated to it in the kitchen. Assured it would fit, the saleswoman promised it would be delivered that afternoon because no one with a nine-month old baby could be without a working refrigerator longer than 24 hours.

The second week was harder and easier. John was anxious and fidgety and barely ate or slept. His pediatrician said it was a common response to the anxiety he felt being projected by his father and that when Danny was feeling more centered John would as well. Danny made a conscious effort to project calm. When he felt his grip on the forced tranquility slipping, he went for overly-long runs on the beach with John in his all-terrain stroller that Danny suspect Steve had ordered from Guns and Ammo-Family Edition but never asked. He did periodically check the suspiciously numerous pockets on the stroller, making absolutely certain that Steve had not stashed any grenades, knives, or heavy artillery in any of them.

The breathing exercises the doctor recommend for Danny and the additional fresh air from their runs seemed to work for them both and John began to sleep more soundly. Or Danny never heard him being restless because Kono, Chin, or Jenna got to him before he woke up his father. Danny didn’t have the heart to ask and they would never admit that they took turns getting up so Danny could have a few hours respite from the ache they could see in his eyes which only Steve could relieve.

The third week passed in a blur. Danny couldn’t sleep more than three hours, prowling around the house as though he was trying to remember where he had stashed Steve. He tried warm milk, cold
milk, cold beer, hot cider, no coffee, extra coffee. Nothing helped. He finally asked Rachel if she could take John for a night so that Chin, Jenna, and Kono could have the night off and Danny could have the house to himself. Rachel’s worried eyes told Kono all she needed to know when she dropped off John, none of them wanting to leave Danny alone but when he kept insisting it’s what he wanted, they could no longer argue.

If Danny’s eyes were red-rimmed and swollen behind his sunglasses the next morning when he picked up John, Rachel would never admit she noticed. And maybe Grace shouldn’t have been allowed to skip school but one day out to spend with her father as a special holiday was not going to ruin her future or her ability to get into any college she wanted.

The beginning of the fourth week, Danny was sure he was going to go out of his mind. He had been out of touch with Steve three times longer than he had since they had threatened each other in the garage across the Marquis. Where was he? Why couldn’t he call? Danny would know already if he was dead, right? Super SEAL or not, his next of kin would be notified. Danny even called Mary with the pretense of catching her up on how big John was getting, comforted by the normality of her tone. She missed Steve too but she hadn’t lived with him most of her life so distance was her norm with her brother.

The beginning of the fifth week, Danny could no longer stand not knowing and called the base commander.

“I know I shouldn’t be calling,” Danny said, John on his hip, one hand fisted in Danny’s shirt. “But it’s been over a month. Can you at least tell me if Steve is okay?”

There was a heart-wrenchingly long pause on the other end and Danny was pretty sure he stopped breathing. “That information is classified, Detective Williams-McGarrett.”

“Classified,” Danny said. “You can’t tell me if my husband, father of my child, is alive or dead?”

“No,” the commander said, not even a hint of sympathy in his voice.

“Then you can rot in hell,” Danny said, slamming down the phone. He carefully put John in his swing and took several deep breaths before dialing the Governor.

“Danny?” Governor Jameson said, her anxiety coming through. That she could hear John crying in the background only worried her more.

“I just talked to the base CO,” Danny said, his words clipped. “He won’t tell me if Steve is alive. Said it’s classified. I’m his fucking husband. How can it be classified?”

“All right, Danny. I’ll find out. I’ll call you back just as quickly as I can,” the Governor promised.

Danny called Chin, knowing he could not be by himself with John right now. The fear and anxiety he was feeling was transmitting to his sobbing son. If Danny picked him up, it would only make matters worse.

Chin was arriving as the phone rang. He watched Danny take a breath before answering, Chin gathering up John and cooing at him in comforting sounds.

“Governor,” Danny said sounding remarkably more calm than he felt.

“He’s fine, Danny. He’s been deep undercover. They lost track of him this morning. The CO wasn’t lying. They didn’t know if he was okay. But they found him,” the Governor told Danny.
“Thank God,” Danny said, sitting down, his knees weak in relief. “Any chance they told you when he’d be back?”

“No, I’m sorry. They didn’t. I tried.”

“I know, ma’am. And I appreciate it,” Danny said.

“Are you all right? Is John all right?”

“Chin is here. We’re fine,” Danny said.

“All right,” she said. “I’ll call again if I find out anything else.”

“I appreciate it,” Danny said, hanging up and looking at Chin, tears he was not trying to hide shimmering in his eyes. “I can’t do this much longer.”

“I know, brah. I have the baby. Go for a run. Or go get Grace. Whatever you want.”

“I want Steve to come home. Right now,” Danny said, his tears spilling over. Maybe he should have been embarrassed but he was past caring, completely overwhelmed with fear and anxiety and loneliness for Steve. He needed Steve. He wasn’t ashamed to admit it.

“Try calling him. Hesse called when Steve had his brother,” Chin reminded him.

Danny took a deep breath and pressed Steve’s speed-dial. It only took two rings for it to go to voicemail but at least he got to hear Steve’s voice. He didn’t leave a message. What would he say? **Hey. It’s me. On the verge of a cataclysmic meltdown not that you can do anything about it. Yeah, talk to you later.**

Certain that John was all right with Chin, Danny changed into shorts and running shoes, hitting the beach. He ran until he couldn’t breathe and then he ran some more. His lungs were bursting, his knee was starting to swell, and his feet were screaming for mercy. He finally, finally stopped, looking around to realize he had no idea where he was. At some point, he had left the beach and was in the middle of downtown. He guessed he was approximately ten miles from home.

“Hey,” he said when Kono answered, his breathing still heavy.

“What’s wrong?” Kono demanded, her fear coming through.

“I ran too far. I need you to take me home,” he admitted.

“Of course. I’ll be there in three minutes,” Kono said, already leaving the office, her cell phone tracking Danny’s. “Don’t move. I’ll be right there.”

“I can’t move,” he told her. “You may have to take me to the hospital on the way home.”

“Your knee?”

“Yeah. I was stupid,” Danny admitted, laying down on a convenient park bench.

“Do not beat yourself up, brah,” she ordered. “Wait right there. I won’t be long.”

“Yeah,” Danny said, watching the trees above him do a weird kind of dance. Why were they moving when there was no wind? How did that make any sense?

“Danny,” Kono was saying, her hand resting warmly on his shoulder, making him wonder how she
had gotten there while he was still talking to her on the phone. “You passed out.”

“I did not pass out,” Danny said a little too loudly. “I was…resting my eyes.”

“Okay, brah. But I’ve been here almost twenty minutes and this is the first time you’ve answered me.”

“Twenty minutes?” Danny asked, very slowly sitting up and frowning at the EMTs watching him. “Who’s hurt? Are you okay?”

“I’m fine. I called them when I couldn’t wake you up,” Kono explained.

“Oh dear God,” Danny said, his face behind his hands. “This is so embarrassing.”

“It’s fine, Danny,” Sara assured him. She had been first on the scene too many times when Steve or Danny or both needed medical assistance. By this time, there was nothing he could do or say or feel that would surprise her.

“Thanks,” Danny said with barely a nod. “I’m fine. I ran too far and didn’t hydrate properly. Promise me you will not tell Steve when he gets back.”

“I promise,” Kono agreed, winking at Sara. “You want to go to the hospital or home?”

“You have to ask?” he replied, letting Kono help him up. Good thing she was much stronger than she looked or she’d never be able to lug his body over to her car.

“Drink plenty of water,” Sara said, leaning in the window on Danny’s side. “Ice your knee. If it’s still swollen tomorrow, call your doctor.”

“Right, right,” Danny agreed, closing his eyes and wishing the ground would just open up and swallow him. Except that would leave John and Gracie behind and he could never do that. “Thanks for your help.”

Sara nodded, patting the door to give Kono the ‘all clear’ before she pulled into the street.

“I’m really sorry,” Danny said, his eyes still closed.

“You have nothing to apologize for. Except I lost the pool,” Kono joked.

“Oh dear God. Please tell me you did not wager on when I’d finally break down,” Danny said.

“I’m kidding, Danny. We’d never do that. We understand how hard this is. It’s hard on all of us,” Kono said.

“I know, kid. I know,” Danny said softly, looking out his window. He was startled out of his reverie when his phone rang. Even though it sounded like ‘Sexy Eyes’ he dismissed that possibility out of hand and answered. “Detective Williams.”

“Did you divorce me while I’ve been gone?” Steve’s voice asked him.

“Steve? Oh my God. Are you okay? Please tell me you are okay. Oh God,” Danny said, certain he was hyperventilating.


“You’re really okay? I called the CO this morning and they didn’t know where you were. I was sure
you were dead. Oh God. I can’t tell you how much I’ve missed you,” Danny said, trying to hold back his tears.

“I miss you too. I’m fine, I promise. I was out of contact this morning your time but nothing was wrong except bad signals.”

“Okay, okay,” Danny said, a death grip on the phone. “Do you know when you’ll be home? God let it be soon.”

“Three or four more days. No longer, I promise,” Steve said. “I’ll be home by the weekend.”

“Okay,” Danny said, trying unsuccessfully to relax. “This weekend.”

“Yeah. The one coming up. I’ll see you before Saturday. This Saturday.”

“Good,” Danny said, some of the anxiety finally seeping out. “I love you, big guy.”

“I love you too, babe. I can’t wait to get home to you.”

“Me too. Like you do not know,” Danny said.

“I have some idea,” Steve said, a smile finally showing up in his voice. “I have to go. I’ll see you soon.”

“About damn time,” Danny said, enjoying Steve’s laugh as they hung up. “He’ll be home by the weekend.”

Kono nodded, her smile saying all that needed to be said about that news.

~o0o~

The beginning of the sixth week, Danny was sure he’d survive until Steve got home. It wouldn’t be much longer. He and John had actually made it through his absence, one that would soon be done, thanks to Jenna, Kono, and Chin. He could breathe. John was sleeping. Danny was almost sleeping, not taking refuge in running as he had been.

The house still had to be cleaned and the laundry still had to be done. It had increased with the arrival of their ohana but he did not mind. Washing, drying, folding, and sorting was the least he could do for all that they were doing for him.

Chin’s clean and folded laundry went into the basket lined with hellacious lime green and bright pink Hawaiian print material. Jenna and Kono’s was co-mingled in the basket lined with pink gingham, more girly than he would have expected but it suited them somehow. His went into the wicker basket with no lining, and John’s went into the baby blue basket Jenna had picked out even before he was born.

As he folded the latest load, he considered whether the blue thongs he’d just pulled from the dryer were Kono or Jenna’s. He thought they were Kono’s because he was pretty sure he’d hung up the matching bra Kono was wearing earlier in the week. The pink bikini panties were definitely Jenna’s although he didn’t want to think of why he knew that with such certainty. The black lacy underwear could belong to either of them and he folded them in quarters like he always did, his hands more occupied than his mind.

“Is there something you need to tell me, babe?” a long absent but oh-so-familiar voice asked from the doorway of the laundry room.
Danny stared down at the panties, wondering if the fumes from the Woolite had finally gotten to him. Were they talking to him now?

“If you want to wear thongs, I’m not going to argue,” Steve said, stepping close enough to grab Danny.

“Oh God. It is you,” Danny said into the front of Steve’s shirt. “Oh God.”

“It’s me, Danno. I promised I’d be home before Saturday. And I am,” Steve said, kissing the top of his head and inhaling his fragrance. Too much hair product. The sun and ocean. Baby formula. All of it Danny – all of it home.

“Let me look at you,” Danny finally said as he leaned back to stare up at Steve. He was wearing the blue polo that was Danny’s favorite shirt, the one that made Steve’s eyes more blue than grey, eyes that were beautiful no matter the color. He also wore a pair of charcoal cargo pants which Danny found extremely reassuring. It was all so normal, almost, almost like Steve hadn’t been gone. “You big, beautiful goof. What happen here?” Danny asked, carefully touching a new scar along Steve’s jaw line. “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine,” Steve assured him, taking Danny’s hand and kissing the palm. “I’m fine. Especially now.”

“Why didn’t you call? I would have come to get you. I’d have brought John. We would have driven out. What’d you do? Fly here with your super secret SEAL cape?”

“I got a lift. I was afraid you’d start crying and, well….” Steve shrugged, all innocence and love and understanding.

“You thought I’d start crying?” Danny asked. “What about you? You definitely have some tears in those eyes.”

Steve shrugged again, staring into Danny’s beautiful eyes until bending down enough to kiss his mouth, tasting all those flavors that were part of his soul but had been missing for way way too longer. “Where’s John-John?” Steve whispered into Danny’s mouth, barely pausing from kissing him long enough to ask.

“Upstairs. Asleep. He’ll be up soon. You want to go wake him?” Danny asked, reaching up for another kiss, wanting it to never end.

“In a minute,” Steve said, holding Danny tight against him and looking over Danny’s head down at the laundry. “Why do you have a pile of panties on the dryer? Did you decide to take in laundry while I was gone?”

“They belong to Jenna and Kono,” Danny said before pointing to Chin’s basket. “That’s Chin’s.”

“They all have washing machines.”

“Yeah. But they are living here. The least I could do is wash their clothes,” Danny said.

“They’re living here,” Steve said, a smile creeping over his face.

“Yeah. Have been since you left,” Danny said.

“Wow,” Steve said, kissing Danny again. “They are ohana.”
“Thankfully, yeah,” Danny agreed.

“Why do we have a new refrigerator?”

“The old one died. Chin and I picked out this one. It even has an ice maker which scares John but Gracie loves. I figured it was easier to make ice packs with an automatic maker,” Danny said.

“Good thinking. Think John is almost ready to be up from his nap?” Steve asked, kissing Danny one more time before he could answer.

“Absolutely,” Danny agreed, taking Steve’s hand and pulling him upstairs. He carefully opened the door to John’s room, not surprised to find John sitting up, chewing on one of his stuffed animals. “Daddy’s home, John-John,” Danny told him, lifting the baby out of his crib. John looked over at Steve, a tiny frown creating a crease between his eyebrows until Steve spoke to him.


John burst into a rush of sounds that might have been words. Danny thought they soon would be. In the meantime, Danny passed John over to Steve, John’s fist tightly wound in Steve’s shirt, his blue eyes staring up at his father in happiness.

“He’s twice the size he was,” Steve said, holding him tight against his body.

“I think that’s a little bit of an exaggeration,” Danny said, smiling at the two of them. “He weighs five more pounds and is three inches taller.”

“That’s a lifetime,” Steve said, kissing John’s head as John continued to babble at Steve.

“I need to call Chin and Kono and Jenna. Oh, and Kamekona. You need to call Mary. Unless you did already. And the Governor.”

“Okay,” Steve laughed. “Tell them to come to dinner.”

“Of course. They’ll need to bring dinner. I don’t think I have anything here to feed them all, especially if Shamu comes,” Danny laughed. Danny called HQ, the three of them promising to be over in 45 minutes with enough pizza for half of Hawai‘i. Kamekona said he’d be there in ten minutes, Danny not wanting to try and decide where he was that he would arrive so quickly. Not that it mattered. Danny also called Grace, making sure she got Rachel’s permission to come to dinner. He then called Chin back to ask that one of them swing by for Grace.

All of the calls made, Steve and Danny took John to the beach, Steve settling in the chair under the umbrella, John content to babble in his lap. Danny pulled a chair closer to Steve’s not wanting any distance between them.

“Did you have anything to eat besides bugs and leaves?” Danny asked, studying Steve with a critical eye.

“Some days I had tree bark too,” Steve joked. “Why?”

“You’ve lost weight. A lot of weight,” Danny said. “You’re okay, right?”

“I’m fine, babe. You’ve lost weight too,” Steve said, his hand on Danny’s cheek. Danny shrugged, pressing more firmly into Steve’s palm.

“John-John hasn’t,” Danny said, soothing down the dark hair that always wanted to stand straight up
from the baby’s head.

“Thankfully,” Steve agreed. “Do you think our ohana would be willing to take John to one of their houses tomorrow night?” he asked in a whisper, leaning closer to Danny to whisper it to him, the question a promise.

“I think we could arrange that,” Danny said, staring at Steve, afraid he’d blink and Steve would no longer be in the beach chair next to him.

“I’m home, babe. You don’t have to worry about me vanishing into thin air.”

“I know. I just…”

“Yeah. Me too, Danno. Me too,” Steve said, leaning over and kissing him in love and promise and relief.

Steve was home.

Danny had survived.
Principal Greer looked through his window to see John Williams-McGarrett’s father striding up to the school. He suppressed a quiet sigh. When he had asked his secretary to call John’s father, he had specifically requested that she contact Detective Williams-McGarrett and not Commander Williams-McGarrett. And yet it was the Commander who was now entering the front door.

“Commander Williams-McGarrett,” Principal Greer said when his secretary had told him to go straight in.

“Principal Greer,” Steve replied, trying very hard to avoid aneurysm face, the one Danny claimed scared people senseless. It had been mostly a losing battle since he’d gotten the call that he needed to come to John’s school and meet with the principal.

“Please, have a seat,” Principal Greer invited, not wanting the Commander to loom over him, even from across his desk. Greer was relieved that the Commander had left his gun elsewhere, the concept of no guns in school finally getting through to him. It had taken the combined persuasiveness of the Principal and Danny for Steve to finally listen and enter the school unarmed. The Principal took it on faith that none of the pockets in Steve’s black cargo pants contained hand grenades or other forms of destructive weaponry.

Steve glanced down at the wooden chair the Principal had indicated, wondering briefly if a chair designed to hold a grade-schooler would bear his weight. Surely it was sturdier than it looked. Steve decided to chance it and lowered himself into the chair, glad it wasn’t made for the youngest kids. At least his knees weren’t directly beneath his chin. “Where is John?”

“He’s in the assistant principal’s office,” Greer said as he sat down in the chair closest to Steve’s.

“Why did you call me down here?” Steve asked, patience wearing thin already. Was John hurt? Was he in some sort of trouble?

“John was fighting on the playground,” the Principal said, closely watching the Commander’s face. It remained surprisingly impassive and Greer breathed a silent sigh of relief.

“He was fighting,” Steve said, knowing he should be concerned by that fact. Danny would be. But it wasn’t so terrible a thing, really. Okay, he was only six, but still.

“Yes sir,” the Principal said. “He said he was defending himself.”

“Then he was,” Steve said. “My son does not lie.”

“I understand that, sir,” the Principal assured him. “However, fighting for any reason is against school rules.”

“Who was he defending himself from?” Steve’s voice was still flat and nearly toneless, his face not betraying any emotion.

“His teacher said that it was a group of third graders who were apparently…teasing him. John and his friends ignored them until they began…well,” the Principal said.

“They began to what?” Steve asked, his voice now rock hard.

“Apparently the third graders told John that his father is a dolphin. John took exception to that, telling
them quite forcefully that you are, in fact, a SEAL, not a dolphin.”

Steve took a moment to consider those words. John wasn’t fighting to defend himself. He was fighting to defend Steve. Because the third graders were making fun of his father. Well. This was… something which Steve wasn’t sure he could appropriately handle. Why had he told Danny he would come? Oh right. Because he was John’s father too and that’s what fathers did. “If the teachers heard all this, why didn’t they stop it?” There. That seemed like a reasonable question to ask.

“They got the information from the children, sir,” the Principal said. “The fight drew quite a crowd. John took down three third-graders by himself.”

Steve knew being proud of John was wrong in this circumstance. He knew that. But he couldn’t help but feel that John was in the right here. And he bested three boys who were two years older than him. How could he not be proud of that? “Three of them?”

“Yes sir, three third graders. They were the ones calling you a dolphin,” the Principal said, knowing that Steve was more proud of John than he by rights should be. Secretly, the Principal couldn’t really blame him. He was very secretly proud of John’s courage as well.

“I see,” Steve said, wondering what the appropriate parental thing to say next was. Well, he felt sure John would be punished for fighting. That’s what schools did. “What is John’s punishment?”

“He will serve detention for three days. The third graders will serve for seven days. They are the ones who started the altercation.”

“All right,” Steve agreed with a nod. “And John’s okay?”

“He’s fine. The third graders have some impressive bruises but John does not,” the Principal said.

“I’m sorry for their pain,” Steve said, not entirely sincerely.

“Yes. Well. Boys will be boys. We all know that,” the Principal agreed. “Do you want to meet with the parents of the other boys? We will be glad to arrange it if you would like.”

“Would it serve any purpose? I doubt those parents could condone what their sons did,” Steve said reasonably.

“That’s entirely up to you, Commander.”

“I’ll talk to John and to Danny. If they want us to meet, we will,” Steve decided. Make it a family decision. That would get him off the hook and give the others a chance to weigh in.

“Very well,” Principal Greer agreed. He stood, waiting as Steve unfolded himself from the chair. “You will probably want to take John home for the rest of the day. He’s of course welcome to return in the morning. Detention is during recess so he will not be kept after school.”

“All right,” Steve said. “He won’t serve detention with the third graders, will he?”

“No sir. He’ll be with the first graders. I believe he may be the only one in detention at the moment. He may serve it with me in my office.”

Steve nodded at that, following the principal across the hallway to where John sat in the assistant’s office. “Hey Bud,” Steve said as he squatted before his son. John’s dark hair was insisting on standing up all over his head, the curls he inherited from both his fathers making it unruly at best. His blue uniform shirt was untucked from his pants and there were grass stains on his knees. Those were
the only signs of his fight except for his blue eyes that were filled with misery and worry. When Steve smiled at him, John visibly relaxed, wrapping his arms around his father’s neck.

“I’m sorry, Daddy,” he whispered into Steve’s shoulder.

“I know, Bud. It’s okay. I’m not angry at you. But you know fighting is not allowed at school,” Steve reminded him because it was a father’s job to enforce the rules, even the ones they did not agree with.

“I know,” John sniffed. “I shouldn’t have done it. But…”

“I understand. Principal Greer says I can take you home. Would that be good with you?”

“Uh huh. Is Danno home?”

“He’s at work. You want to go see him?” Steve asked, as he stood, holding John close to his body.

“Uh huh. Does he have Em?”

“He does. We’ll go to HQ,” Steve promised, holding his right hand out to Principal Greer. “Thank you.”

“Thank you, Commander,” the Principal responded, shaking his hand, glad that Steve did not break any of his fingers in his grip. He walked them to the door, watching as Steve put John in the backseat of his truck, fastening him in before entering the driver’s side.

“Daddy?” John said as Steve pulled away from the curb in front of the school.

“Yeah?” Steve responded, looking at his beautiful son in the rearview mirror.

“I know I shouldn’t have hit those boys,” John said, chewing on his lower lip in a way Steve knew came directly from him. “But they were being mean.”

“What did they say that made you fight them?” Steve asked. Danny always said confession was good for the soul so he figured it was good for a six year old’s soul too.

“They were saying mean things about you. They said you were a dolphin,” John said with a frown.

“You know the truth, John-John. What does it matter what they said?”

“You aren’t a dolphin,” John said a little too loudly.

“That wasn’t the question, Bud,” Steve reminded him gently. “Why do you care what they said?”

John didn’t answer except for the tears that spilled over.

“Hey, hey. You don’t need to cry,” Steve said. “I’m not mad. You know that, right?”

“Uh huh. Danno’s going to yell at me,” John said, wiping away his tears.

“Danno yells at everybody. Of course he’s going to yell at you. Wouldn’t you be worried if he didn’t?”

John shrugged, looking out the truck window at the palace. “Are Chin and Kono here?”

“Yeah. It’s going to be fine,” Steve promised as he left the truck to open John’s door and help him
“Come on. Let’s go see Danno and Emma.”

John nodded, trailing slightly behind Steve although he was holding tight to his father’s hand. Steve looked down at his son, understanding that his hesitation was competing with his need to see Danno and his little sister.

They went up the steps together, Steve not taking them two at a time like he normally would. John was a little tall for his age at the moment, Danny hopeful that he would take after Steve in the height department. That didn’t mean that John could sprint up the steps like his father always did.

“So?” Danny said as they entered the bullpen. He bent down to accept John in his arms, wishing he weren’t already crying. “What’s this, Babe? You don’t need to cry.” While he was comforting their sobbing son, Emma came barreling out of Danny’s office to collide with Steve’s legs.

“Daddy. Daddy.” She held up her arms so Steve would pick her up, her arms tight around his neck. “Hey Daddy.”

“Hey Princess,” Steve said, kissing her before blowing a raspberry on her cheek.

She giggled and moved away, looking over at John. “Why’s John-John crying?”

“He got into trouble at school,” Steve explained, telling Chin and Kono at the same time. They had left their offices when Steve and John had arrived.

“Why?” Emma asked, her slate grey eyes wide. Her curls were caught in a ponytail high on her head, a pink ribbon the exact match for her shirt and shorts.

“What happened?” Danno asked John who was still tightly clinging to him, making his dress shirt damp with tears.

“I was fighting,” John admitted, his voice muffled by Danny’s shoulder.

“Fighting,” Danny repeated, looking from John to Steve. “Even though you know it’s against the rules.”

“But Danno,” John tried, stopping when he saw Danny’s expression.

“Why were you fighting, John-John? We don’t fight at school,” Danny said a little too loudly. But he wanted to make sure that both John and his father knew it was wrong to fight, especially at school.

“Don’t yell at him, please,” Steve requested, Danny frowning at him.

“He was fighting, Steven. He needs to be yelled at,” Danny countered.

“I’m sorry, Danno,” John said softly, tears coming faster.

“I know, Babe. Tell me why you were fighting,” Danny requested, his voice turning gentle. Any of his children could reduce him to mush by crying. He hoped the two youngest hadn’t figured that out yet.

“They called Daddy a dolphin,” John said, his voice revealing some of his indignation at the insults that had been hurled at his father.

“A dolphin,” Danny repeated, looking at Steve in question.

“Instead of a SEAL,” Steve supplied, trying to be helpful.
“Yeah, I got that,” Danny said, looking again at John. “Why were they even discussing it?”

“Cause Daddy was on TV last night,” John said. “They said he was a SEAL. You know, on TV.”

“Oh,” Steve said, finally understanding. The news crew had shown up at the crime scene just in time to film Steve emerging from the ocean with the bodies of two dead perps floating near-by. Despite the best efforts of the entire 5-0 team, the news insisted on talking about how Steve had taken down the dangerous fugitives bare-handed even though the bad guys were heavily armed, one carrying a gigantic knife. Steve thought they had blown it all out of proportion but there was no stopping them from hyping his supposed super-Human feat.

“It doesn’t matter what anyone else thinks, does it?” Danno asked John gently. “We know the truth. Daddy’s a SEAL. If they want to call him a dolphin, it doesn’t hurt his feelings. Does it, Steve?”

“Not at all,” Steve agreed.

“You’re not a dolphin,” Emma said loudly.

Steve laughed, shaking his head. “No, I’m not. Although Danno does think I’m a fish sometimes.”

“You swim like a fish. You smell like a fish,” Danny teased.

“He doesn’t smell like a fish, Danno,” Emma said. “He smells like Daddy.”

“Okay,” Danny had to agree. “What do you say if I take you two guppies to see Kamekona and we have shaved ice?”

“Really?” John asked, looking at Danny to make sure he wasn’t still mad.

“Really really,” Danny teased. “If you think that’s something you would like to do.”

“Uh huh,” John agreed with enthusiasm.

“There’s nothing going on here, Boss. What do you say we all go?” Kono suggested with a smile that brightened up the entire office.

“Who am I to argue when there’s shaved ice involved?” Steve laughed.

“Yay,” Emma cheered. “Shaved ice.”

“I guess that’s a yes,” Danny said, smiling at Steve. “Thanks.”

“For what?” Steve asked, leaning a little closer to Danno, Emma on his other hip.

“For being a responsible adult, finally,” Danny said with a wink.

“I try, Danno. I try,” Steve said, kissing him lightly on the mouth, the two children squealing. “What is that?”

“Don’t kiss Daddy in public, Daddy,” John said. “It’s gross.”

“Gross, huh?” Steve said. “He got that from you.”

“He did not. I don’t use that word,” Danny protested as they all went to the steps, Chin and Kono bringing up the rear.
“Yeah you do,” a chorus of voices said, Danny only able to laugh. All right. If his *ohana* said it was his fault, who was he to argue?
“Hey Danno,” Steve said, rubbing over Danny’s firm backside, marveling again how it fit perfectly in his hand. The sun streaming in the window was dancing off Danny’s golden skin, highlighting the peach-fuzz covering Danny’s ass. Danny’s ass might have been the tipping factor in making Steve fall completely in love with him. That and his never ending rants about the superiority of all things New Jersey. And his unyielding determination to maintain his “professionalism” at the cost of his comfort. His iron will that justice would be served and the world would be a safer place for Gracie and then John to grow up. Okay, everything about Danno had made Steve fall in love with him. But his ass. That was a bonus.

“Yeah Babe?” Danny asked, his cheek cushioned by his folded arms. His eyes had drifted closed but he knew Steve was still studying him from his position stretched out in the bed beside him. Steve loved watching Danny and most of the time Danny had no objections to the attention. Especially when those huge hands were touching him like they were at the moment.

“Do you think one of your sisters would have my baby?” Steve asked, leaning down to kiss across both shoulder blades.

“Mmm…” Danny responded, opening one eye to look up at him. “Probably.”

“Probably?” Steve laughed. “What kind of answer is that?”

“I’m not the boss of them, Steven. And when did we decide we wanted another baby?” Danny asked.

“I always kind of thought we’d have another one. So John didn’t grow up as a part-time only child,” Steve said.

“He’s not my only child. I have Grace and I have you,” Danny said, rolling on his side to study his beautiful husband, all lean muscles and tanned tattooed skin. God he couldn’t believe how far he had married up the second time. Not compared to Rachel but compared to himself – the loud mouthed Jersey boy who landed the sexiest man on the planet Earth although there was still the possibility that Steve was not actually from Earth.

“If we have another baby, I’ll have more playmates,” Steve said with his silliest grin, one that Danny tried pretending wasn’t heart-melting.

“You are such a goof,” Danny said, shaking his head.

“Yeah. But I’m your goof,” Steve reminded him. “So. Another baby?”

“Sure,” Danny agreed, like Steve was just asking if he wanted more malasadas. “You can ask when they’re here for John’s birthday party.”

“Do you think one of them will agree?”

“Maybe. Angie already has five children. What’s one more to her? Jerry, on the other hand, is as likely to agree as he is to try and take your head off.”

“Yeah. Jerry could be a problem,” Steve said. “They’re all coming for the party?”

“Yes,” Danny sighed, sounding put-upon. “We talked about this. My three sisters, the two still-
married ones with their husbands, their combined ten children, and my parents are ALL coming to celebrate John’s first birthday. They will be here a week from yesterday.”

“Right,” Steve said like it was the first time he’d heard about these plans. Which Danny knew was a blatant lie. Steve could play innocent all he wanted. Danny knew his super SEAL was as super smart as he was super sexy.

“You can be so weird sometimes,” Danny said with a smile just for Steve.

“Okay, I heard you when you invited them,” Steve admitted, kissing Danny’s cheek and rubbing his nose against Danny’s jaw and the blond stubble that covered it. “I’m sorry Matt won’t be here.”

Danny closed his eyes momentarily at that. “He made his choice. I hate it for him but I won’t mourn him any longer.”

“I know, Babe,” Steve agreed, listening to the baby monitor before leaving their bed. “I’ll go.”

“Good,” Danny said with a wave of his hand. “It’s your turn anyway.”

“Actually it’s your turn to change him. But since you are being so lazy, I’ll go,” Steve said, attempting to sound grumpy at the idea of changing their baby. Trying but not succeeding.

“Yeah yeah yeah. My heart bleeds for you,” Danny said, rolling out of bed in search of a pair of boxers. He knew that Steve would return with John as soon as he was changed. Danny did not need their baby in bed with him when he wasn’t wearing anything but a smile.

~o0o~

The next Saturday the house was filled to overflowing with family celebrating John’s first birthday. Steve had asked Mary to come but she didn’t think it would be such a good idea. She’d celebrate with them privately the next time she came for a visit. There wasn’t any point in giving mixed signals as to who were the real parents of the birthday boy.

Rachel brought Grace over, and with the combined persuasiveness of all the assorted Williamses, she stayed for the festivities. Grace was thrilled to be with her grandparents as well as all her aunts, uncles, and cousins. Danny’s mother and father were overjoyed to see Grace and could not believe how much she’d grown since the last time they had spent time with her.

Jenna, Kono, Chin, and Kamekona arrived with beer and pineapples and leis for the entire clan. Danny even agreed to wear one, conceding to Steve’s point that he couldn’t be the lone holdout at his own son’s birthday party.

The happy chaos lasted the entire day, Steve sure that he’d heard more words spoken in those hours than he had in the rest of his life combined. Not that he was complaining. But the cacophony of sounds was very nearly too much for him. He breathed a sigh of relief when Danny suggested quietly, a little after 6 o’clock, that Steve go for a swim. It was his habit to swim and having the entire world visiting didn’t mean he should give it up.

“Thank you, Danno,” Steve said, kissing him quickly before sprinting upstairs to pull on a pair of trunks. He made his way outside, shedding his cargo pants and polo when he was at the water’s edge. Danny snuck John down to the beach, letting him have some peace and quiet as they watched Steve swim back and forth parallel to the sand.

“Boss okay?” Kono asked as she gracefully sat in the sand next to Danny and a sleeping John.
Yeah. A little overwhelmed. I’m a little overwhelmed and they’re my family.”

“It’s natural,” Kono told him.

“Yeah. John’s worn out,” Danny said, shifting so Kono could see his face relaxed in sleep, his thumb firmly in his mouth. That had been the source of several arguments between his two fathers. Danny said they should stop him but Steve insisted it was normal for babies to suck their thumbs and that he would eventually grow out of it. All babies did. Danny suspected from the conversations that Steve had sucked his thumb but had never asked him. How much damage would be done to Steve’s super SEAL intimidation factor if that information ever got out? It would surely bring the end of the world as they knew it.

“He’s been a very good boy,” Kono said with a smile. “I don’t know many babies who could have been passed around as much as he has and not cried.”

“Hearty Williams-McGarrett genes,” Danny said.

“Totally,” Kono said. “Are you asking your sisters about the baby after dinner?”

“I think so. I thought we should ask one at a time but Steve thinks asking them all at once would be easier,” Danny said with a shrug.

“You aren’t having second thoughts, are you?” Kono asked.

“No. But Mary offered. That’s a lot different from asking them to have Steve’s baby.”

“They won’t agree if they don’t want to do it,” Kono assured him. “Trust the girl when she tells you this.”

“I do,” Danny said with a smile. He squinted up at Steve when he walked out of the water, accepting the towel to dry his face. “Better?”

“I am,” Steve said, sitting next to Danny and leaning against him on purpose just to get him wet.

“Don’t drip on the baby,” Danny scolded with no heat in the words.

“He’s an aquababy, Danno. He’s not going to melt,” Steve said with a loving smile for his son.

“Yeah,” Danny replied, studying Steve instead of the baby. “Do you want to go to the office? Pretend the Governor needs you?”

“No Danno. I’m okay. I know you think I can’t relate mammal to mammal without a gun or a hand grenade as back-up. But I’m fine.”

“I don’t want you overwhelmed. They’re here for the entire week.”

“I’m not overwhelmed. Even if it is a lot like having seven of you plus ten miniature versions,” Steve joked.

“It’s takes some getting used to,” Kono said with a laugh. “You’re holding up remarkably well.”

“Thank you,” Steve replied. “I can put on company manners when I have to.”

“We never doubted it, Boss,” Kono said with a wink, leaving to reenter the party zone.

It wasn’t long before Danny’s mom came down to announce that dinner was ready and maybe Steve
wanted to take a shower before he ate not that it was her place to tell him what to do in his own house but surely he’d be more comfortable once he’d washed off the salt water and had on fresh clothes because eating while still dripping from his swim wouldn’t be healthy not that she thought he’d catch his death of cold because that was just an old wives’ tale to which she did not subscribe any merit but it would still be best if he showered and dressed before joining the rest of the family for dinner.

Steve looked at her, slightly stunned by the sheer number of words she was able to say without taking a breath. He finally looked over at Danny who was laughing at his expression.

“Come on, Babe. Let’s get you upstairs,” Danny said, passing John to his mom and going with Steve up to their bedroom. Danny waited as Steve showered and dressed, making sure he was ready to return back downstairs.

“I’m ready. And I’m hungry,” Steve said when he had on clean blue cargo pants and a lighter blue shirt.

“You won’t be once you’ve eaten Mom’s lasagna. It will fill you up for a couple of days.”

“That’s a good thing, right?” Steve asked, making Danny frown at him.

“Yes it is a very good thing. And even if you don’t like it, you are to tell Mom you do,” Danny warned.

“I don’t lie, Danno,” Steve reminded him innocently.

“Then you won’t live to see John grow up,” Danny told him, sprinting carefully down the stairs before Steve could retort. Danny knew he’d pay for his threats later but payment would be something they both enjoyed so he wasn’t at all worried.

~o0o~

Once the lasagna had been consumed, the dishes washed, dried, and put away, the children were coaxed to the beach with the promise of s’mores and a blazing fire. Kono, Chin, Jenna, Rachel, and Kamekona were stationed as guards along with Danny’s parents.

Danny’s sisters and brothers-in-laws sat as requested, all their attention focused on Danny and Steve as they stood in the living room. They hadn’t run out of chairs or couches but Danny knew Steve was better off standing. Made disguising some of his nervous energy a little easier.

“So,” Danny said. “We’ll just cut to the chase. You probably know what we’re going to say anyway.”

Steve nodded, watching Danny rather than trying to decide if either of his brothers-in-law were plotting their combined demise. Who would take John if they succeeded? Rachel? Mary? Why was he even considering it? He could take them both on and win. Probably. With Danno as back-up. No he was sure he would win even if all Danny did was bitch at them for their crappy attitudes – ‘them’ including Steve, he was certain.

“We are hoping that one of you will have Steve’s baby,” Danny said plainly, watching the five faces before him.

“Steve’s baby,” Angie finally said, looking from Danny to Steve and back. Angie looked a little like she would be willing to sleep with Steve but not necessarily for the purpose of procreation. Recreation seemed her only motive.
“Yes,” Danny said. “Like Mary had John.”

Angie’s husband Jerry made a quiet choking sound in the back of his throat and Steve knew that eliminated Angie from the pool of potential mothers. Danny watched Steve from the corner of his eye, making sure Steve wasn’t going to physically and forcefully show Jerry what he thought of his negative attitude.

“How would that work, Danny?” his youngest sister Leah asked. “I mean, would the baby be born here? Or Jersey?” She was an accountant with one of the largest accounting firms in New York City and could always be counted on to see things in columns and rows – where would the baby be conceived? Born? How would they get him or her back across the continent to Hawaii?

“Jersey, probably,” Danny said. “We’d fly over, Steve would make his contribution, then we’d fly back here. When the baby is ready to be born, we’d fly back to Jersey and return here as soon as we have permission.”

Leah nodded at that, glancing at her husband Michael who simply looked back at her. He was a policeman, a brother in arms. He didn’t seem to have any particular opinion about the idea of his wife having Steve’s child. That was an improvement over Jerry’s reaction.

“I’ll do it,” Maggie piped up. Maggie owned her own bakery, using the secret recipes from their mother and grandmothers to fatten up all of her neighbors in Hoboken. She had been married to a policeman for 8 years before he decided being married to someone who always smelled like butter and sugar was not really for him. She was not happy that he left her but neither was she all that torn up over it. She liked him well enough but didn’t know that she was ever in love with him. She married him when they discovered she was pregnant with their first child Sally. Their marriage was workable but not a model one by any means.

“Just like that?” Angie asked her, frowning.

“Sure, Angie. Why not? I don’t have a husband to object. You know I love being pregnant. And God knows I’m fertile enough for any of us,” she said with a laugh, her face lighting up and reminding Steve of Danny’s joy filled expression, especially around Gracie and John. She also resembled Danny more than his other two sisters which Steve thought of as a win.

“You can’t decide just like that, Maggie,” Leah said cautiously. “You need to think about it.”

Maggie shrugged. “I don’t think they intend to do it right here, Leah. There will be time before it happens. There are forms to sign, doctors to visit. Plans to make. If I change my mind, the boys aren’t going to hold it against me. Right?” Maggie said up to Steve and Danny.

“Of course not, Mags. You can change your mind any time. And if you want, you can call Mary and talk to her,” Danny said with a happy smile.

“Yeah,” Maggie agreed. “I’ll have to explain to Sally and Josh. Sally will understand better than Josh.”

“And what will you say?” Jerry demanded. “That you were knocked up by your brother’s husband and have no intentions of keeping the baby?”

Steve shifted slightly, crossing his arms over his chest, no disguising his displeasure at the man’s words.

“That’s enough,” Angie said to her husband. “They aren’t going to have sex, for God’s sakes. Stop acting like a Cro-Magnon man.”
He frowned at her and left the living room for the beach. Angie watched him go before returning her focus to the others. “I’m sorry.”

“You have no reason to be,” Leah assured her. “He’s old fashioned. We get that.”

“Yeah,” Angie said with a shrug. “I’ll go talk to him.”

“We don’t think there’s anything wrong with what you are doing,” Michael said in an effort to smooth over the awkwardness. “We sure don’t blame you for wanting another baby.”

“Thank you,” Steve said, breaking his silence finally and relaxing slightly. He no longer looked ready to take down anyone who objected to the idea of one of the sisters having his baby and Danny was grateful for the reprieve from Aneurysm Face Steve.

~o0o~

All of the arrangements were made, all the forms signed, all the agreements reached. Steve and Danny flew to New Jersey, John left in the care of Jenna, Kono, and Chin who moved into their house for the duration. And they sure didn’t need to worry that John was going to notice his dads were gone while being spoiled rotten by his ohana.

Maggie picked them up at Newark International Airport, Danny barely able to keep his eyes open. Steve was wired, not showing any signs of sleep deprivation. Even if he were still wide awake, Danny thought he should have the common courtesy to at least pretend to be tired.

“I can go for five or six days with no sleep, Danno,” Steve reminded him.

“Like I don’t know that,” Danny said, shaking his head.

Maggie laughed at them both, dropping them off at their mom and dad’s house where they would be staying for the next week. They wanted to make sure that they were there long enough to try at least twice, just in case. “I’ll pick you up tomorrow at 8:30,” Maggie reminded them as she left her parents’ house.

Danny’s mom fed them too much. Danny’s father had little to say but Danny assured Steve it was his nature. Steve secretly thought that Danny’s mom talked so much, it never left room for his father to say anything. He knew first hand how well that actually worked out.

Danny wanted to go to bed as soon as they ate, Steve agreeing with him. Danny could only hope that Steve would actually sleep and not plot the overthrow of the New Jersey government or plan a complete redesign of the Jersey Turnpike although it certainly needed some assistance to prevent the sort of congestion they had encountered by being dumb enough to land at 4:00 pm and get stuck in the height of after-work traffic.

“I’ll sleep, Danno,” Steve assured him as Danny rummaged through his tote for a pair of pajamas. “I think those are mine.”

Danny held them up to his body, the sleeves way too long, the pants covering his toes and an additional six inches of floor. “Ya think?”

“Yep. Pretty sure,” Steve said, taking the pajamas from him. “I guess we have to wear them, huh?”

“We are in my parents’ house, Steven. We will wear pajamas for as long as we are here,” Danny told him firmly.
“Even during the day?” Steve asked purely to make Danny frown at him.

“Shut up and change into your pajamas. I’m begging you,” Danny said as he got out of his clothes.

“I want to take a shower,” Steve said.

“Fine. It’s at the end of the hallway. Just make sure you knock. I’ll be scarred for life if you accidentally walked in on my mom.”

“I’ll knock,” Steve promised, standing up with his pajamas in his hands. “Are the towels in there?”

“Yes. You’ll see them,” Danny said, stopping him from leaving with a hand on his arm. He reached up to kiss Steve, smiling at the surprise radiating from Steve.

“What was that for?”

“Because I’m crazy in love with you. And if I’m asleep when you get back, I don’t want you to forget it.”

“I could never forget, Danno,” Steve assured him, kissing him again before slipping out of the room.

As predicted, Danny was already asleep when Steve returned, freshly showered and dressed respectfully in pajamas he rarely wore.

~o0o~

They arrived at the doctor’s office precisely at 9, the receptionist cheerfully greeting them. She took Maggie to an exam room before showing Steve and Danny a very discreet, very private room where they would take care of their part of the plan. As soon as she had the door closed and locked, Steve pulled Danny into a long, breathless kiss, grinding his groin into Danny’s. Steve’s hands were shoved in the back pockets of Danny’s jeans, holding him tight against Steve’s body, savoring the closeness they had been denying themselves out of necessity.

“Well,” Danny said when he could speak. “We need to abstain more often.”

Steve shook his head. “No. We aren’t having any more babies after this one. So we’ll never have to go another week without me making you beg me to come.”

“I do not beg,” Danny denied, frowning up at his goof-ball husband.

“I have evidence to the contrary,” Steve assured him, undoing Danny’s jeans and shoving his hand into the front of them.

“What are you doing?” Danny asked, looking down at where Steve’s hand was buried in just the right way.

“After all the time we’ve been married, I would have thought you’d have figured it out,” Steve teased, his fingers curling around Danny’s forming erection.

“We aren’t here for that,” Danny said, gasping softly when Steve squeezed him in just the right way.

“We sort of are,” Steve said. “You have to make me come. It only seems fair I take care of you first.”

“Oh. Well,” Danny said, leaning closer to Steve and staring up at his mouth. “When you put it that way, it’s hard to argue.”

“Hard,” Steve whispered against his mouth. “Like you.”
“Just like me,” Danny agreed, before neither of them were able to speak. Not for a few delicious minutes as Steve used his free hand to lower Danny’s pants and briefs, his right hand working its special form of magic. It didn’t take long for Danny to give a warning moan, Steve reaching over for a convenient towel and catching Danny’s eruption without getting it on either of them. “Mmm….” Danny sighed, boneless and happy, Steve’s arm the only thing holding him upright.

“Yeah,” Steve agreed, kissing him on top of the head before leaning him against the exam table. Once he was sure Danny wouldn’t fall over or ooze down onto the floor, Steve disposed of the towel and returned to kiss Danny’s slack, delicious mouth before pulling his briefs and pants back up into place.

“You hard?” Danny asked through half-lidded eyes.

“Of course,” Steve replied, taking Danny’s right hand to press it firmly against the bulge in his jeans.

“Of course,” Danny agreed. “How do you want to do this?”

Steve shrugged, looking at the exam table. “Sitting down, I guess. Make it easier for you to collect it. Like when we did it for Mary.”

“Oh, okay,” Danny said, opening Steve’s jeans and lowering them and his briefs to free his erection.

“Do you want them off?”

“Nah,” Steve said, hoisting himself up onto the table. “This is fine.” Danny tried pretending he didn’t enjoy the sight of all those muscles under Steve’s tattoos flexing as he easily lifted himself onto the table. But it was pointless to act like that wasn’t enough to get him hard all over again.

Danny finally was able to drag his eyes from Steve’s fine, fine body and nodded, reaching over for the specimen jar and handing it to Steve. “You sure you don’t mind going to the Yankee game tomorrow?” Danny asked as he gently grasped Steve’s erection, touching him in just the right ways.

“Even if I didn’t want to go, how would I ever refuse you?” Steve responded, leaning closer to kiss Danny’s mouth, moaning quietly as Danny stroked him, not bringing him any relief, only arousing him further. Danny had always been something of a tease and this was proving to be no exception.

“That doesn’t mean you get to blow up more shit when we get home to make up for suffering through the game,” Danny said, biting Steve’s lower lip, making Steve moan again.

“I like blowing shit up,” Steve said unnecessarily.

“Really? I hadn’t noticed.”

“For a detective, your powers of observation are decidedly lacking,” Steve informed him, looking down at his erection as the tip appeared and disappeared in Danny’s fist.

“I have observed that you are insane,” Danny told him. “And that you are a danger to me and all living things. Including our daughter and our son. It’s a wonder to me that you’ve actually lived this long.”

“Then why are you agreeing to have another baby with me?”

“I’m hoping to make it up to the world. Maybe the next baby will make you think twice before you blow up more shit.”

“Doubt it,” Steve admitted.
“Yeah, I know,” Danny sighed, kissing Steve again, plunging his tongue into Steve’s mouth, the kiss nearly hotter than what Danny’s hands were doing. Danny felt the signs of Steve’s coming orgasm, accepting the specimen jar back from Steve’s shaking hands. He got in place in plenty of time to collect every drop, Steve slowly laying down to stare blindly up at the ceiling. “Be right back,” Danny said, draping a towel over Steve’s stomach and groin before carefully slipping out of the room.

Steve was in the exact same position when Danny returned. He did manage to lift his head enough to smile at Danny. “Hey.”

“Hey yourself. The doctor said Maggie needs to wait for an hour so we should go have a cup of coffee. We’ll come back for her.”

“Okay,” Steve agreed, hoisting himself off the table. He smiled down at Danny’s head as he pulled Steve’s jeans and boxers back into place.

“There is no reason for you to look so pleased with yourself,” Danny scolded with no heat in the words.

“Why not? We’re going to have a baby,” Steve reminded him, kissing him on the nose.

“Yes we are,” Danny said, smiling brightly up at Steve. “Come on. We don’t need to hang around here with all the pregnant women in half of Jersey.”

Steve shrugged, following Danny out and into the waiting room. Danny did not notice that every single woman was openly staring at his husband as they made their way to the door. Even the ones who were ready to give birth looked like they would like their turn, figuring out someway they could make love to Super SEAL despite the fact that they were on the verge of having someone else’s baby.

“You are cute when you’re jealous,” Steve whispered into Danny’s ear as they went down in the elevator.

“Who said anything about me being jealous? Those women can look all they want but I’m the one you come home to every night with your ridiculous tattoos and your eyes that can’t decide what color they want to be one minute to the next not that you can really see them under those ridiculous paint brushes you have the nerve to call eyelashes.”

“Huh,” Steve said, following Danny out of the building and down the street. “That’s not jealousy?”

“Shut up you,” Danny said with no heat in the words, leading him into a convenient coffee shop that he knew served bottomless cups of the hottest, freshest coffee within a five mile radius. Danny had made a study of coffee shops while still a beat cop and this was one of the best.

“Well as I live and breathe,” the older woman behind the counter said, a grin splitting her face. “If it isn’t Danny Williams back from paradise.” She had rounded her counter, pulling Danny into a fierce hug, beefy arms wrapping tightly around him. “I’d heard you were home visiting. If you hadn’t come in here, I’d have found you and dragged you back.”

“Why do you think I’m here, Mildred?” Danny asked with a bright smile.

“I’d say it’s for me but I think not,” she said, looking up at Steve, her head tilted way back. She was a little shorter than Danny and almost as wide as she was tall. But she radiated goodness and love and home even to Steve.
“I’m Steve Williams-McGarrett,” Steve said, offering his hand to the woman who took it into both of hers.

“It’s good to finally meet you, Commander. Heard all about you. Not from this one, of course. There are other Williamses who keep me posted. Not Danny. Leaves Jersey and never looks back.”

“That’s not so, Mildred,” Danny said in his defense. “Didn’t you get the pictures of John and Gracie I sent you?”

“Sure. But do you bring them so I can see them in person? No you do not.”

“We will, Mildred. I promise,” Danny said.

“Fine. Fine. Sit. I’ll get your coffee. And éclairs?”

“Yes please,” Danny agreed, going to the booth in the back of the small seating section, Steve folding himself to sit opposite from him.

“She a relative of yours?” Steve asked quietly.

“I don’t think so. Not by blood.”

Steve nodded at that, smiling up at Mildred when she brought the two steaming mugs of coffee and four éclairs on a plate complete with a doily.

“You let me know if there’s anything else you need,” she reminded them before going to serve the customers who had just entered.

“Are you actually going to eat those?” Steve asked, staring at the éclairs like they were going to rise up and strike him dead if he moved too suddenly or got too close.

“I most certainly am,” Danny said, stuffing almost an entire éclair in this mouth. “See?”

“You think I’m not house-broken,” Steve complained, watching Danny eat it with enthusiasm. “You have zero class.”

“I most certainly do,” Danny said, licking his fingers as noisily as he could manage. “I have class to spare. Just because you look like James Bond doesn’t mean I couldn’t outclass your Army ass any second of the day.”

“My ass belongs to the Navy,” Steve reminded him.

“No. It belongs to me. I’ll loan it to the Navy if they insist but they are not getting it back,” Danny said.

Steve laughed at that, the other customers glancing over appreciatively at the two men in the back of the café. Danny thought the tall women with the dark hair lingered overly long on her appraisal but he wasn’t going to complain or call it to Steve’s attention which would only inflate his outsized ego even more.

“She’s eye-fucking you,” Steve whispered, leaning across the table in a clear mark of ownership.

“So not. You maybe.”

Steve shook his head, looking over at her and sweeping her with his eyes before dismissing her. He couldn’t prevent a smirk of satisfaction when she swung her hair in frustration and practically
stormed out.

“God you are good at that,” Danny said. “Although I don’t want to know how you learned to be so completely dismissive of potential pick-ups with just one look that could singe her ego for the rest of her life.”

“She was a bitch, Danno. She deserved to be taken down a peg,” Steve said, reaching over to take the flake of chocolate off Danny’s lip, licking his thumb to make it disappear.

“Stop. Stop trying to seduce me with your come-fuck-me eyes and your alpha need to stake your claim.”

“I don’t need to stake my claim. I already have you,” Steve reminded him, lifting Danny’s left hand to kiss his wedding band.

“Well there is that,” Danny was forced to agree, eating a second éclair one-handed. Because no way was he going to complain about sitting in a coffee shop in New Jersey holding hands with his incredibly beautiful husband.

~o0o~

Almost a month passed after they got back from Jersey before Maggie finally called and told them they were going to be fathers again. This celebration was no less enthusiastic than the one for John had been. Steve decided the office needed to close early that day, the team agreeing happily. They also agreed to go with the guys to the giant box store for paint. The bedroom that used to be Mary’s was going to be the second baby’s room, with her blessing. It desperately needed a fresh coat of paint and the 5-0 team didn’t trust Steve and Danny to pick it out by themselves.

Steve and Danny swung by Rachel’s to pick up John, Grace joining them on their outing to acquire appropriate paint and baby furniture. Even though John would be just over two when the baby was born, they still needed a second crib.

Grace raced over to Kono, Jenna, and Chin when they were inside the store. John was in his baby carrier snug against Steve’s chest, facing out so he could squeal in delight at the sight of his ohana.

“Hey baby,” Kono said kissing John on the head while managing to hold Gracie on her hip.

“What color Danno?” Gracie asked after she had slipped out of Kono’s arms to stand pressed between Jenna and Chin in front of all the sample cards.

“Well,” Danny said, looking at them over her head. “Since we don’t know the gender, something neutral.”

“How about this?” Grace asked, choosing a very pink card from the Disney Princess collection.

“I don’t know if that would work for the baby’s room, Monkey,” Steve said with affectionate patience. “But if you wanted to repaint your room, that would work.”

“Really Steve? Danno? I could paint my room this color?” she asked, her excitement making her cheeks nearly as pink as the paint sample.

“If that’s what you want,” Danny agreed. “I bet we could find some Disney Princess borders to go with it.”

“Can we go look?” Grace asked, all wide-eyed wonder. “Can we please?”
“We’ll go with you,” Jenna said with a happy smile. “I love Disney Princesses.”

“Me too,” Kono had to agree as they followed Gracie over to the wallpaper section of the store.

“Now,” Chin said, holding out the samples he had chosen. They were various shades of soothing yellow and mint green and one light lavender. “These seem suitable for either sex.”

Danny nodded, tilting his head to study the chips. “What do you think?”

Steve shrugged, taking the samples from Chin. “I kind of like this one,” he decided, indicating a pale green.

“Nice,” Danny agreed. “Don’t you think it could be a little darker?”

They debated the merits of one shade over the next, finally deciding on painting the walls the original color Chin had chosen and doing the trim in a paint two shades darker. As the customer service woman was mixing them, John became anxious and squirmed unhappily in his carrier. Steve reached back and took a bottle out of his back pocket, John accepting it greedily. The paint mixer looked wide-eyed at the tall man holding the mysteriously appearing bottle for the beautiful child with the dark curls. Her face softened and her smile took ten years off her age.

“He’s beautiful,” she said, smiling at John.

“Thank you,” Danny said, trying to get John’s hair to lay flat, a hopeless battle.

“How old is he?” she asked.

“He’ll be eighteen months in a few weeks,” Steve said to her nods. She glanced over at Chin before looking at Danny and then at Steve, trying to figure out who the baby belonged to. Not that it was any of her business but rarely did she get the opportunity to see three such gorgeous men at one time and less likely to see them with a baby in tow.

“Steve and I are his fathers,” Danny told her, taking pity on her finally. “This is an uncle.”

The woman nodded, not that what he had said made sense. But it was so clear that they all adored the baby what did it matter? “Is this paint for his room?”

“It’s for the baby who hasn’t been born yet,” Steve said.

“Then this is the perfect color,” she said in approval, showing them the paint.

“We also need a gallon of this one,” Danny said, handing her the Disney pink Grace wanted.

“This isn’t for him, is it?” she asked with a barely disguised laugh.

“No it’s for our daughter. She loves pink,” Steve said unnecessarily. As if on cue, Grace came hurrying back to them, several packages of Disney cut-outs clutched eagerly in her hands.

“Steve. Danno. Look. We found these,” she said, putting them on the counter. “See. It’s all the princesses.”

“It sure is,” Danny agreed. “What did you do with Jenna and Kono?”

She pointed vaguely over to her left, telling Steve and Chin where each princess would go, the woman behind the counter watching all of it in warm amusement. It wasn’t long before Jenna and Kono returned, packages of curtains in their hands.
“These are for Grace,” Kono said, handing Chin the Princess curtains made to match the cut-outs.
“These are for John,” she said, showing them the blue gingham that would go perfectly with the walls of his room.

“And these are for the baby,” Jenna finished, gesturing at the white sheers she was holding.

“Perfect,” Chin agreed.

The woman behind the counter was studying the five adults, the expression on her face making it obvious that she was trying sort it out. Was one of the these pretty women the mother of the baby? He didn’t have any Asian features so that eliminated surfer-girl. The other woman looked enough like the baby that she could be the mother. But she seemed to be with surfer-girl. And what about the daughter? She resembled the shorter, blond haole but not the tall serviceman. And where did the native son come into all this? To whom did he belong?

She shook her head when the pink paint was fully mixed, showing the results to the excited little girl who squealed in delight.

“It’s perfect, isn’t it?” she said to all the adults clustered around her. The adults naturally agreed that it was absolutely perfect and certainly they could go home and start painting her room right now.

The paint service woman watched in warm amusement as the group strolled away after appropriate thank yous, the brightest from the little girl clutching her Disney Princess cut-outs. However that ohana was arranged, there was clearly plenty of love to go around.

~o0o~

“Would you hurry up?” Steve asked again as Danny collected his suitcase from the conveyor belt. His impatience wasn’t entirely fair, he knew. Danny was holding a sleeping Gracie on one hip, John in his carrier against his chest. Danny frowned at Steve and shoved his suitcase toward him.

“It isn’t my fault there were storms over the Mississippi, Babe,” Danny reminded him wearily as Steve grabbed the handle of Danny’s suitcase. Steve’s only luggage was the gigantic backpack settled way too easily on his shoulders as though it didn’t contain the combined needs of Steve, Gracie, and John plus some of the gifts for the baby that could even right now be arriving in the world minus her fathers.

“I know, Danno. I’m sorry,” Steve said, kissing his head and shifting Grace easily from Danny’s arms to his own. “Where are your parents?”

“Since we didn’t know when we’d finally land, I said we’d rent a car. Just as easy,” Danny said, taking his phone out. “They reserved us one. Over here.”

Steve automatically followed, holding Grace tight in his right arm as Danny made his way to the rental counter.

“Hi. You have a car reserved for Williams-McGarrett,” Danny said to the uninterested clerk.

“Yeah. Sure,” the young man said. He really should have better customer service skills when dealing with sleep-deprived travelers who had been stuck in the air for almost fifteen hours especially when one of them was carrying an exhausted two year old and the taller one looked ready to kill anyone who looked the wrong way at the sleeping nine-year old in his arms.

Danny could see the muscle in Steve’s jaw jumping, the one that was generally a prelude to way-past-Aneurysm Face and into I’ll-kill-you-and-you’ll-never-see-it-coming Face. The customer service
agent chose that second to look up at them, taking an involuntary step backwards.

‘Good,’ Danny thought. ‘That Face might be enough for a free upgrade.’

“Here you are sirs,” the clerk said overly quickly. “Blue SUV. Right outside those double doors.” He pointed over at the doors that said ‘rental cars’ as Danny signed the necessary forms and provided both their drivers’ licenses, seeing his surprised expression. “Hawaii?”

“Yes Hawaii,” Danny said. “We’ve only been stuck on a plane for 15 hours. Why?”

“Do you drive on the same side of the road as we do here?” the clerk asked.

Danny didn’t know whether to laugh or punch him right in the face. “I know high school is getting ridiculously stupid but have you never heard that Hawaii is actually a part of these great United States of America?” he finally asked.

The clerk just looked at him with a blank expression and Danny decided that was enough of that conversation. He turned for the door, sure that Steve would follow.

It didn’t take long to settle John into the baby seat the rental company had provided or to get Grace strapped into her seat. Danny got into the driver’s side, sure that Steve wanted to drive but since Danny could drive the highways of New Jersey in his sleep it was imminently more sensible for him to drive even though the enforced inactivity was driving Steve quietly mad.

“I’m really sorry, Danno,” Steve said, surprising Danny.

“For what, Babe? We’re all exhausted and on edge. I get that,” Danny assured him, threading his fingers through Steve’s and squeezing tight.

Steve nodded, looking out into the bright New Jersey sunshine. “I’m going to call a friend and see if we can take a military transport back.”

“Is that allowed?” Danny asked, glancing over at Steve.

“Sometimes. If there is one going to Hawaii. They won’t go specifically for us but if there’s one already scheduled, we can hitch a ride.”

“All right,” Danny agreed. “As long as you don’t plan to drive.”

“You don’t drive a plane, Danno,” Steve said with an attempt to sound frustrated. But Danny could clearly hear the amusement underneath.

“Pilot. Steer. Whatever,” Danny said, waving a hand in dismissal. “Call Mom and see if the baby’s been born yet.”

Steve nodded, taking out his phone to speed-dial Danny’s mom. “Yes ma’am we just left the airport….We’re at exit 163….Okay… Yes ma’am…Of course,” he said, handing Danny the phone and looking into the backseat to make sure the children were okay.

“Yes, Mom, I know….Yes, we will….Okay….Okay….Bye.” Danny returned Steve’s phone, shaking his head. “Poor Maggie. Going on 20 hours now.”

“Will they perform a cesarean if it takes much longer?” Steve asked.

“I don’t think so. It took Grace fifteen hours. John ninjied himself out in record time,” Danny reminded Steve.
“Excellent McGarrett genes,” Steve agreed.

“Maybe because Maggie’s having a girl, she isn’t as impatient to be born,” Danny suggested.

“Maybe not,” Steve said, breathing a sigh of relief when Danny pulled into the parking lot of the hospital. “Feels wrong not to have our ohana here,” Steve remarked as he got John out of the car seat, taking the camouflage diaper bag from the floor of the backseat. With John securely in one arm and the diaper bag over the other, Steve waited as Danny pulled a sleeping Grace out of the car, holding tight to her.

“We’ll call them as soon as the baby arrives,” Danny promised, going into the hospital by Steve’s side. They went up together to labor and delivery, finding Danny’s parents and one of his sisters in the waiting room.

“Finally,” his mom said, taking Grace as his father accepted John. “Tell the nurse at the desk you’re here for Maggie. She’ll take you down.”

Danny and Steve turned for the front desk, Steve reminding them that the baby’s bottles were in his bag, Mrs. Williams promising to feed him at the first sign he was awake. The nurse said she’d be happy to take them to the delivery room, getting them quickly dressed in scrubs before letting them in.

Maggie was panting, Angie by her head coaching her through. “Hey,” Angie said in greeting as Maggie pushed and panted.

“How’s it going, sis?” Danny asked Maggie, kissing her sweat drenched forehead.

“Just peachy,” she gritted between her teeth. “About damn time you got here.”

“I know. Storms over the Mississippi,” Danny said, holding her hand. “Now how about giving us our baby?”

“Shut up. I will kill you,” Maggie warned.

“You’ll have to get in line. My goofy husband has first dibs,” Danny reminded her with a smile for Steve.

“This is his fault. His gigantic genes made her huge. Thank you so much, Commander,” Maggie said, glaring at Steve.

Steve could only shrug, leaning down to kiss her lightly. “Thank you, Maggie.”

“You’re doing great, Maggie,” her doctor assured her. “One more push and she should be ready. Big push. One two three – go.”

Maggie groaned and pushed, Steve supporting her shoulders as she strained to deliver their child. She had an iron hold on Danny’s hand and he was sure he would never play piano again. Not that he ever had but that possible career path was now permanently closed to him.

All thoughts flew out of his head when the doctor encouraged Maggie to continue to push so that the baby would come all the way out into the world. It didn’t take long for the doctor to triumphantly hold up a squirming little girl, the most beautiful sight Steve or Danny had ever seen.

When she was cleaned up and wrapped in a warm blanket, the doctor handed her to Steve who stared down at her in complete awe. “She’s beautiful, Maggie. Thank you.”
Maggie gave them a weary smile, relaxing as much as she could.

Steve gave their daughter to Danny to hold until they had to surrender her to the nurse to put her in the nursery where she would be monitored, not that they thought she was anything short of perfect. But there were precautions to be made.

“Have you chosen a name yet?” Angie asked, cooling Maggie’s forehead with a damp cloth.

“Emma,” Steve said to Angie’s nods.

“Perfect. Congratulations,” she said, kissing Danny and standing on her toes to also kiss Steve. “She’s a very lucky little girl.”

“We like to think so,” Danny said, smiling up at his goofy husband who looked like he would never stop smiling. And that was just fine.
Yeah But I'm Your Goof

It had become a tradition starting with the year John was about to go to kindergarten. Steve, Danny, and John had hiked up to see the petroglyphs the Saturday before school started. Emma was with them, alternating between walking up the jungle trail and being carried by her two fathers. That first time when she was 3 was the only time she allowed them to carry her. Maybe her shorter legs slowed them down over the next few years but her three men never said anything about it.

Some years Grace also went with them, but not every year. As Danny had predicted the first time Steve had taken him, before they were married, Grace preferred a pedicure to petroglyphs. But if hike weekend was one she was with Danny and Steve, she would go with them, never once complaining, and helping keep an eye on her brother and sister.

This year felt different, more monumental. The school year that started on Monday would be John’s senior year. Steve and Danny had a hard time believing that their little boy was 17 and their baby girl was 15. How was that even possible?

“Hey Dad,” John said from where he was walking next to Steve. He was almost as tall as his father to Danny’s dismay. Well, Danny preferred that all three of their children were taller than he was. He was used to being shorter than average but that didn’t mean he wanted his children to be as well.

“Yeah Bud?” Steve responded, looping an arm across John’s shoulders, resting lightly between his backpack and his neck. Steve had to smile at John’s curls that tried to stick up all over his head, his clear blue eyes smiling back when he met Steve’s.

“Would you be mad if I didn’t apply to Annapolis?” John asked. He was pretty sure of the answer but he had to be certain he wasn’t going to disappoint his SEAL father.

“Oh course not,” Steve said, his smile never faltering. “I hope you know I never expected you to if that’s not what you want.”

“Yeah. But… well… you are so Navy I don’t want to make you think I don’t respect that about you.”

“I know you do,” Steve assured him. “I’m pretty sure that Emma’s determined to be the first female SEAL.”

“If anyone could, it’s her,” John agreed, turning over his shoulder to grin at his little sister. She smiled back, winking at him in the secret communication they had always shared.

“You’re right about that, kunane,” Emma responded, her fathers sure she would succeed. Because she let nothing stand in her way once she’d made up her mind. They had witnessed that more times than they could count.

“You can go to college wherever you want. You know that,” Steve said.

“As long as it’s in Hawaii,” Danny added from behind him where he winked at Emma who was laughing at him. Her blond curls were tumbling from the ponytail she always wore, keeping her hair out of her way. Danny wondered why she didn’t just cut it short but it was Emma’s hair and her decision to keep it long.

“You’re welcome. You aren’t planning to leave Hawaii, are you?” Danny asked suspiciously.

“It’s his choice, Danno,” Steve reminded Danny, Danny frowning at him in response.

“So he should just pack up and go? Is that what you’re saying, Steven? Send him out into the world all by himself?” Danny asked.

“He’ll come back. He knows where his home is,” Steve replied over his shoulder.

“Okay, you two,” John finally said with a laugh. “That’s enough. Em and I do not want to have to watch you kiss and make up.”

“How you’ve stayed married this long is the real mystery,” Emma agreed affectionately, kissing Danny’s cheek with he grumbled at her.

“Who else would take him?” Steve said with a smile just for Danny.

“You’re a good one to claim that, Super SEAL,” Danny retorted, returning his smile.

“I’ve been retired for almost 10 years, Danno. Isn’t it time for you to retire that nickname?” Steve asked as he so often did.

“Once a SEAL always a SEAL. Isn’t that your official motto?” Danny asked.

“I’m begging you to shut up,” Steve shot back, standing next to Danny to watch John and Emma continue on to the cliff where the petroglyphs were located. “Careful you two.”

They waved back at him, laughing as they sat beneath the carvings to drink from their canteens. They made a huge show of groaning and covering their eyes when Steve bent down enough to kiss Danny, Danny leaning into it, his right hand snaking behind Steve’s head to hold him tight.

“Come on guys. You’ve been married for 19 years. Try acting like it,” Emma shouted back at them.

“She gets that from you,” Steve and Danny said at the exact same time, the kids laughing at them. They opened some space between them, holding hands as they closed the distance to sit with their children.

“Where do you want to go to college?” Danny asked John as he accepted the water from Steve.

John shrugged. They hadn’t really talked about it, avoiding the subject because the kids and Steve knew that Danny could barely contemplate the idea of John leaving home. Thankfully Grace had attended college at University of Hawaii because they were all pretty sure Danny would have hogtied her if she had tried to go to the mainland.

“You got another scholarship offer yesterday,” Steve said casually, as though having his son get offers from big name schools to come play quarterback for them was an every day occurrence. But then it had been since John entered his junior year. By Steve’s count, it was up to 23 as of yesterday.

“What’d Mary say?” John asked, looking over at his father who shrugged.

“Syracuse. I told her probably not. Didn’t think you were ready for that much snow,” Steve laughed.

“No,” John agreed. “I still don’t know if I want to play college ball.”

“We know that, Bud,” Danny assured him. “And you get to make that decision.”
“But you want to, don’t you?” Emma asked him. “You love being the star quarterback.”

“Not as much as you love being the quarterback’s sister,” John teased.

“Oh that is so not true,” she claimed.

“Is so,” John responded, laughing at her.

“Not,” she countered.

“Is,” her three men informed her, making her laugh.

“Whatever,” she said with great sass and the smile that lit all of their hearts. “Anyway. I’m too busy to worry about John’s football stuff,” she said with a wave of dismissal.

“Stuff?” Steve said with a laugh, his eyes twinkling as he tackled her.

“Daddy,” she said with a laugh. “I can’t breathe.”

“Pile-up,” John called, carefully launching himself, Danny joining them as they all dissolved into laughter.

“Excuse me, sir,” one of their security detail said, almost disguising his smile as he looked down them.

“Yeah, Henry?” Steve asked in resignation. This was going to be the end of their hike. He just knew it.

“You are needed back at the capitol, Governor. The tsunami warnings were just activated,” Henry informed them all. He had been on their detail since Steve had been drafted to run for governor. Steve had tried his best not to give into the pressures for him to stand for the office but forces he could not resist made the decision without his full permission. Kono had agreed to stand as lieutenant governor and they had run the state ever since. Chin was in charge of 5-0, an arrangement that worked out perfectly for all involved.

Steve sighed, waiting for the kids and Danny to untangle themselves before sitting up and accepting Henry’s hand. Henry hoisted him up, waiting for Steve’s orders.

“How is he getting down?” John asked, brushing dirt off his jeans before helping Emma get some of the grass and weeds out of her hair.

“We have a chopper on the way,” Henry said. “We’ll get the family to the mountain retreat.”

“I’m coming with Steve,” Danny announced.

“You need to go with the kids,” Steve said, shaking his head, a common argument.

“Daddy,” Emma said in exasperation. “The last three times there was a tsunami warning, where was Danno?”

“With me,” Steve conceded.

“So what makes you think this time is going to be different?” John asked sensibly. “We’ll be fine, Daddy. Henry will be there. I’m sure Grace, Alicia, Zacchary, and Rachel will come just as soon as they can.”
“They are on their way now,” Henry confirmed.

“All right,” Steve agreed, shielding his eyes as the helicopter came into sight. He watched as it landed on the clearing less than a half a mile from where they were standing, Chin Ho waving at them. “You two behave,” Steve said as he hugged John and Emma.

“We will. Take care of Danno,” Emma reminded him as they all turned to follow the path to where the helicopter waited. Emma and John watched their fathers climb aboard the chopper, followed by two of the security detail.

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The next morning, John, Emma, Alicia, Zacchary, and Grace watched Steve on TV discussing the amount of damage caused by the tsunami, thankful that there were no fatalities. He said that he anticipated that everyone would be able to return to their homes and businesses by midday on Monday.

“Where’s Danno?” Grace asked as she drank from her second cup of coffee. She was sitting in the easy chair that was reserved exclusively for Danny whenever he was there. But since he was with Steve, and Grace was seven month pregnant with Danny’s granddaughter, the chair was hers. Her husband, who had worked on the 5-0 Task Force since right after the first time Steve was elected, was in Honolulu, doing all those things 5-0 was expected to do any time there was an emergency. She had talked to Aomu right before she had come into the living room, assured that everyone on 5-0 was safe and accounted for.

“You know he hates being on TV,” Emma reminded her with a laugh.

“He’s probably right behind Dad and we just can’t see him,” John suggested, the other kids laughing at him.

“I’m telling Danno you said that,” Alicia threatened, punching John in the side. In retaliation, he leaned hard against her until she squealed her surrender.

“Children,” Rachel said in fond exasperation as she came in from the kitchen.

“Sorry, Mom,” Alicia said not at all sincerely.

“Come and eat,” Rachel said, shaking her head, watching the TV for a few moments before herding the children into the dining room. She thought Steve looked tired though no less attractive for the weariness she was sure everyone could see. He hadn’t shaved and he was still wearing the black polo and grey cargoes he had been wearing on the hike. She knew that it wouldn’t be much longer before Danny would drag Steve into their private quarters and persuade Steve to shower then sleep for a couple of hours. Thank goodness for Danny, she thought not for the first time.

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“Come on, Babe,” Danny said to Steve as soon as they were back in the Governor’s residence. The TV reporters had finally dispersed, none of them trying to follow them inside, the security detail running interference with the overly enthusiastic ones. Steve had spent half an hour answering their questions after finishing his formal statement, proving he had learned some patience in all the time he’d been governor.

“I need to go back to my office,” Steve told Danny, his arms crossed over his chest, his muscles still as impressive as they were the first time Danny had seen them. That just wasn’t fair. Surely Steve would begin to age like a normal person eventually. Okay there was more silver than black in his
hair and the laugh lines were evident even when he wasn’t laughing. Other than that, Steve had barely aged at all. How was that even fair?

“No you don’t. You need to come upstairs with me to take a shower and change into clean clothes,” Danny corrected, going up the steps and knowing Steve would follow. Their security detail made sure the almost-smiles on their faces did not show as the Governor and his husband engaged in a common argument, one they all knew that Danny would win.

“I don’t have time,” Steve tried. But he seemed unable to stop his journey up the steps. Maybe Danny really had cast a magical spell over him like some people claimed.

“I know, Babe,” Danny said, opening their bedroom door and motioning Steve inside. He made sure the door was closed and locked before stripping Steve, experience and desire making quick work of it, even those ridiculous lace-up boots Steve insisted on wearing any time he could get away with it.

“Why do you say you know I need to go to the office and yet I’m standing here naked?” Steve said, trying unsuccessfully to sound grouchy.

“You can’t shower in your clothes,” Danny said with exaggerated patience as he undressed himself, briefly wondering why Steve wasn’t helping. Or just doing it. Maybe he was really angry. But that wasn’t an angry face. It was a tired, complacent face.

“Fine. But I’m topping you in the shower. And if you can’t sit still, I don’t want to hear about it,” Steve warned, advancing on Danny with a predatory gleam in his eyes.

“We’re showering, you Neanderthal. Not screwing around,” Danny said, backing away from Steve who was decidedly stalking him.

“Wrong. Shower. Sex. Maybe I’ll blow you if you beg really well,” Steve offered, grinning when Danny collided with the wall. Steve took advantage of the situation, leaning down to devour Danny’s mouth with his own. All Danny could do was moan wordlessly into Steve’s mouth, bucking his hips in an attempt to find any contact for his yearning erection.

“I hate you,” Danny said, pulling Steve’s head back down to bite his lips and plunge his tongue deep into Steve’s mouth. He would never get enough of the taste of Steve or the feel of Steve or having Steve.

“I know. Because I hate you more,” Steve told him, finally relenting and grinding his thigh against Danny’s hard cock.

“You can’t hate me more. There’s no way,” Danny said, twisting so that Steve could not use Danny’s body to find any relief.

“No. You can’t possibly hate me more. Your hate is nothing compared to mine.”

“God you are so fucking competitive, so egomaniacal. How have I lived with you all this time? It’s a wonder I didn’t kill you years ago,” Danny said, biting Steve’s lip and forestalling his reply.

“Are we taking a shower or what? Because I am three seconds away from shooting my load all over you,” Steve warned.

“You are just gross. I should write an expose about what you are really like and Kono would finally get to be governor. Except then you’d be home all the time. God. I’d kill myself.”

“I’d kill you first,” Steve said, maneuvering Danny into the oversized bathroom which was one of
the best things about being governor – it was big enough for a formal dinner followed by dancing. Which made it big enough for hot messy sex that was never interrupted because even the governor was allowed to be in the bathroom without being disturbed. Danny allowed Steve to lower him to the soft carpeting covering the floor where he frowned up at Steve.

“You aren’t topping,” Danny lied, his legs falling open as he waited for Steve to get the lube out of the drawer. He knew he looked wanton and more than just a little slutty with his hard cock dribbling on his stomach but he didn’t care. He wanted Steve and he knew Steve knew it. Just the way Steve wanted him, needed him, would not survive without him.

“If you aren’t bottom, why are you laying there like an open invitation?” Steve asked, standing over Danny and sweeping his body with a hot, lust-filled gaze.

“I’m going to jerk off. Deny you. Make you watch and not touch.”

Steve shook his head, stepping across to straddle him before squatting over Danny, his body just out of reach to Danny’s erection. “Tell me what I’m going to do to you.”

“No,” Danny said, his fingers curling around Steve’s hard thighs and trying to get him to lower himself two more inches.

“I can’t give you what you want if you don’t tell me,” Steve claimed.

“I’ve been married to you for 19 years of hell. And you still don’t know what I want? Why do you tell me your IQ is borderline genius when you can’t remember for two days how to get me off?”

“I am a genius, Detective. But even I can’t be expected to remember what every man I screw likes most. I can guess but I could be wrong. Are you the one who likes it hard and rough? Or slow and easy? Do you want to be on your hands and knees? Or do you prefer it face-to-face?”

“I know you are a man-whore, Governor. But as far as I know, I’m your only husband.”

“Yeah. Now,” Steve said, lowering himself enough to brush against Danny’s erection, making him thrust his hips up with a gasp.

“The rest killed themselves, right?” Danny said, thrusting up again as Steve lowered himself completely, resting lightly over Danny’s pelvis.

“I killed them. Accidentally. Blew them away with sex.”

“Oh God,” Danny moaned, reaching up to wrap shaking arms around Steve’s body and pulling him down. “Shut up and kiss me.”

“Mmm….” Steve agreed, doing what he was told while carefully stretching on top of Danny who welcomed his weight. The years had taught them how to slot their bodies perfectly to maximize the contact without Danny being crushed beneath Steve. It was hot and messy and perfect.

“Please, Babe, please,” Danny begged, lifting his hips in yearning.

“I’m coming,” Steve promised into Danny’s ear, entering Danny in a quick, easy thrust that was Danny’s own heaven.

“I don’t hate you,” Danny whispered in Steve’s ear. “I love you, everything about you. I love you when you are making love to me, when you are ruling over your state, when you are away from me, when I look at the faces of our children. I even love you when you are an ego maniac and will never
ever admit you are wrong.”

“I would admit I was wrong if I ever was,” Steve assured him, moaning when Danny bit his shoulder, in just the right place that the mark would not show even when he was wearing a polo. “I wasn’t wrong when I married you. Because I knew I wouldn’t survive if I didn’t.”

“Faster,” Danny requested, shifting beneath him in an attempt to make Steve speed his thrusts. But Steve was such a tease, he slowed down, grinning insanely at Danny.

“You hate me again, don’t you?”

“If I were speaking to you, I’d tell you,” Danny said, reaching up for Steve’s mouth. “Please, super SEAL.”

“Hmmm...” Steve hummed into Danny’s mouth, thrusting more firmly and slipping a hand between their bodies to grasp Danny’s cock.

“No,” Danny moaned.

“No?” Steve responded, kissing him again. “I will make you come so hard you’ll see fireworks for three days.”

“Blow me. You said...” The rest of Danny’s statement was cut off by the expert treatment he was receiving from Steve’s right hand, his left over Danny’s head.

“Later. Tonight. No time,” Steve said before looking up at his arm. His shifting focus did not interrupt his motions, hips thrusting just right to prod Danny’s sweet spot with each perfect delicious movement.

“For the love of God, tell me you aren’t timing this,” Danny whispered, staring up at his husband with eyes glazed over with pleasure and love and need. He tilted his head back, glaring when he saw Steve’s watch in clear view for Steve to see.

“I said we had to hurry,” Steve reminded him, swallowing Danny’s retort by kissing him again, making no allowances for his tongue or his normal need to breathe.

The kiss and the thrusts were enough to give Danny the relief he so desperately needed, clinching tightly around Steve and bringing him over the edge as well. “Oh God. You are going to be the death to me,” Danny whispered into Steve’s hair when he had collapsed on top of Danny.

“But in the best way possible,” Steve reminded him far too smugly.

“Yeah. In the best way possible,” Danny was forced to agree, kissing the side of Steve’s head. “Now get off me so I can call our children.”

“Covered in come you’re going to call them?” Steve asked, his nose wrinkled at the thought of it.

“Again with the deviant language. What’s with you today? Tsunami’s make you more horny than usual?”

“Maybe. All that warm rushing water. All that power surging straight toward us.”

“If anyone ever heard you talk like that, they would have a recall election so fast we wouldn’t have time to pack,” Danny told him, accepting his hand to stand when Steve had gracefully gotten to his feet.
“That’s why we lock the door,” Steve reminded him, starting the shower and dragging Danny in with him. “When are the kids coming home?”

“That’s why we lock the door,” Steve reminded him, starting the shower and dragging Danny in with him. “When are the kids coming home?”

“Tomorrow. The Governor said everyone should stay out until then.”

“Damn bureaucrats,” Steve said, making Danny laugh. “Can’t you find someone who could make an exception? Just this once?”

“No I will not. What kind of example would that make? Everyone else has to stay away but the Governor’s children can be escorted back to the residence. Taking away valuable man-hours from the recovery.”

“You have always been such a stickler for trivial things like rules.”


“Good thing, huh?” Steve asked with a warm, gentle kiss.

“I think so,” Danny agreed, soapy hands everywhere over Steve’s body. “Are you going to nap with me before going to the office?”

“No. I need to check the status reports,” Steve said.

“We haven’t slept in 28 hours, Babe. Kono’s on it. You can sleep for a couple of hours before going back,” Danny said, watching his words wash over Steve like the warm water. “Two hours. Then you can go right back to it.”

“Just two,” Steve finally conceded, knowing he failed to keep the exhaustion from his voice. “I swear there are days when being a SEAL was a cake walk compared to being governor.”

“I know, Babe. Your secret is safe with me,” Danny promised, turning off the water and drying himself as Steve did the same. They pulled on boxers and tee shirts, not their preferred way to sleep but they had learned the hard way that the Governor and his husband sleeping naked was a really bad idea. “Get in bed. I’ll tell Troy.”

Steve nodded reluctantly, slipping between the cool sheets and watching Danny cross over to the door. He didn’t leave Steve’s sight as he told Troy that they were going to catch 40 winks then Steve would go to the office. Troy nodded, assuring him that they would only be disturbed in case of emergency. In the meantime, Troy would naturally contact Lt. Governor Kalakaua to inform her of their status.

Danny nodded, entering the bed next to Steve who wrapped an arm around Danny’s thigh as Danny leaned against the headboard. “Go on to sleep. I’ll be with you as soon as I talk to the kids,” Danny said, his left hand buried in Steve’s curls.

Steve grunted, trying hard to stay awake so he could talk to the children as well. But the weight of sleep was too much to resist and he fell completely asleep before Danny had finished dialing the phone.

“Hey Monkey,” Danny said when Grace answered.

“Hey Danno. You and Steve okay?” she asked, sure of the answer.

“We’re fine. Super SEAL’s asleep already. I’m not far behind.”
“Good. It’s what you need,” Grace agreed.

“How are you feeling?” Danny asked, knowing she was fine. He could hear it in her voice but he still had to ask.

“I’m great,” she laughed. “I’m not the first woman to ever be pregnant.”

“You’re the first daughter of mine to have a baby. I can’t help but worry.”

“I know, Daddy. I’m fine. The baby’s fine. Don’t worry about us.”

“All right, Monkey,” Danny agreed.

“Here’s Emma,” Grace said, handing the phone over.

“Hey Daddy,” Emma said with her ever present smile in her voice.

“Hey Princess. Steve said you guys can come home tomorrow.”

“We saw on TV. John said you were probably behind him and we just couldn’t see you,” Emma said, squealing when John punched her.

“Tell John he’s grounded. Forever,” Danny said, laughing when Emma did.

“I will. He so deserves it. No…I’m not done. John!”

Danny could hear them fighting over the phone before John spoke to Danny.

“Hey Danno,” John said sounding triumphant and just a little smug.

“Why are you so mean to Emma?” Danny asked, trying and failing to sound stern.

“Because she deserves it. Daddy’s asleep?”

“He is. Snoring way too loud for me to ever hope to sleep.”

“Daddy doesn’t snore,” John laughed. “That’s you.”

“Whatever,” Danny said with a smile. “Please tell me you are behaving yourselves and not giving Rachel one more thing to yell at me about.”

“Rachel doesn’t yell at you,” John said. “Except when you deserve it.”

“Thanks for your support there Sport,” Danny said.

“Besides, Em and I are perfect angels compared to those Edwards brats.”

“John Williams-McGarrett. That is no way to talk about Alicia and Zacchary,” Danny scolded, proud that he kept the laugh from his voice.


“Yes. You are so grounded,” Danny warned, John’s laugh his only response.

“Hey Danno,” Alicia said, her voice warm even though there was no smile in it. She was by far the most serious of all the children. Not that she didn’t laugh or enjoy life. But hers was an old soul, wise
beyond her young years.

“Hey Pumpkin. I’m sorry for the way Steve’s son talked about you and Zach.”

“No need to apologize. When you are raised by wolves, you can’t help acting like one,” Alicia said, making one of her rare jokes.

“Wolf, Pumpkin. I’m perfectly acceptable in Human society. Steve on the other hand.”

“I know,” she said in mock sympathy. “The ballet premiers next Thursday. Will you and Steve come, please?”

“Are you sure? You know it can become a circus if we do,” Danny said.

“I want you there. Both of you. Mom and Dad said they are okay with it. You can come right after it starts. I don’t come on stage until 20 minutes into the first act.”

“Twenty minutes? The star is absent until the first act is almost over?”

“You know,” she said. He could hear her shrug and the near blush on her face. She had starred in three ballets since being accepted into the Hawaii University School of the Arts, the youngest in many years to be selected to lead the dance. “Will you come?”

“I think we can. I have to check Steve’s calendar. But I don’t remember anything next Thursday.”

“Okay. Tell Steve he doesn’t have to wear his tuxedo. That should help,” Alicia said.

“It should. Fortunately he finally realizes that polos and cargo pants aren’t appropriate attire for his lofty position.”

“Finally,” she agreed. “Here’s Zach. Love you, Danno.”

“Love you too, Princess,” Danny said, waiting as she passed the phone to Zacchary.

“Danno,” Zacchary said, that one word signaling to Danny that all was not well.

“What’s up Zach?” Danny asked, his change in tone waking Steve who looked up at Danny with a worried frown.

“I’m okay,” Zach said, his voice pitched lower. Danny could hear him walking away from the other children.

“Talk to me, Buddy. What’s going on?” Danny coaxed. “What’s happened?”


“Tomorrow, Buddy. I promise. The danger will be contained by then. All the roads will be reopened. Do you not have your laptop with you?”

“Yeah I have it. But the power went out last night. And I….”

“I know, Zach. It’s back on now, right? And you can get back online. I got your email this morning. I replied to it. You got it?”

“Uh huh. I got one from Steve too. Tell him thanks?”
“Of course I will. It’s only one more day, Zach. Your mom’s there. Grace is there. I’m sorry Steve and I aren’t there. But you’ll see us tomorrow. And Stan will be home when you get there. Why didn’t you call me sooner?” Danny asked, lacing his fingers in with Steve’s, the only thing keeping him grounded as he tried to calm down the youngest of the clan. It didn’t matter that Zacchary wasn’t their child by blood. In every other way, he was Danny and Steve’s as surely as Grace, John, or Emma.

“I didn’t want to bother you,” Zach said. “You were helping Steve.”

“I always have time to talk to you, Zach. You know that. Nothing is more important to either of us than our children.”

“I’m not really yours,” Zach said with the first hint of smile Danny had heard.

“When has that mattered? Isn’t Alicia ours too?”

“Uh huh,” Zach agreed. Danny could hear him take a deep breath, slowly releasing it.

“Do you want to talk to Steve? He’s right here.”

“Does he have time?” Zach asked, trying not to sound too hopeful.

“Oh course does,” Danny assured him, giving Steve the phone.

“Hey Buddy,” Steve said, sounding completely and totally awake. “How’s it going?”

“Oh, I saw you on TV. You look tired.”

“We haven’t slept since Friday night,” Steve agreed, pleased that Zach could recognize the signs of exhaustion on Steve’s face. There had been a time when he would have failed to notice those things at all. “We are going to go to sleep after we eat breakfast,” Steve said with a shrug. It was the fastest lie his brain could come up with.

“You haven’t eaten yet?” Zach asked with a tiny edge of panic.

“We’re waiting for all the lights to be restored. We don’t want to use the generator any more than we absolutely have to,” Steve said, the truth in every word.

“Oh. I’d be really hungry by now.”

“I think we’re too tired to be hungry,” Steve admitted. “I found some old granola bars. Danno even ate one.” That got a laugh from Zach, a knot loosening in Steve’s stomach at the sound. “Have you seen any of Alicia’s rehearsals? Rachel said the ballet is amazing.”

“We got to see part of it Thursday. She wears a blue outfit. I was sure Kemoa was going to drop her.”

“But he didn’t, did he?” Steve asked with a warm smile in his voice.

“No. He never does. He’s a very good dancer.”

“Yes he is,” Steve agreed. “As soon as you come down, are you going to come here?”

“If it’s okay. I mean, do you have time for me to come?”

“Of course. If I’m in a meeting, Danny will know how long it will be until I’m done. And you can
stay with him until then.”

“Okay,” Zachary agreed with a sigh.

“You’re going to be just fine, Buddy. You’ll be home tomorrow. You know that, right?” Steve reminded him firmly but gently.

“I know. Mom will bring me straight there,” Zach said. Steve thought Zach was probably nodding in confirmation of his words.

“Good. May I talk to her for a moment, please? Does she have time?”

“Uh huh. Here Mom,” Zach said, passing the phone to Rachel.

“He okay?” Steve asked without preamble.

“Yes,” Rachel said, her tone reassuring. Steve wished she could say more but he understood her reluctance to expand her answer.

“Okay. We promised he could come straight here. Do you want me to call Stan and explain?” Steve offered.

“That won’t be necessary, Steve. But thank you. We both understand,” she assured him. That Zacchary has worshiped Steve, and to a lesser degree Danny, practically since he was born was obvious to anyone who saw them together. Fortunately Stan didn’t let his feelings get hurt that his son idolized Steve the way that he did. Steve was the best thing that had ever come into Zachary’s life. They all knew it.

“Thanks,” Steve said. “Danny will be right here if I’m not immediately available.”

“I’m not concerned,” she told him with a genuine smile. “Thank you.”

“You have no reason to thank me,” he assured her.

“I do for many reasons, Steven. Not the least of which is the way you take such good care of Zacchary. And Daniel.”

“I love you too,” Steve said with a laugh.

“Go to sleep. I know you are exhausted even if you try to pretend that you aren’t.”

“Yes ma’am,” Steve agreed, hanging up and returning the phone to Danny. They exchanged a concerned look before Danny scooted down in the bed to lay pressed close to Steve. “Zach’s fine, Danno. You don’t need to worry about him.”

“I should have stayed,” Danny said. “He reacts this way every time.”

“I know,” Steve said, kissing Danny gently. “But I needed you.”

“You don’t need me,” Danny said in scolding. “You are a grown-ass man perfectly capable of taking care of yourself.”

“Not without you,” Steve said, nuzzling Danny’s chin with his nose. “Go to sleep, please. Zach is fine.”

“I know,” Danny sighed, rolling onto his side to face Steve, twinning their legs together. “You are
such a goof.”

“But I’m your goof,” Steve reminded him with a fond, sleepy smile.
“Hey Danno,” Steve says.

“Yeah Babe,” Danny responds, rolling on his side to look over at Steve. They are laying on Steve’s beach, a blanket beneath them in concession to Danny’s complaints about sand ending up everywhere when they lay down without one. There is only a hand’s width distance between them, in some ways too far and others not far enough.

It isn’t full sunset yet. The sun is lazing its way down over the horizon, smiling on them and turn everything soft, edges indistinct. Everything except Steve. Danny can’t keep from staring at Steve with his bare chest and hard muscles and ridiculous tattoos that should look freakish but don’t. His Greek god sculpted body; his beautiful, beautiful face that can seem so closed off but in reality is so openly expressive when you know what to look for. His eyes that can go from hazel to grey to green all in one blink. The eyelashes that tangle in Danny’s stubble when Steve gives him butterfly kisses. What kind of self-respecting he-man like Lt Commander McGarrett has eyelashes like that?

“Isn’t it about time we got married?” Steve says, interrupting Danny’s study of the perfect form that is his certifiably insane and unbearably hot partner.

“Not yet, Babe,” Danny says like he has the last three times Steve has asked.

Steve frowns a little, a trick he has apparently learned from Grace. Not enough to look angry. Just enough to look hurt. “Why not?” he asks, rolling to face Danny, his right hand holding up his head. His left is touching Danny’s chest reverently and fleetingly, as though maybe Danny isn’t fully there and Steve’s touch could startle him into flight.

“We will. Just not yet,” Danny tells him. He leans closer intending to kiss Steve but Steve pulls his ridiculous beautiful face out of reach. “What? What is that?”

“Tell me,” Steve says, his hand moving from Danny’s chest to his hair. Danny is glad Steve is still in contact with him because he knows that means Steve is more curious than angry or, God forbid, hurt by his most recent refusal.

“Tell you what?” Danny asks in a clear stalling tactic.

Steve arches an eyebrow at Danny but won’t explain further. Because he knows Danny knows exactly what Steve wants Danny to tell him.

Danny sweeps down the lines of Steve’s body, the look nearly tangible. His eyes take in the long, long legs that lead to the sculpted precision of Steve’s hips and stomach, all hard muscle and eloquent form. His broad chest and six-pack abs that are so incredibly cliché Danny can’t believe he thinks of them that way. And all of that, all of it, pales in comparison to how fucking gorgeous Steve is. Danny can think of no man or woman alive as beautiful as Steve. And before they were an item? He tried. He compared Steve to all of the men and women who had ever caught his eye. People he knew in the flesh. People too beautiful to be real and exist only on screen. People in books, magazines, photos. None of them are as beautiful as Steve.

And who has Steve chosen? When he could have any man or woman alive? Not Catherine who is nearly as beautifully perfect as Danny’s SEAL. Not Kono who could kill men with her looks if her lethal strength didn’t do it. No. Super SEAL has chosen a short loud haole from New Jersey of all places. A man who talks more in the first five minutes of any given day than Steve does in an entire
A man who has an opinion on everything and doesn’t care if it is not one that others would welcome to be shared. Danny hates pineapple and ham on pizza and he is going to inform any and all who come within hearing distance of the abomination they have committed to the sacred food of pizza.

“Danno,” Steve says, breaking Danny out of his whirling thoughts. “Tell me.”

Danny can’t say it out loud while Steve is looking at him, his big bruised heart in his eyes for only Danny to see. The love that is clearly there for Danny alone. The trust that didn’t come easily but will maintain them both no matter what. So he leans into Steve, rolling him onto his back to snuggle his face in the crook of Steve’s neck. He breathes in the essence of Steve, sighing when Steve wraps his long, beautiful arms around Danny’s body, holding him like he will never let him go.

“Why me?” Danny finally says into Steve’s skin. He feels the jolt of surprise shoot through Steve before he can suppress it.

“That’s it?” Steve asks, looking up at the stars that are beginning to emerge from their dark shrouds.

“You could have anyone, Babe. Anyone. You know you could.”

“I don’t want anyone, Danno. I want you.”

“But why? You are so…you,” Danny says, waving one hand at Steve like that explains everything for which there are no words.

“You aren’t really making sense,” Steve says warmly, laughing when Danny punches him in the ribs. “I’m in love with you, Danno. Isn’t that all that matters?”

“I love you too, you ninja freak. But that still doesn’t explain why you want to marry me. Why didn’t you marry Catherine and have perfect, beautiful Navy babies together?”

“I don’t love Catherine like that,” Steve says. And it sounds so simple. Like it really is that easy if Danny will just let it.

“Are you being intentionally dense?” Danny asks, frowning when he feels Steve laugh. “I am so not having sex with you for the next week.”

“Yeah you are. You are addicted to me,” Steve reminds him.

“Yeah,” Danny sighs. He lifts himself off Steve to look down at him. “I’m not cursed with a lack of self esteem. But I have eyes. You are a super model. And I’m… well, I’m hardly in the same league. Not the same league at all.”

“So?” Steve says, eyes wide and innocent. Danny knows he’s not being teased now. Steve loves him. He loves Steve. That is the question and the answer.

“It’s like we are trying to make Beauty and the Beast a reality,” Danny tries.

“Are you the Beast or am I?” Steve asks, laughing when Danny frowns at him.

“You know what I mean,” Danny complains. “Don’t think I’m blind to the looks every breathing woman and man shoots your way. They all want you. They can’t believe I have you. Because I am so clearly less than you are.”

“First, I’m not a vase,” Steve reminds him, the laugh just barely below the surface.
“Nobody eye-fucks a vase, Steven.”

“Rachel does,” Steve corrects.

“Well. Okay. That’s true,” Danny is forced to agree.

“Second, you are the target of as much eye-humping as me. You refuse to see it. Or you’re so busy giving them the haole evil eye of death you don’t notice the looks directed at you.”

“You are delusion. You know this, right?” Danny demands.

“I’m not,” Steve says. “Ask Kono. She won’t lie to you.”

“She will tell me that you are hot like the sun. And I’m a tealight on the ocean.”

“A tealight?” Steve laughs.

“I don’t understand why you keep laughing. I’m trying to have a serious possibly life-altering conversation and you are being a third grader,” Danny huffs.

“Well,” Steve shrugs. “I never went to third grade so maybe I’m making up for it.”

“Oh God,” Danny moans, dropping onto his back, his hands over his face.

“What?” Steve asks, kissing the parts of Danny’s face he can reach.

“You. You skipped third grade. You graduated top of your class at Annapolis. Fucking Annapolis. You were Naval Intelligence.”

“Which you always remind me is an oxymoron,” Steve tells him.

“Not the point, Babe. Not the point at all. Certified genius. That’s what you are.”

“And you aren’t?” Steve asks, knowing the answer.

“I didn’t attend only the even number elementary grades,” Danny tells him.

“I only skipped third, Danno. It’s not that big a deal. Mom taught me to read before I was four. She was a teacher, you know.”

“Yeah,” Danny agrees, looking up at Steve. “What if… you decide I’m not…”

“What if I decide what?” Steve coaxes, surprisingly gentle.

“That I’m not good enough after all,” Danny whispers, ashamed of saying it out loud. But there it is. His deepest secret. His darkest fear. That Steve will emerge from one of his epic swims and realize he’s settled for Danny when he could have someone more worthy.

Steve shakes his head, his eyes shining with a luminous brilliance. “Who else would take me, Danno? Who else would listen when I won’t talk? Would have stood by when I was arrested for murder? Waits for me to surface from the cesspool I allow my emotions to become? You know me. You know me and it doesn’t terrify you. You know I’ve done things I’m not proud of but I did them because I was honor bound. You know there are things in my past that should be buried, dug up, burned, and buried even deeper. But you don’t run. You don’t push. You don’t perseverate over those things I don’t or can’t or won’t say out loud. Because you already know them. Never once have you judged me. You’ve challenged my methods. You’ve expressed your dismay. You’ve
questioned my sanity or my tactics or my decision-making ability. But you never, ever judge me. That is why you have to marry me. Because I will never find anyone who gets me, loves me the way you do.”

Danny takes a deep breath when Steve stops as though he’s the one who has said all those words. The volume of them is astounding. The beauty unbounded. “Yeah. Okay.”

“Okay?” Steve asks, staring at Danny like he is the one who has gone completely off the reservation despite the fact that Danny is the one who accuses Steve of it every single day.

“I’ll marry you,” Danny says, smiling at his goof-ball. The smile he gets in return lays to rest any remaining doubts. Answers any remaining questions. Danny loves Steve. Steve loves Danny. Yeah, it is that simple.
“Daddy?” John said from where he was sitting on top of the dryer. Steve was folding the laundry, John ‘helping’ in his own very special way. Steve didn’t mind that he would have to refold all those clothes because it made John so happy to help.

“Yeah Bud?” Steve responded, handing John another one of Emma’s rompers as Steve expertly took care of one of his own polo shirts.

“Why don’t me and Emma have a mommy?” John asked.

“Emma and I,” Steve corrected automatically, and in reality, stalling for time. The question, he knew, was inevitable. He and Danny had even discussed what they would say when it finally surfaced. Now that John had asked it, Steve found himself out of breath and out of answers.

“Why, Daddy?” John asked in all his five year earnestness as he folded another romper. “Everybody at school has a mommy. Aiu has two mommies. He said me and Emma musta been hatched in a tube.”

Steve shook his head at that, putting his hands on the dryer on either side of John’s body. “What did you say to Aiu?”

John shrugged, looking up at his father, his blue eyes innocent and curious. “Nothin’. We weren’t hatched, were we?”

“No, of course not, Bud,” Steve assured him.

“Who’s my mommy?” John asked.

Steve breathed a sigh of relief when he heard Danny enter the house, Emma in tow. They had run out to the grocery store to get some extra vegetables for the stew they were making.

“Babe?” Danny called out from the kitchen.

“We’re in the laundry room,” Steve called back.

“Daddy,” John cheered, watching the door until Danny and Emma appeared. “Whad’ya bring me?”

“We went to the grocery store, Bud. Why would we bring you anything?” Danny teased.

“Always do,” John reminded him with a bright smile. John turned his smile down at Emma who was holding up a giant lollipop for John.

“Seriously, Danno?” Steve said, shaking his head.

Danny just shrugged, helping John unwrap it. “They’ll get tired of it after a few licks. No problem. What are the two of you doing?”

“Laundry,” John announced happily, his tongue already turning colors from the swirls of the lollipop.

“And talking,” Steve said, Danny studying his face at his words.

“What?” Danny asked.
“Ask Daddy what you asked me,” Steve requested of John.

“You mean about why Emma and me don’t have a mommy?” John asked.

“Oh,” Danny said in realization.

“We have daddies,” Emma chirped, lifting her arms to Steve so he would pick her up. He settled her on his hip, careful to stay out of range of the sticky sucker she was licking.

“Aiu says everybody’s got a mommy except us,” John told Danny like he had Steve.

“He said that they must have been hatched,” Steve repeated to Danny with a frown.

“Well that’s just silly,” Danny said. “You both have mommies.”

“Why don’t they live with us?” John asked, looking from Danny to Steve. “You aren’t our mommy.”

“Clearly we aren’t,” Danny agreed. “When we decided we wanted to have you and Emma, we asked very nicely if your aunt Mary and your aunt Maggie would have you for us. They said they would because we can’t.”

John considered his father’s words, looking at Emma in Steve’s arms. Emma was more interested in her lollipop than whatever it was her men were discussing. They were all there. That’s all she really cared about. Because if they ever disappeared from her view for longer than two minutes, she’d track them down to find out where they were. “We were inside their tummies?”

“Uh huh,” Danny confirmed.

“They didn’t want us?” John asked.

“It wasn’t that they didn’t want you, Bud,” Danny said. “They were like the oven that we used to bake our bread.”

“We’re not bread,” Emma piped up, surprising the guys. They were sure she hadn’t been listening to them. At all.

“We know that, Princess,” Steve assured her. “Danno’s using the oven and the bread to make a point. Which he will probably never get to since he talks so much.”

“Thanks,” Danny said with a huff. “As I was saying, you two are like our cinnamon buns. Mary and Maggie are like the oven you were baked in. When the buns were done, Daddy and I got to bring them home.”

“I like cimmomom rolls,” Emma announced.

“We all do,” Danny agreed.

“Daddy never eats them,” John reminded them.

“Danno eats enough for all of us,” Steve teased, Danny scowling at him.

“Do you understand, Bud?” Danny asked, studying John carefully.

“Uh huh,” John said, much more of his focus on his lollipop than the question.
“Come on, Em. Let’s go make stew,” Danny said, accepting Emma from Steve. The men exchanged a knowing look as they transferred their daughter. The kids had lost interest in the topic of mommies but they both knew it would come up again.

~000~

John was almost eight the next time the question came up. He was sitting on Danny’s lap in one of the beach chairs as Steve and Emma continued their swim. The kids had started swimming with Steve as soon as they were old enough to follow him down the steps by themselves. Steve had never intended to take them swimming each morning – they had decided they needed to go. Danny had mixed emotions about them trying to keep up with their father in the water and had reluctantly started getting up with them as soon as the sun was over the horizon. It made him feel much more secure to sit on the beach and wait for the kids to emerge from the water then it did to leave the children alone on the beach while Steve remained in his swimming Zen.

Emma was a natural in the water, able to swim almost endlessly from the beginning. She couldn’t swim as long as Steve but could swim much further than John. Danny always said John had enough sense to get out of the water before he turned into a fish. Steve claimed John took after his landlubber father and only swam because he wasn’t going to let Emma do something he couldn’t. Or wouldn’t. Danny reminded Steve that John had started swimming with him even before Emma could walk but mostly Steve just ignored him.

John had been swimming for 20 minutes when he came ashore and settled in Danny’s lap. Danny wrapped the towel and his arms around his son, sipping his coffee as they watched Super SEAL and baby seal continue their epic swim.

“Why didn’t our mommies want us?” John asked Danny out of the blue.

“It wasn’t that they didn’t want you, Bud. They had you because Steve and I can’t,” Danny told him before kissing the back of his head. If his arms tightened a little more around his son’s body, it was a natural reaction.

“They gave us up.”

“I suppose in some ways they did,” Danny said, needing to honor his son’s honest concern. “But when they offered to have you, they knew you would live with me and Steve. They had decided that before you were a twinkle in their eye.”

“Like a cinnamon bun,” John said, shifting so he could look at Danny, his blue eyes meeting Danny’s.

“Exactly. They were the ovens. When you and Emma were done, they gave you to us.”

“And you are our daddies?” John asked.

“Of course we are.”

John nodded, thinking that over, a tiny line appearing between his eyebrows. “Aiu said you both can’t be my daddy. Only one.”

“You need to put the closed sign on your ears when Aiu starts talking about mommies and daddies,” Danny told him, not for the first time.

“But he said I can only have one real daddy.”
Danny sighed, wishing he could have a talk with Aiu about what is and is not appropriate schoolyard conversation. “Aiu has two mommies. Why can’t you have two daddies?”

“He said his real mommy is Judie. Sylvia is his other mommy.”

“They are both his mommy,” Danny reminded John.

“Are you my real daddy? Or is Steve?” John asked, clearly not ready to let this go, as much as Danny wished he would.

“What does it matter, Bud? Steve and I love you and Emma with all our hearts. We are both your daddies. Do you really care what Aiu thinks about us?”

“But I can only have one real father,” John said stubbornly. Danny thought he got that from Steve although he was pretty sure Steve would blame it on Danny.

“You’re not going to let this go, are you?” Danny asked, kissing John’s forehead to show there was no anger behind the words.

“You wouldn’t,” John pointed out with a silly smile, realizing one of his father’s greatest fears. He was turning into his fathers and it was too late to stop it.

“I was the sperm donor for you,” Danny finally conceded. “Steve was the donor for Emma.”

“Mary’s my mother,” John said with a nod.

“She had you. Giving birth doesn’t make you a mom,” Danny reminded him.

“I know that, Danno,” John said, studying Danny with a familiar intensity. “I’m glad I have two daddies. The two daddies I have.”

“Thank you, Bud. We’re glad we are your daddies,” Danny said, kissing John’s forehead again and hugging him tight against his body.

“I can’t breathe, Danno,” John claimed, laughing when Danny tickled him. “Are you telling Emma?”

“Not until she asks. Does she ask you?”

“She’s too busy trying to keep up with Steve to think about anything else,” John said, settling back against Danny, warm and content in his father’s arms.

“What should we make our seals for breakfast?”

“We could throw raw fish at them,” John said, making Danny laugh.

“It’s what they deserve,” Danny agreed, watching Emma emerge from the water and come up to them, a tired, happy expression on her face. “Hi Princess,” he said, handing her the towel.

“Hey Daddy,” Emma returned, leaning against the arm of his chair. “I’m hungry.”

“I can understand that,” Danny said. “We were just talking about what we should make for breakfast. You have any preference?”

“Pancakes,” Emma and John said at the same moment.
Danny laughed and shook his head. “What will Super SEAL eat?”

“We’ll throw fish at him,” John declared, leaving Danny’s lap to race up the house, Emma staying with Danny.

“What, baby?” Danny asked his daughter as he helped her dry off, squeezing some of the water out of her blonde curls.

“What?” she asked him, looking up at him with grey eyes just like her father’s.

“You seem to have something on your mind,” he said, watching her.

She shrugged, turning for the house.

Danny stood to follow her, wondering if she was going to try and keep everything inside like his goof-ball husband did. Not that Steve generally succeeded but Emma looked far more serious than a typical six-year old. Danny ran up behind her and scooped her up, making her giggle in delight.

“Put me down, Danno,” she laughed, wiggling against him.

“Nope. I have you and I’m not letting you go.”

“Good,” she said, wrapping arms around his neck and holding tight as he carried her inside.

~00o~

“Hey Danno,” Emma said as she was coming down the steps. It was a lazy Sunday, all of them home for a change. Danny was on the couch watching a game. At least, the game was on. Whether or not Danny was actually watching it was a matter of some debate. Steve was in the garage, tinkering with the Marquis. Why he bothered when he still hadn’t gotten it to run properly after all these years was an eternal mystery to them all. John and Emma were upstairs, being quiet which Danny hoped meant they were doing homework and not plotting the overthrow of the free world. He was pretty sure they would one day be head of the Imperial Forces but on this particular Sunday, they were almost 12 and 14. Still too young to have full control over the universe, thankfully.

“Yeah Princess,” Danny responded automatically, looking over at her and recognizing the expression on her face. It was not good news. It was, in fact, an expression he inherited from Steve. His stubborn, determined, take-no-prisoners face. This was bad. This was very bad. “What’s up?” he asked, hoping he sounded casual, calm. Show no fear. He’d learned that from dealing with Steve all these years.


“My baby pictures?” Danny repeated. This was unexpected. A strategic op? Throw him off his game?

“Yeah. From when you were little. They had cameras back then, right?”

“Yes, little miss. They did. Why do you want to see my baby pictures?” he asked, his eyes narrowed. What was her end game? Did she have weapons in the pockets of her carpenter jeans?

“Why aren’t you telling me where they are?” she countered. Put Danny on the defensive.

Danny stared at her, fatherly disapproval in every line of his body. He counted it a win when she
softened at the edges.

“Can I see them, please?” she tried. Make huge doe eyes at him. Flutter those ridiculous eyelashes he blamed on Steve.

“You still haven’t answered my question,” he reminded her, proving he was not distracted by her adorable self.

She sighed, sounding put-upon and defeated. But he knew better. It was a tactical move on her part. He was not fooled. “John and I are just curious. We want to see what you and Daddy looked like as babies.”

He studied her again, seeing the lies in her shoulders, the way she shoved her hands deep in her pockets. “Why?”

“Can’t we be curious, Daddy? We’ve never seen them. I bet you were a really cute baby.”


“Not yet. We figured you’d know where his are too. He’s the family control freak but you’re the neat freak. Always rearranging closets and the attic.”

“I see,” Danny said, narrowing his eyes at her again. Good, she took a tiny step backwards. Score one for Daddy. “Ask Steve.”


“Maybe he’s naked in his. Do you want to see Super SEAL in all his infant, naked glory?” Danny asked. Make her think. Throw in a few unnecessary details to see if it distracts her.

“If he’s a baby, he’s not going to be showing the goods, Danno,” she said. Her exasperation was beginning to show. Advantage Danny.

“He might.”

“Danno,” she said. He could see her restraining herself from stomping her foot at him. She knew that would win her nothing. It would ensure she never saw the pictures.

“Go and ask Steve. If he says yes, I’ll get them for you,” he said. Yes, reinforcements were required at this stage. He was weakening. He could feel it. And it had absolutely nothing to do with the tears he might have detected shimmering in the depths of her eyes. No. He was stronger than that.

“Fine,” she sighed, turning to retreat from the living room. “Hey Daddy,” she said brightly when she was inside the garage with Steve. He lifted his head from his study of the engine to focus on her, seeing her overly bright, overly enthusiastic smile. He was going to kill Danny the first chance he had. Danny had sicced their daughter on him - he could see the signs.

“Yeah Princess?” Steve said with well practiced nonchalance. Danny was so totally dead.

“Can John and I see your baby pictures, please?” she requested, leaning against the grill of the Marquis in order to pretend to be interested in what Steve was doing. But he knew better.

“My baby pictures,” he repeated, looking over at her.
“Uh huh.”

“I’m not sure where they are,” he told her honestly.

“Danno knows,” she said, her eyes widening slightly at her confession.

“Danno knows,” he repeated, straightening from beneath the hood of the car.

“What’s the big deal, Daddy? We just want to see your baby pictures. We aren’t asking for the records of your classified missions. They are just baby pictures. Jeez,” she said. Okay, maybe shouted. Which was a huge mistake. She knew it was but that didn’t seem to have any meaning to her brain. She was not even a little surprised when Steve scooped her up and carried her inside, holding her under one arm like a bag of potatoes.

“Danny,” Steve said when he was in the living room, Emma still dangling from his hip.

“Steve,” Danny replied, looking from Emma to Steve. “John!”

“Yeah?” John yelled back from upstairs.


“What’s up?” John asked. His I have no idea what’s happening down here expression needed work. They could see the lie way too clearly.

“Daddy,” Emma said. “Could you put me down please?”

Steve sat her on her feet, pointing at the couch. “Sit. You too, John.”

They both did it, Danny retreating to stand next to Steve.

“All right. The truth,” Steve said, staring at their two children.

Predictably it was John who broke first. That’s what they had been counting on. Not that he couldn’t be as stubborn as any mule in Christendom but he broke much more quickly when faced with the combined disapproval of his fathers. A peace-maker by nature. “We were talking about, you know,” he said, waving one hand in an oh-so-familiar manner. Okay, so they didn’t inherit all of their annoying habits from Steve.

“We don’t know,” Steve said, eyes narrowing dangerously.

“We wanted to see if we look like you did when you were babies,” John said. “I wanted to see if I look like Steve and Emma wants to know if she looks like Danno.”

Steve and Danny traded a glance, volumes spoken in their silent exchange. “That’s it?” Steve finally asked.

“Yeah,” Emma responded for them both. “Most kids look at their mom and dad’s pictures. To see who they take after. I want to see if I look like you,” Emma said, looking up at Danny.

“What if you don’t, Em? What if you don’t see yourself at all in my pictures? Will you feel like you aren’t really mine?” Danny asked, sounding more worried than he wanted to admit to even himself. He didn’t want anything to come between him and any of his children. All three of them were too precious to him.

“No, Danno. Jeez. Please keep the freaking out to a minimum,” Emma said. But the fact that she had
come up and wrapped her arms around his waist helped minimize the amount of freaking out he was planning to do.

“That’s no way to talk to your father,” Steve scolded mildly, his hand on the back of her head.

“Only when he’s about to have a meltdown,” she said to Steve, smiling up at him.

“Yeah,” Steve had to agree. “All right. Danno, will you go find our pictures for them?”

“Of course. What do you say we all look at them?” Danny suggested.

“Good plan,” John agreed. “I’ll pop the popcorn. Em, you get the sodas.”

Danny and Steve laughed, certain there was no need for any insecurity on either of their parts. Their kids loved them unconditionally. Like they loved the kids. And there would never be any doubts in any of their minds that Emma and John were truly blessed to have two such devoted fathers.
TO: sjmccarrettwilliams@h50.gov
FROM: sdenning@hawaiigov.gov
RE: required forms and lack of completion thereof

Monday, October 3 2:25:43 p.m.

Commander,

It has been brought to my attention that Form 8992(b) has not yet been completed and returned to the GAO as required any time a state owned vehicles is declared totaled or rendered beyond repair. I have been informed by HPD that one of their cruisers was, in fact, destroyed while in your possession. As the vehicle in question was requisitioned, driven, and subsequently totaled by you seven (7) working days ago, Form 8992(b) is now four (4) days overdue.

I am certain you understand the importance of complying in a timely fashion with the completion and submission of all mandatory forms. I expect to have the aforementioned form completed and signed and on my desk no later that 5:00 p.m. today. Failure to provide said form will result in you being held personally liable for the damages to the state owned vehicle and will be required to pay for its replacement, estimated at $47,984.76 including all of the equipment that was destroyed along with the car itself.

Steve could not help but sigh in frustration when he finished reading the latest electronic missive from Governor Denning. Seriously? It’s not like Steve had wrecked the police car on purpose. It was hardly his fault that it had been knocked into the Pacific Ocean while he and Danny were chasing those drug smugglers. Sure, he’d driven the police cruiser onto the freighter they had been using to move their shipments. And, well, he couldn’t have predicted that they would use a bulldozer – a bulldozer – who has a bulldozer on a ship??? – to plow the car off the side. Who could have predicted that? Luckily he and Danny were already out of the car when the bad guys decided to turn it into scrap metal while sending it to its watery death. And now the Governor had his boxers in a twist because the stupid form wasn’t turned in. Really? This is what his life had come down to? Justifying the destruction of a police cruiser? They’d caught the drug smugglers. Didn’t that count for anything? Danny had barely escaped being shot through the leg. He’d risked life and limb, literally, to stop the thugs from escaping. And their thanks was Form 8992(b)?

Steve sighed again, going to the ‘forms’ section of the official Hawaii state government website, searching for the required, overdue form. The first result he got said it was Form 8992(b) but upon further reading, it was to be used to request maternity leave for employees of the state treasurers’ office. The state treasurers’ office had its own form for maternity leave? Why?

Rather than consider it further, Steve searched ‘destruction of government vehicle’ and instantly found the correct form. He shifted in his chair momentarily, steeling himself to double-click the appropriate icon. When he did, it was a jumble of words, check boxes, and rectangles just daring him to include more information than characters allotted to each space.

Okay. He’d graduated Annapolis top of his class. He could handle one form. And despite what Danny claimed loudly and frequently, Steve did (occasionally) do his own paperwork. Granted,
never with the flair or panache or alacrity (alacrity? oh God – Danny’s word of the day calendar-inspired vocabulary was entering Steve’s brain without his permission) with which Danny did *his*, but still the only good paperwork was finished, submitted paperwork.

**Question #1** - *vehicle registration number of damaged vehicle.* How would he know that? He didn’t pay the insurance or take care of the license plates. Didn’t the state have that on file? Chin could find it without any trouble. No. That was cheating. And if he asked Chin, completely innocently, to find said registration number, Danny would accuse him of trying to get Chin to do all of the paperwork for him. So totally *not* true. Okay. He didn’t know the registration number.

**Question #2** – *if registration number is unavailable, explain why it is unavailable.* “It’s at the bottom of the Pacific.” Was that an acceptable answer? Would someone in the GAO yell at him if he put that as the answer? Best not to think of that possible outcome.

**Question #3** – *if registration number is unavailable, complete form 9976(q) to request information required in order to complete form 8992(b).* Oh dear God. He had to fill out a different form to get information required for this form? And he was only on question three? He was in so much trouble. He returned to the government website to search for form 9976(q) to discover *request is outdated.* Form 9976(q) has been discontinued. Once a replacement is made available, it will be posted on the official website.

How was he going to complete form 8992(b) without completing 9976(q) which no longer existed? And some people had the nerve to say that the Navy had a problem with paperwork?

**Question #4** – *explain the circumstances under which the vehicle was damaged. Provide as much detail as possible including time of day, weather conditions, rate of speed of vehicle at time of damage, other vehicles involved in the damage, condition of the other vehicles, etc.* Weather conditions? What difference did that make? The bulldozer didn’t care if it was raining or not. Time of day was… let’s see. John and Emma were still in school. So it had to be before 2:30. He and Danny hadn’t had lunch that day so it could have been any time after they left the office. They checked out the police car at 9:32. Okay, took without permission more than *checked out* but Danny’s Camaro was in the shop for reasons totally *not* Steve’s fault. And Steve’s truck had been commandeered by the children. Something about hay bales and Homecoming? He hadn’t really listened. Alicia had asked and he had said yes. Because when had he ever said no to her? Not likely he ever would. Although why Stan didn’t just buy her a truck was beyond him. Maybe it was Rachel that didn’t want Alicia driving around Oahu in a truck. Not that Steve thought there was anything wrong with the Volkswagen Alicia drove. It just wasn’t very big which is why she had taken his truck. And that’s why they had to use a police cruiser that day.

**Question #5** - *Attach the mandatory drug and alcohol screening for the driver of the vehicle in question.* This wasn’t a question, per se. It was instructions. Wait – mandatory drug and alcohol screening? They hadn’t had a drug or alcohol screening after the car was shoved off the ship. They weren’t in it. They didn’t wreck it. The drug dealers did. And Steve was pretty sure that those particular dealers would have had interesting results if they had been subjected to a drug and alcohol screening. Him and Danny? They had neither needed nor submitted to one. They didn’t even need to be checked over by the EMTs when the excitement finally scaled down. An admittedly unusual turn of events.

**Question #6** – *Describe any and all physical injuries to driver and passenger(s) resulting from incident in which state vehicle was damaged.* Well, two of the drug dealers were dead. But that didn’t have anything to do with the car. Three of them were behind bars. One of those had a gun shot wound to the shoulder and the other came very close to being a soprano. The singing kind not
the mafia kind. But the car didn’t do that to them. Steve and Danny did.

Question #7 – Describe any and all previous incidents in which the driver was involved that resulted in substantial damage to other vehicles. What did that matter? Steve didn’t have an Excel spreadsheet to record ‘any and all previous incidents.’ Who keeps score? Anyway most of those ‘incidents’ were to Danny’s Camaro or Steve’s truck, not state owned vehicles. Those damages were not germane to this report. No, he wasn’t listing even the ones he could remember.

Question #7(b) – Record below official record number(s) of all previously submitted form(s) 8992(b). Oh. Well. Steve had no idea where those copies might be. They must have been filed… somewhere? Did H5-0 have actual filing cabinets? They must, right? Where would those be? And why did he have no idea? He was in charge. Shouldn’t he know where the file cabinets were?

All right. He was totally out of his depth. And why didn’t they have a secretary? Err… administrative assistant? Somebody whose job was to fill out and file all the endless paperwork?

He looked through the window of his office, seeing Danny at his desk watching Steve watch Danny. Surely Danny would help him out. Surely. Maybe. If Steve traded a blow job for the paperwork. Danny would do almost anything for a blow job, not that Steve wasn’t wiling to provide that particular favor any time Danny even thought about wanting one.

Steve lifted his eyebrows at Danny, working on his come-hither expression. Or possibly his ‘I’ll suck your brain out your cock if you’ll do this for me’ expression. Either way. He could see Danny sigh before getting up from behind his desk to cross over to Steve’s office.

“What?” Danny asked, suspicion and exasperation in that one word.

“I’ll blow you if you’ll do this,” Steve said, seeing no advantage to tact in this situation.

“You blow me all the time. Which I do not take for granted, mind you. And not that it isn’t incredibly fabulous each and every time. Because it is. So why would I do whatever it is you want me to do which I am not dumb enough to believe for one second does not include you requesting me to finish your paperwork. Am I close?”

“Frankly, I have no idea. I have no idea what you just said,” Steve told him, a smile fighting to break out over his face.

“You so owe me a blowjob no matter what,” Danny told him, stalking toward him. “Move. Move your giagantor body out of the way so I have room to work.”

“Why do you continually insult me? I offer you a blowjob and you resort to name calling,” Steve protested, leaning against his desk, positioning his leg close enough to touch Danny’s foot and calf with his own.

“Do you want to talk or do you want to finish this report?” Danny asked, not bothering to look up at Steve as he asked. He knew the answer.

Steve didn’t even try to respond, instead watching Danny’s finger fly over the keyboard. He might have goofy thumbs but Steve didn’t know anyone who could type as fast as Danny. “Do we have file cabinets?”

“Yes.”

“Where?” Steve asked, all casual disinterest.
“Filing room,” Danny told him, full focus still on the computer screen.

“We have a filing room?”

“Tours on alternate Thursdays. You’ll have to wait until then, Babe.” Danny glanced up at Steve, his fingers not slowing. “Instead of lurking over me, how about getting me a cup of coffee?”

“Why don’t we have a secretary?”

“You are in charge. You should be able to answer that,” Danny reminded him.

“Hmmm… A secretary would be good, wouldn’t it?”

“Sure. I’ll fill out that form just as soon as I finish this one,” Danny told him, turning to look up at him. “Coffee?”

“I’ll be back,” Steve said with a smile as he left his office. It took a little longer than expected to return because Steve decided his Danno needed fresh coffee, not the sludge that had been slowly hardening in the bottom of the pot all day. His smile was even brighter when he returned, setting the coffee on his desk within easy reach.

“Thank you,” Danny said, full focus still on the electronic form. He used his left hand to snag his coffee cup, his right still flying over the keyboard.

“Are you making this up?” Steve asked, leaning sideways to look at what Danny had written so far.

“I sure as hell can’t tell the truth,” Danny pointed out. “I’m using some ‘creative license.’”

“Creative license,” Steve repeated with a laugh.

“Don’t you have children who need to be collected from their school?” Danny asked him, glancing quickly up at him before returning to the form.

Steve checked his watch, shaking his head. “Another 20 minutes. If you hurry, I can blow you before I go get them.”

“No. Just no,” Danny said. “We are not having sex in your office. Windows. The entire office is made of windows.”

“The bathroom’s not,” Steve reminded him with a suggestive leer. There was a time when Danny would not have been able to ignore that look. It was still hard but he managed to almost ignore him.

“As I am all too aware,” Danny assured him. “As tempting as your offer is, and no way can I pretend it’s not, we aren’t having sex in your office. We aren’t having sex in my office. And we are no longer having sex in the bathroom. The bed. That’s where we will have sex.”

“Not on a train? Not in the rain? Not in a box? Not with….”

“Stop. Stop channeling Dr. Seuss. How can you take our daughter’s favorite Seuss book and turn it into a recitation of where we will and will not be having sex?” Danny demanded, staring up at him.

Steve just shrugged innocently and kissed Danny on the top the head. Like that would guarantee him absolution. Well, it really would but Steve didn’t need to know that it was a foregone conclusion.

“Go pick up your children, please. By the time you get back, I’ll be done and I can take them home and feed them.”
“Will you take me home too?” Steve asked, all puppy-dog face and wide eyes.

“I’d say no but I know you’d just follow us and howl outside our door until we took pity on you,” Danny said, trying very hard to frown at Steve.

“Yep,” Steve agreed, holding out his hand in expectation.

“What? It’s not time for your allowance yet. What do you want?”

“The car keys?” Steve suggested.

“Why don’t you have your keys? What happened to those?” Danny asked as he stood up to extract his keys. “Did they get lost in your multiple pockets? I told you to make an index of what goes where.”

“These are my keys, Danno. You’re the one who lost his. Not me,” Steve said cheerfully as he snatched the keys from Danny’s unresisting hand and hurried toward the door. “Various Williams-McGarretts will return shortly.”

“Drive the speed limit please,” Danny shouted after him, knowing it was utterly useless. When Steve had disappeared, Danny left Steve’s office, going directly into Chin’s. “You find the registration number yet?”

“I got it right here,” Chin agreed. “Why didn’t you tell Steve I was hunting it down?”

Danny shrugged, accepting the post-it note and returning to Steve’s office. Chin’s laugh followed him.

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Danny looked through the window when he heard the unmistakable sound of the return of his husband along with their two children. He smiled at the happy noises, watching as they all tumbled into Steve’s office. “Hello,” he greeted them.

“Danno,” Emma said, waiting until Steve was settled on the couch before sitting on top of him.

“What is wrong with the rest of the couch?” Steve tried even as he wrapped his arms around his daughter.

Emma shrugged. “Danno doing your homework again?”

“Paperwork, little miss,” Steve corrected, making her laugh.

“Whatever. Sit down before you finish wearing out the carpet,” she ordered John who was pacing in front of them.

“What’s up, John-John?” Danny asked when John stopped in mid-stride.

“Nothing, really. Just. You know. Stuff,” John said with a hand-wave he had learned from his shorter father.

“Stuff is kind of generic, Bud. Want to elaborate?” Steve asked, resting his chin on the top of Emma’s head.

“Well,” Kono said when she entered Steve’s office. “I thought I heard a herd of elephants tromping through here.”
“Nope. Just these strays,” Danny assured her.

She nodded seriously before turning and leaving, the kids laughing at her.

“Spill it,” Emma said, watching John with an intensity she had inherited from her Navy father. One that was a little scary and always effective.

John shrugged, leaning against the front of Steve’s desk. “Really. It’s not anything. Or not any one thing. It’s… you know.”

“If we knew, we wouldn’t be asking,” Emma said sensibly.

John shrugged again, frowning over at Emma. “Is it true that Aiu invited you to the dance next week?”

“Oh. My. God. I am going to kill Zachary. Kill him until he is dead.”

“Please, for the love of all that is holy, tell me Aiu did not invite you to the dance,” Danny said. “Can sixth graders even go to the eight grade dance?”

“What’s the big deal, Danno? He didn’t ask me to have his babies. He asked me to a school dance. One where you and Super SEAL will no doubt be chaperoning and scaring the crap out of all the other kids,” Emma responded.

“What is this language you are using?” Steve asked her. “And why do you care if Emma goes to the dance with Aiu? Where, yes, we will be chaperoning.”

“Aiu, Steven,” Danny replied with excessive hand-waving. “And you are not, I repeat, NOT having his babies.”

“Well. DUH,” Emma replied.

“He’s mostly harmless. Is that what’s concerning you?” Steve asked John.

“I asked Mi’llin to go with me but she still hasn’t answered yes or no. I thought she liked me,” John said, mostly directing his statement to Emma.

“She does,” Emma said, genuine warmth in her voice as she talked to her brother. “She wants to say yes. She doesn’t want to hurt Austin’s feelings.”

John nodded at that, sitting on the couch next to Steve and Emma. “Maybe I’ll tell her to go with Austin. Then she won’t have to choose.”

“If that feels right, Bud,” Steve said, looking over at Danny for confirmation. Danny was frowning and nodding which Steve took to mean he agreed.

“No, John. She wants to go with you,” Emma assured him.

“What does that matter?” John asked in defeat.

“It matters because you should watch out for yourself as much as you do everyone else,” Emma told him. “Why does he always put himself last?” she asked Steve, twisting enough to see her father on whom she was still sitting.

“I don’t know, Princess. He always has,” Steve told her.
“He’s sitting right here, you know,” John protested, not sounding angry for all that he was pretending to frown.

“Oh. Hey,” Emma said in mock surprise. “So if it could be all about me for a minute.”

“Like it isn’t every minute,” John said, leaning away from her when she punched him.

“Are you going to take me shopping for a new dress, Danno?”

Danny sighed, standing up from behind Steve’s desk. “No. I don’t want you going with Aiu. And I’m boycotting the dress shopping in protest.”

She shrugged, smiling at Steve. “You’ll take me, won’t you, Daddy?”

Steve glanced from Emma to Danny and back. If he had been counting on Danny’s help out of this conundrum, he was in for a disappointment. “Uhmm….”

“You don’t even need a new dress, Em,” John said. “You have six in your closet.”

“I wore those already,” she said, her tone clearly adding as if. “I can’t wear the same dress twice.”

“You can’t?” Steve asked.

“Daddy.”

“Okay. I’m sorry. I’m not up-to-speed on the school dance paradigm where it relates to dresses,” Steve told her.

“We could go now,” John suggested.

“You want to shopping with her?” Danny asked John in suspicion.

“We can all go. Then you can take us to dinner. You know. Some place nice,” John suggested with a broad smile.

“Did the two of you plan this?” Steve asked, sharing Danny’s suspicion that the children had been plotting behind their backs.

“Us?” Emma said, all innocent and guileless. Or at least hoping to appear that way.

“We don’t have school tomorrow,” John said. “And we haven’t had dinner. Makes sense to me.”

“You don’t have school tomorrow?” Steve repeated with a tiny frown.

“No Daddy. Teachers’ work day,” Emma told him.

“Then you’ll have to stay at Rachel’s. Danno can’t take the day off work,” Steve said.

“You have a mean boss,” Emma told Danny who just shrugged.

“Only way to keep him in line,” Steve claimed, smiling over at Danny. “You finish my homework for me?”

“Yes, dear. It’s right here on your desk waiting to be signed. You can meet me and the kids at the boutique over on Alahoo after you drop it off.”

“Alahoo? You said you wouldn’t take me shopping,” Emma said, all bright smiles and excitement.
“I shouldn’t. But I happened to notice the most beautiful lavender dress in their window. It will be perfect for you,” Danny admitted, smiling warmly at Emma.

“Long sleeves?” Steve asked, making Danny frown.

“High neck?” John added.

“Floor length? Matching bloomers underneath?” Emma asked.

“A hundred tiny buttons?” Steve added.

Danny sighed, all put-upon patience. “You done?”

“I’m done,” Steve said, glancing at Emma and John. “You done?”

They agreed they were, Emma kissing Danny on the cheek after Steve leveraged her onto her feet. “Thank you, Danno.”

“I don’t know why I keep agreeing when you don’t deserve it. No one who sasses her fathers as much as you do deserves a new dress.”

“I come by it honestly,” she reminded him. And he had no answer at all to give in response to that. It was so true.
“But I should be the Captain, Danno,” Steve said not for the first time. They were still arguing over which costumes they should order. The kids had decided that they would all be attending the Halloween party at school and they wanted costumes that went together. Stan and Rachel would be out of the country for the party so Steve and Danny would have all four children.

“You don’t have blond hair,” Danny pointed out sensibly. “And Spock was taller. And a Commander.”

Steve considered those words momentarily before returning his focus on the costumes displayed on the computer screen. “I’m in charge,” Steve tried. It sounded lame to his own ears but just maybe if he gave it one more try, Danny would relent and let Steve be the Captain.

“Seriously, Babe? That’s what you’re going with? ‘I’m in charge so I should be Captain Kirk.’”

“Yeah?” Steve replied, glancing over at Danny, still not quite ready to concede to defeat. Maybe refusing to surrender would prove he was supposed to be the intrepid Captain.

“Daddy,” John said, shaking his head where he sat on the couch watching something loud on TV. “You know Danno’s right.” John was going to be Lt. Sulu because he thought being the pilot was the coolest ever. He was still hoping Steve would be able to order him the retractable katana that the costume site sold. Danny had objected even though it was plastic and completely harmless.

“Yep,” Emma agreed. “Daddy has to be the Captain. Blond. Blue eyes. Danno wins.” She really had no dog in their fight because she was going to be Lt. Uhura. Not that Danny was happy about ordering their baby girl a mini-skirt but Emma promised to wear the matching panties underneath, making them perfectly acceptable.

“I’ll order you this phaser and this tricorder if you just admit you are destined to be Commander Spock,” Danny bargained, pointing to the props that accompanied the costumes.

“Do the phasers work?” Steve asked hopefully, making Danny laugh.

“Sure. Just like we can use the communicators to tell Chin to beam us out.”

“Cool,” Steve said. “Do Zacchary and Alicia have their costumes?”

“No Daddy. You need to order them,” Emma told him.

“Okay. Zach’s still going to be Scotty?” Steve asked Emma and John.

“Of course,” John agreed. “And Alicia said she didn’t care that Dr. McCoy is a guy. She wants to be the doctor.”
“That’s fine,” Danny said. “Pants. Long sleeves. The only appropriate way for certain young women to dress.”

“Let it go, Danno,” Steve suggested, clicking on the right sizes of the costumes.

“What about Kono and Chin?” John asked.

“Kono wants to be Ensign Chekov,” Danny said. “I don’t see it but who am I to argue with Kono.”

“She’ll kick your ass if you try,” John said.

“John Williams-McGarrett,” Danny said in scolding. “What kind of language is that?”

“The kind you use,” John said, trying to sound repentant.

“Why are you acting surprised, Danno? You say it all the time,” Steve reminded him.

“I’m a grown man. John is an 11 year old who can have his mouth washed out with soap for saying it.”

“I’m sorry, Daddy. I’ll try to not talk like you,” John said.

“I appreciate it. I think,” Danny said, frowning slightly.

“What about Chin?” John asked with a smile because he knew all was forgiven.

“He said he didn’t care as long as he wasn’t wearing a red shirt,” Danny said.

“How about Yoda? He’s all Zen-like,” Steve suggested.

“Daddy,” Emma said, adding several extra syllables. “Yoda’s not Star Trek.”

“Oh right,” Steve said. “My bad.”

Danny laughed at Steve’s innocent expression, not buying it for one second. He knew Steve knew the difference and was pretending he didn’t to make them all laugh. “What about Admiral Pike? Chin’d make an excellent admiral, wouldn’t he?”

“That’s a good idea,” Steve said with a nod. “Should we order him this Captain’s uniform?”

“Do they have the grey one?” Danny asked, moving closer to Steve. Looking at the screen was really just the excuse to lean against him, to enjoy his body heat and his delicious smell and him.

“Here,” Steve said, pointing at the uniform then-Captain Pike wore in the bar at the beginning of the movie. “This good?”

“Perfect,” Danny agreed. “Okay. We have uniforms, communicators, phasers. Anything else?”

“What about Grace?” John asked, looking over at Steve and Danny where they huddled together in front of the computer.

“She is staying at the University for Halloween,” Steve said, glancing over at Danny who shrugged.

“And you said that was okay, Danno?” Emma asked in surprise.

“She’s a sophomore in college, Princess. I don’t get to say any longer.”
“But you tried, right? ‘Cause I’m not ready for the end of the world,” John said.

Danny shrugged, focusing back on the computer.

“He tried,” Steve assured them.

“No thanks to you,” Danny said with a frown. “’No, no Gracie. Stay at the University for Halloween. We won’t mind.’”

“You do a horribly imitation of Daddy,” John informed him with a laugh.

“Steve, please delete that Lt Sulu costume. John is grounded forever,” Danny said.

“Daddy, I’m always grounded,” John laughed. “Can I still go to the party, please?”

“All right,” Danny decided, Steve agreeing that John really did deserve to go.

“Thank you,” John said, looking up at Emma when she hopped off the couch. “Where’re you going?”

“To find our decorations. We need to put out the skeletons and spider webs and… you know,” she said, waving to encompass the house and the yard and the ocean and possible the universe.

“They are in the attic. Right side. Black and orange totes,” Danny told them, watching them troop up the steps. “Be careful up there.”

“Finally,” Steve said, turning to face Danny. “Permission to make inappropriate romantic advances, sir.”

“Permission granted, Commander. And you can be sure they are not inappropriate,”’ Danny said, showing Steve just how much permission was granted and wanted and desired and reciprocated.
Steve was frowning at his computer screen, trying to figure out how they were going to build the centrifuge for John’s science fair project. Not that he and Danny were planning to build it by themselves, but they still needed all the parts required to make it work. John said that the 4th grade science fair was a battleground, all of them contending for the title of ‘coolest geek alive.’ Steve could understand that mentality although he wasn’t entirely sure how he felt about John thinking it. He could imagine Danny’s rant in response which was why, Steve felt sure, John had told him about the epic geek war instead of Danno. Whatever the reason it was so important to John, both his fathers were determined to help him make his science fair project the best ever.

Although he’d had some minor experience with centrifuges, not that he could discuss any details or particulars, finding all the appropriate parts for a 4th grade version was proving to be beyond his capacity. He glanced over at Chin’s office, knowing Chin would be able to supply the expertise required for this reconnaissance. As he was crossing the very short distance between their offices, a glance over at Danny’s office showed it to be empty. Wait. What? It was still empty? Danny had left at least an hour and a half ago to pick up coffee and malasadas. Why wasn’t he back? What sense did that make?

“Hey, Chin,” Steve said as he entered his office.

“Yeah?” Chin responded automatically, looking up at Steve.

“Didn’t Danny leave over an hour ago?” Steve asked, glancing from Chin to Danny’s deserted office and back.

“Yeah,” Chin agreed with a small frown. “You call him?”

“Not yet,” Steve admitted, taking out his phone. After ringing eight long times, it went to voice mail. That wasn’t like Danny at all. “Can you track his cell?”

“Sure,” Chin agreed, leaving his office for the bullpen, Steve close behind. Chin typed into the magic keyboard, frowning at the results that appeared on the table. He typed in a few more commands, the frown deepening.

“What?” Steve asked, recognizing that the look on Chin’s face was not a good one.

“It seems to be out of service,” Chin said, frowning up at Steve.

“Out of service,” Steve repeated slowly. “What precisely does that mean?”

“Best case, it has been turned off.”

“No,” Steve breathed. “Danny would never turn it off.”

“Kono,” Chin called quietly but urgently. When she was in the bullpen, Chin explained about Danny’s phone.

As one, they left the building, climbing into Chin’s SUV. Steve reminded Chin the route Danny always took to his favorite bakery, berating himself silently for not telling Danny one more time to vary his habits, to alter his routes, to make it harder for anyone to track him. But Danny being Danny never listened. It took him exactly 8 minutes to drive to the bakery and he wasn’t going to add unnecessary distance between him and his favorite morning treat.
“Stop. Stop,” Steve ordered when he spotted the Camaro in the parking lot adjacent to the bakery. Steve was out of the SUV and standing by the Camaro even before Chin had come to a full stop. When Chin and Kono joined Steve by Danny’s car, Steve was pointing at the smear of blood on the driver’s door that went all the way down, a small blotch of blood on the curb right next to the car.

Kono took one look at Steve’s face and knew someone had to say something before he tore apart half of Honolulu to find Danny. “Okay, Boss. I know this looks bad. But….”

“But what, Kono?” Steve asked, voice frighteningly calm, face a mask. He’d gone into warrior mode, a particularly undesirable state of Steve. Especially when there was no Danny to counteract it.

Before Kono had a chance to respond, to hopefully talk Steve down a notch, Chin straightened from where he had squatted to examine the underside of the car. In his hand were the remains of a cell phone, smashed beyond repair. Steve looked at it, his expression even more grim. Kono felt a little sorry for the perps who had done this. They were as dead as Danny’s cell phone. It was only a matter of how and when.

“We’re going to find him,” Kono promised quietly. Maybe it should have sounded patronizing but Kono did not make promises she had no intentions of keeping. Steve stared at her, barely breathing. They could see the wheels turning in his head and were afraid for those who had done this.

“I need to inform the Governor,” Steve said.

“I got it,” Chin responded. “Kono, get HPD here to secure the site. Tell them to bring Fong. This is our only priority.”

Steve turned away from Chin and Kono, his long strides taking him across the parking lot.

“Whoa, Boss,” Kono said, when she had run to stand in front of him. “Where are you going? Talk to me.”

Steve stared down at her, wondering why she didn’t get out his way. Couldn’t she see he was in a hurry?

“Talk to me,” Kono repeated, one hand on his forearm.

Something about the warm touch of her skin to his gave him some clarity and lifted a little of the rage that had taken over his body. “Emma and John. I need to go get them. Whoever has Danny could go after them next.”

“Okay,” Kono said, calling to Chin to toss her his keys. “I’ll drive you.” There was no point in trying to argue with him. The investigation into Danny’s disappearance was being handled. Steve needed to make sure the children were secure.

Steve automatically followed Kono back to Chin’s SUV, getting in the passenger seat as Kono climbed into the driver’s side. “I should call the school,” he said, sounding far away even to his own ears. And maybe it sounded a little like a question. Calling the school made sense strategically, right? Shouldn’t he know? Shouldn’t he know automatically what was best for his own children? Why couldn’t he make that decision for himself? He glanced over at Kono when he heard her talking, not too surprised that she had the phone to her ear.

“Yes, Commander Williams-McGarrett is on his way… yes, sir, I appreciate it. We should be there in 9 minutes….thank you,” Kono said before disconnecting. “The kids will be brought to the principal’s office. They should get there about the same time we do.”
Steve nodded. Kono had that part handled. That was good. That was very good. He could concentrate on the recovery mission. He would be getting Danny back. There was no other possible outcome.

When they got to the school, Steve and Kono both left their guns in the car before hurrying in and straight to the principal’s office. John and Emma looked understandably worried, both of them hugging Steve as soon as he was inside.

“What’s wrong?” John asked, looking up at Steve.

Steve squatted down so he could see them both, one hand of each shoulder. “Someone has taken Daddy.”

“Taken Daddy where?” Emma asked.

“We don’t know, Em. We don’t know where he is,” Steve explained with more calm then he felt.

“You lost Daddy?” Emma asked, her wide eyes filling up with tears. Steve didn’t think she completely understood but she did know her Danno was missing.

“In a manner of speaking, yes,” Steve agreed. “He left headquarters and when we went to find him, he wasn’t where we thought he would be.”

“Will you find him?” Emma asked, some tears spilling over.

“Of course we will. We just don’t know how long it will take,” Steve said. He glanced over a John who looked scared but was trying to contain it. He wanted to be strong and brave but it looked like he was on the verge of losing it completely. “You know Daddy can take care of himself. He’ll talk the bad guys into letting him go just so they don’t have to listen to him rant any longer.”

“What bad guys?” John asked.

“We don’t know yet. But we’ll find out soon enough,” Steve promised them. It broke his heart to see John’s eyes fill with tears. Steve hugged the kids tight to his body and stood up, one in each arm. “We need to go back to headquarters. Do you have homework?”

“Not to worry, Commander,” Principal Greer assured him. “We’ll have it sent via email. Let us know if there is anything we can do to help. And we will see John and Emma when you determine that it is…appropriate for them to return.”

“Thank you,” Steve agreed.

“We’ll keep you posted,” Kono told the principal before following Steve out to the car. He had Emma buckled in, using his handkerchief to try and dry her tears. She was crying quietly, not entirely understanding what was wrong. She only knew that John and Daddy were upset about Danno not being where he was supposed to be. That was enough to make her cry.

John was holding tight to Steve, his face buried in Steve’s shoulder. Steve was trying to talk him into letting go so they could get into the car but John wasn’t loosening his grip.

“All right, Bud. I’ll sit in the back seat with you and Em. Will that help?” Steve asked gently. John managed to nod, sitting on Steve’s lap when Steve had climbed in.

“Daddy will be okay won’t he Daddy?” Emma asked, tears still streaming down her face.
“Yes, Baby. Daddy will be fine,” Steve promised. Because Danny would be okay. Steve would make sure.

~o0o~

Danny knew pain. And darkness. Mostly pain. In his head. And his groin. That was new. The darkness he was used to. As he clawed up closer to the surface and out of the black, he knew the pain in his head was from being hit with an object harder than his skull. Which Steve would point out was nearly impossible since Danny was the most hard-headed person Steve had ever known. True, he meant it as stubborn but Danny had been assaulted enough times to know a head trauma when he felt one.

Fortunately this one didn’t seem to come with the usual unfortunate side effects like nausea and blurred vision. As he allowed his eyes to open, he was grateful for the subdued light in the room where he was being held. It seemed to be a hallway of some type, closed off on the end he was facing. The back wall was about 20 feet in front of him. There was a grimy skylight over his head which was the only illumination in the room. There didn’t appear to be any sources of artificial light.

He tried to twist to check the area behind him but he was immobilized, his wrists and ankles duck taped to the hard chair which he quickly discovered was bolted to the concert floor. And he was naked. Naked. What kind of bad guys kidnapped a cop and then stripped him naked before binding him to a chair? Seriously? The bad guys needed to learn some manners. Plus they had wound duck tape around his chest to secure him even further to the chair. Oh God. The pain that he would be forced to endure when Steve found him was going to be off the scale. All that body hair that was going to come off with the tape.

Because, yeah, he knew Steve would find him. There were absolutely no doubts in his mind. It was just a matter of how long it took. And then the guys who had taken Danny would be dead. Really and truly dead. They were already. They just didn’t know it.

But naked? That was a new low. It wasn’t like he could escape from the chair. And even Steve would not have been able to reach the skylight to get out. It was at least 25 feet above his head.

He had no idea who it was that had taken him. He did suspect that his groin hurt because when they had hit him on the head, he had dropped like a rock and landed on his ass on the curb next to his car. A bruised pelvis. A headache from hell. Duck tape pulling his body hair. What a fine mess this was.

He remained completely still as the door behind him creaked open. The person who came around to stand in front of him wore a bandana like a bandit from a bad Western. And sunglasses. Danny supposed that was as good a disguise as any. Not like it mattered. They’d identify the bodies once Steve was done with them.

The general appearance of the person didn’t look at all familiar so Danny didn’t think he had encountered him (or possibly her) before. Didn’t much matter. Kidnapping him was the last thing he would ever do.

“I am calling Commander McGarrett,” his abductor informed him. A man. Definitely a man. “You will tell him you are fine.”

Danny stared at the disguised man, not responding to his orders. He watched impassively as the man dialed the phone, waiting as it rang.

“Commander. I have something that belongs to you.”
Danny could hear Steve’s response. It was pretty much what Danny had expected.

“Detective Williams is awake. I will allow to speak with him. To prove he is unharmed.” The man drew closer, holding the phone to Danny’s ear.

“Danny?” Steve said, his tone stern.

“Hey Babe,” Danny replied.

“Are you okay?”

“Pretty lousy,” Danny said.

“I’m sorry. I have Emma and John.”

“Watch all the early risers,” Danny requested.

“I will,” Steve agreed. “I’ll get you out of there.”

“Never doubted it,” Danny said, waiting as the man snatched the phone away.

“You know he is safe. Here are our demands,” the man told Steve.

“Yeah?” Steve prompted.

“$20 million in cash. And a helicopter. You have 36 hours.” With that, the man disconnected, putting the phone in the pocket of his jeans.

“He’ll never be able to get that kind of cash,” Danny said, looking up at his captor.

“Then he’ll never see you again,” the man said, leaving the room and locking the door behind him.

~o0o~

“Watch the early risers?” Chin said when the phone call had terminated. “Does he have a concussion?”

“No,” Steve said. “It means he’s near water. He can hear it.”

“Water,” Kono repeated.

“He said ‘watch all the early risers.’ The first letter of each word spells water,” Steve explained.

“Water,” Kono said with a nod. “How does that help us?”

“It doesn’t yet. But if he has a chance to talk to me again, he’ll tell me everything he knows.” Steve stopped when Fong entered, all their attention going to him. “You get the surveillance tapes?”

Charlie nodded, pulling them up on the computer table. “These are from three different angles. This one shows Danny going down. But not who did it. This one shows him being shoved into a truck. We can’t see the license plate.”

“And it’s black. There are probably only 2000 black trucks on the island,” Chin said.

“Okay,” Steve said, his agitation manifesting itself in his inability to stand still. “Okay. It had to be someone who knew Danny’s habits. And someone with a beef against him or me or both. Have there been any recent releases? Guys who said they would come after us?”
“They want $20 million,” Kono said. “Do you think maybe it’s someone who knows about the asset forfeiture locker? No way the Governor is going to ransom Danny.” She was careful to keep her voice low, not wanting to risk upsetting the kids who had finally fallen into a fitful sleep on Steve’s couch.

“There are only a handful of people besides us that know about that,” Chin reminded them, glancing over at Charlie. “You don’t need to know.”

“I don’t,” Fong agreed. “I’m going back down and analyze the tapes again. Maybe I missed something.”

“Thanks,” Steve said, watching him leave. “What time is it?”

“Nearly six,” Chin said, checking the clock on the computer.

“Okay. Rachel should be here soon to get the kids. Kono, cross reference all the recent releases with our cases. Chin and I are going to go back to the bakery once Rachel gets here.”

“Don’t you want to take the kids home?” Kono suggested gently.

Steve shook his head. “I need to stay here. I’ve asked for a uniform to be stationed at Rachel and Stan’s. Zacchary and Alicia are on a school trip. Otherwise…well. Zacchary doesn’t need to know.”

“Any news?” Rachel asked as she hurried into the office, looking frantic and worried.

“I talked to him briefly. He sounds okay,” Steve said, taking Rachel into his arms to hug her. There was a time when he couldn’t have imagined doing such a thing but now it was second nature for them both.

“I know you’ll find him, Steve,” Rachel said, looking up with tears shining in her eyes.

“We will. Take care of the kids. The uniform will be at your house until we find Danny.”

Rachel nodded. “The kids are going to need to see you. Come for breakfast.”

Steve agreed, promising to be at Rachel’s by 8:30 the next morning. “Come on, you two,” Steve said when he was in his office, squatting next to his couch. “Wake up so you can go to Rachel’s.”

John slowly opened his eyes, frowning at Steve. “I want to stay here with you.”

“I know, Babies. I want nothing more than for you to stay too. But I can’t leave here and you need to eat.”

“Let us stay, Daddy,” John requested, his bottom lip quivering.

“You need to go with Rachel. I’ll come see you in the morning. We’ll have breakfast together,” Steve promised.

John studied Steve for a long moment before finally nodding. He took Emma’s hand, standing up. “Find Danno, Daddy.”

“I will, Bud,” Steve promised, kissing John and Emma on their heads. “Call me when you’re ready for bed.”
They both nodded, looking utterly miserable as they followed Rachel out. Steve tried not to think about their expressions as he turned back to the computer table.

~o0o~

Danny was bored. That was the worst part of being held captive in his opinion. Sure, the whole *I may die before I'm rescued* thing was a real bummer. But Steve was not going to allow that to happen. So all Danny had to do was sit in a dark hallway/room with a sore head and a sore ass and wonder why he thought going into law enforcement in the first place was a good idea. He had a beautiful husband and three incredible children. He could have quit years ago. He didn’t need this bullshit.

Not only was he bored, he was hungry. And thirsty. Worse, he needed to pee. He wondered if the kidnappers had considered that bit of bodily need. He doubted it. And he sure didn’t want to relieve himself without something to put it in. That was inhuman. But then so was putting duck tape on someone with as much body hair as he had. Seriously. They had all the power. What was with the humiliation? Something to drink. Maybe a blanket. That wasn’t too much to ask was it?

Rather than consider his uncomfortable circumstances what with the pins and needles in his hands and feet and the fact that his bruised ass made it feel like he was sitting on white hot coals, he concentrated on his surroundings. There was a very faint smell in the air that was not unpleasant and vaguely familiar. What was it? He knew he should know but he couldn’t place it.

He looked up at the skylight as it grew brighter, noticing that the wall on his right was also getting brighter. He suspected he’d been kidnapped about 20 hours earlier, more or less. Which meant dawn was breaking. The guy who had called Steve said he had 36 hours to come up with the $20 million and a helicopter. So Danny was about half way through this stupid ordeal. More than half way if Steve found him before the exchange was supposed to take place. And Danny wasn’t stupid. He was pretty sure that even if the kidnappers got the $20 million (which would never happen since the HPD had closed the asset forfeiture locker and put all the money and drugs and guns in a vault in an empty bank they had purchased) they still intended to kill him. That’s the way it always worked out. Except when you put Super SEAL in the mix. Then all bets were off except the one where Steve would find him and the kidnappers would be dead.

Serious, though. Something to drink? That wasn’t too much to be asking. He’d really like some coffee but he wasn’t going to be picky. Water. Even pineapple juice. And an empty jar.

He was brought out of his fantasies of coffee and malasadas by the slow increase in noise coming from his left side. The factory in which he was being held was coming back to life. Nice change of pace, that. He’d expected to be in a deserted warehouse rather than an active factory. The sounds were distant and indistinct so he knew shouting would only make this throat hurt and bring him no closer to rescue. And he sure didn’t want his mouth duck taped in addition to what was already being used on him.

As the factory came more and more alive, the faint smell he noticed earlier became stronger. Still not clearly identified in his brain but he knew if he thought about it calmly, it would occur to him what exactly it was.

He waited impassively as the door behind him opened slowly, the same Wild West kidnapper stopping in front of him. Danny stared up at the sunglasses, hoping some of Steve’s intimidation factor had rubbed off on him.

“Good morning, Detective Williams,” the man said.
“Right,” Danny sneered. “I need to pee.” No point in dancing around the truth. This was just ridiculous.

The man considered his words momentarily before nodding once and leaving. When he returned, he was carrying an empty jar and a glass of water. He awkwardly put the jar where it needed to be, Danny trying to quell the additional humiliation the man’s nearness and assistance was causing.

His business done, the man backed up to put the jar on the floor before returning to give Danny some water. Danny wanted to gulp it down but knew that would be a mistake. Instead he drank it slowly, savoring each sip. The kidnapper allowed him to drink it all before backing away.

As Danny watched, the man took his cell phone out, speed dialing. “Commander McGarrett,” the man said with far too much confidence. “Detective Williams is fine.”

Danny waited as the man held the phone to his ear. “Hey Babe.”

“How are you?” Steve asked.

“Probably live,” Danny replied. “I haven’t been this nervous since I proposed to you.”

“I’m going to get you out,” Steve assured him.

“I know. Keep an eye on the kids. Find activities – coloring, tents, or racing yaks. Emma acted strange Thursday.”

“Got it,” Steve assured him.

“Love you, Babe,” Danny said before the man took the phone back.

“How romantic,” the kidnapper said. “You have the money?”

“Not yet. We’re working on it,” Steve said.

“You have 14 hours, Commander. If you want to see Detective Williams alive you won’t be late.”

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“More code?” Chin asked when the phone call was finished.

“‘Emma acted strange Thursday’ means he’s being held on the East side of the island,” Steve agreed.

“‘Keep an eye on the kids’?” Kono asked.

“Not sure. I don’t think that was part of it,” Steve said, looking at the words that Chin had typed into the computer as Danny had said them. “‘Find activities – coloring, tents, or racing yaks.’”

“Racing yaks?” Chin asked, staring at the words and trying to make sense of what Danny had said.


“He’s in a factory on the east side of the island,” Kono said. “What factory? Where?” That she was frustrated was abundantly clear, just like the guys.


“Since I proposed to you….”” Steve read.
“Didn’t you propose to him, Boss?” Kono asked, looking at the words too.

“Yeah,” Steve said, considering it. “I asked him four times. Until he finally said yes.”

“What did you say the fourth time?” Kono asked.

Steve shook his head, sighing. “That was 13 years ago. I really have no idea.”

“It’s got to be important,” Chin reminded him. “He wouldn’t have said it if it wasn’t a clue.”

Steve had to nod at that, thinking back to the night Danny finally said yes. “We were on our beach. He…uhm… said ‘not yet’ like he had the first three times. I finally made him tell me why he wasn’t agreeing.” Steve frowned, his face all lines of concentration.

“What did he say?” Kono prompted.

“He couldn’t understand why I wanted to marry him,” Steve admitted.

“We knew that,” Chin agreed. “What did you say to change his mind?”

“That I loved him. He finally believed me,” Steve said, shaking his head. “That’s no help.”

“There has to be something else, Boss. Why did he think you wouldn’t want to marry him?”

“He said people eye-humped me all the time,” Steve said, recreating the conversation in his head. “I told him they did the same to him. He didn’t believe me so I said he should ask you. You’d tell him the truth,” Steve said, frowning at Kono in concentration.

“Okay,” Kono said. “They did. They do. Eye-humping Danny is some people’s only hobby.”

Steve nodded at that, trying to remember exactly what they had said that night. “Danny said it couldn’t be true because I was hot like the sun. And he was….,” Steve stopped, typing furiously into the computer. Almost instantly on the screen was a picture of a factory located on the east side of the island.

“The Heimpaok Candle Factory?” Chin said, staring down at it.

“Danny said I was hot like the sun and he was a teallight on the ocean,” Steve said, pointing at the candle factory. “He can smell the wax. He’s being held in the factory.”

“Doesn’t that factory belong to Vincent Fryer’s brother?” Kono said, the proverbial steam rising from her ears.

The muscle on Steve’s jaw was working overtime. Vincent Fryer, the man who had tried to make their lives a living nightmare, was one again rearing his ugly, stupid head. “We’re taking the factory.”

“Right,” Chin agreed. “How do you want to do this?”

“We have to do it with just us. If Fryer’s behind it, he could be tipped off by any insiders with HPD,” Steve said. “Chances are good that there’s only 3 or 4 guys guarding Danny. And we have to be careful with the factory workers. We don’t want collateral damage of innocents.”

“Right,” Chin agreed, going to the lockers for their TACT vests. They strapped them on, getting extra armaments from the safebox.
Finding and releasing Danny was almost comically easy. He was being held in a loading bay that had been walled up on one end. Once they had determined where he was being held, which was simple enough because it was the only loading bay being guarded, Steve shot the lookout before he could radio anyone that they had been made.

Breaking into the loading bay was accomplished with a well placed bullet in the center of the lock. The two kidnappers inside were dispatched with one gun shot each. Chin and Kono were not even going to comment that Steve left them alive. Danny had had a calming influence on Super SEAL even in his absence.

Steve slammed the door open, kneeling next to Danny before Chin and Kono could climb over the stray pieces of wood that had once been the door.

“Danno,” Steve breathed, kissing him roughly in a need to know that he was alive.

“I’m okay, Babe,” Danny said, leaning toward him for another kiss. “I knew you’d find me.”

“Your codes were perfect,” Steve told him, ripping off his TACT vest and pulling off his outside shirt. He draped it over Danny’s body, shaking his head. “I’ll cut you loose and the hospital can remove the duck tape.”

Danny nodded at that, not bothering to argue. “My head’s okay. But I think I bruised my pelvis falling.”

“Your pelvis?” Chin asked, looking down at the strain on Danny’s face.

“It feels like I’m sitting on hot coals,” Danny said, using his newly free right hand to cradle Steve’s cheek. “Nobody touched me, Babe. It happened when I fell.”

“You hit the curb pretty hard,” Kono agreed.

“Yeah. One foot was up and one was down,” Danny said. He made to stand up, collapsing in Steve’s waiting arms. “Not good,” Danny announced unnecessarily, Steve easing him back into the chair.

“EMS is on the way,” Kono said, squatting next to Danny. “They should be here in 3 minutes.”

Danny nodded, focusing back on Steve. “You call the kids?”

Steve shook his head, taking out his phone and handing it to Danny. Danny pressed John’s speed dial, smiling at his son’s voice.

“Daddy?” John asked tentatively.


“Are you, Danno? Are you really okay? We were so scared. Daddy didn’t know where you were. Is Daddy there?”

“I’m fine, John. I promise. Daddy’s here. So are Kono and Chin. Ask Rachel to bring you to the hospital, okay?”

“If you’re okay, why do we have to come to the hospital?” John asked, Emma squealing in the background.
“It’s standard procedure, Bud. I’m fine. Tired and hungry but otherwise okay,” Danny assured him.

“We’ll be there shortly, Daniel,” Rachel said, the smile in her voice warming Danny.

“Thank you, Rachel. We’ll see you there,” Danny agreed.

“Of course,” Rachel said before disconnecting.

Danny returned Steve’s cell phone to him, smiling tiredly. “Thank you.”

“You don’t have anything to thank me for, Danno,” Steve said, kissing him lightly. Steve reluctantly backed away when the EMTs wheeled the stretcher into the loading bay. He would not allow them to pick up Danny, Steve lifting him onto the stretcher himself and making sure Danny was fully covered. Steve kept a tight hold on Danny’s hand as he was wheeled out to the ambulance where Steve automatically climbed in with him.

“We’ll meet you at the hospital,” Kono promised, going with Chin to Steve’s truck.

~o0o~

Danny was diagnosed with a fracture of the pelvis. While it wasn’t serious, it was still very painful. He would have to walk with crutches for several weeks to prevent the damage from worsening. The break did not require surgery, for which he was grateful. But he would need to have physical therapy to make sure the muscles could support him with the fracture.

The first 24 hours he was in the hospital were a blur of tests and exams and the good drugs. At some point, they used a magic dissolving solution to get the duck tape off. Even in his drug-induced haze, he was very grateful that they hadn’t had to simply rip it off like a bizarre Brazilian wax gone wrong.

Every time he managed to surface through the haze, Steve was right there, the kids sitting on Steve or laying in the bed with Danny or playing quietly on the floor. Danny didn’t care as long as they were all present and accounted for.

The second day, the doctor agreed Danny could go home. Bed rest was required at this point and he could get more of that at home than in the hospital. The doctor did request that Danny not go up or down the steps, which Steve agreed was for the best. Steve would move a bed in to the office on the first floor, not ideal but workable. The half bath wasn’t too far from the office and Steve could carry Danny upstairs when he absolutely needed a shower.

Certain all the necessary arrangements were made, the doctor signed Danny out, Steve pushing him to the car in the wheelchair, John and Emma each holding tightly to Danny’s hands.

Chin and Kono were at their house, lunch ready once Danny was safe in the bed Chin had moved down for them. As hungry as he was, Danny didn’t think he was going to stay awake long enough to eat. The kids said they were going to eat on top of the bed and Steve did not have the heart to argue with them. And if any of their lunch spilled on the covers, he would change the bed as many times as it took. The TV that had been moved into the office was perfect for playing the kids’ favorite movies, Danny sleeping through most of them. When he did wake up, Steve helped him to the bathroom before settling him back into bed.

The third day, Danny woke up to find himself laying practically on top of Steve, Emma behind him and John on Steve’s other side. He couldn’t tell what time it was but the office was flooded with sunlight so it had to be fairly late in the day.

He smiled when Steve stirred beneath him, raising up on one elbow to smile at his husband. “Hey
“Hey yourself,” Steve said, his fingers buried in Danny’s hair. “I can’t believe the doctor said we can’t … you know, for six weeks.”

“I do know. And we definitely can’t. I’d die if we tried,” Danny reminded him.

“But what a way to go,” Steve said with a laugh.

“Yeah,” Danny said, love shining in his eyes. The love only grew when the children slowly sat up, sleep making their faces soft and younger. They very carefully piled up on Steve who wrapped his arms around them all. Because they were all right where they belonged. And he knew better than to ever take that for granted.
Steve Williams-McGarrett Plans to Rule the World

Chapter Summary

Despite his best efforts, Steve is elected governor. Only he would act like this!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

He never intended to run for governor. With God as his witness, he still couldn’t figure out how it happened. One day, then-governor Denning was in his 5-0 office telling Steve he didn’t intend to run for re-election. Instead, he was going to run for the vacant US Senate seat. And the next day Steve was the candidate of choice for governor of Hawaii. Maybe Danny understood how it happened. Because Steve still didn’t. Probably never would.

He did know that John had just turned 14 and Emma was not quite 12. They had apparently approved the decision for Steve to run. Which was pretty amazing since Steve had no recollection of agreeing to it himself. Maybe Danny and the kids had made the decision behind his back? That might explain it. And it certainly wouldn’t be the first life-altering decision that had been made without his express permission.

Once the political ‘machine’ that had assured the election of Gov. Denning turned its considerable focus and resources on Steve’s candidacy, Steve was at a loss to stop it. Try as he might, he could not derail that freight train after it had started down the tracks. And when did he ever say he wanted to make campaign speeches? Really? Had they met him? His family accused him of being mute half the time. And they expected him to give speeches?

“Not to worry, Commander,” Sebastian Holder, who was apparently his campaign manager, had told him more than once including this time as he was standing in Steve’s office ignoring the glare of death Steve was trying to project onto him. “You only have to read what’s written. Intersperse it with your own stories of combat and heading up 5-0. You are a shoe-in.”

“Danno,” Steve called from his brand new election headquarters office after Sebastian had finally left. Because he was not permitted to use his 5-0 office for election business. Why did he need a second office to conduct a campaign for a position he didn’t want and never agreed to run for?

“Danno!”

“Yes, Commander Impatient,” Danny said as he appeared in the doorway. “What can I do for you?”

“Six speeches in two days? Really? I don’t have enough to say for one speech much less six,” Steve said, waving the iPad that had his schedule on display. If the various and assorted campaign workers were less busy doing work and more busy listening in, well, that was no surprise. The arguments between the candidate and his ‘better half’ were already common-place and a source of constant amusement. There may or may not have been a betting pool on how much time would elapse between fights and who would give in first once the latest one erupted. There were bonus points for those who accurately predicted which of the two men would appear next with a hickey they didn’t even bother to try and hide. Rumor had it that Annie in logistics was ahead in that category.

“You don’t give six speeches, Babe,” Danny reminded him. “You give one. In six different
locations.”

“I don’t want to give any speeches,” Steve said with a new, even scarier version of Aneurysm face on full display.

“I know you don’t. But the campaign stops are all arranged. You can’t stand in front of the crowds and not give a speech. Even if you take your shirt off, they will expect you to say something.”

“I’m pretty sure Sebastian would have a heart attack if I took off my shirt,” Steve reminded Danny, his arms crossed over his chest in a familiar this is not the way it’s supposed to work manner. “Did you read this speech? I’d never say any of this.”

“I haven’t yet. I need to go get the kids. When I get back, we’ll rewrite it,” Danny promised.

“I’m coming with you,” Steve decided, putting the iPad on his desk.

“No can do, Babe. You have an interview in 10 minutes. Don’t bite the pretty lady coming to talk to you. Kono will be here very shortly. She can do most of the talking if you want.”

“Why can’t she be governor?” Steve asked. “You could be her lieutenant governor.”

“No thanks. I’m not a war hero or former head of 5-0.”

“Former head?” Steve asked with a frown. “What if I lose the election? Am I unemployed?”

Danny just shook his head and patted Kono on the shoulder when she arrived. “He’s all yours.”

“You owe me,” she shouted after Danny as he escaped the chaos of the campaign headquarters. Kono turned her black stare of immortality on Steve who crumbled slightly in face of it. Sure he knew she wasn’t really immortal but he was not going to be the one to tell her that. No thanks. Besides which, if she wasn’t immortal, why hadn’t she aged at all since that day he and Danny had met her on the beach? She was still as beautiful and thin and young. God, was he ever that young?

“Did you actually agree to run for lieutenant governor?” he asked, hoping he sounded more macho to her ears than his own. When had he been reduced to, OMG, whining? When did this become his life???

“Dude,” she said like that explained everything. Maybe it did. He sure wasn’t going to ask her again. He preferred all of his man-bits exactly where they were and he knew she would rearrange and/or remove some of the more important ones if he asked a second time. Not that he was scared of her. No more than anyone else. Anyone with sense.

He took a deep breath, going back behind his brand new desk. Why was it made of something so shiny? Were wooden desks completely out of fashion? Would he not be elected if he had a wooden desk instead of this chrome and glass monstrosity? Why didn’t he get a say? Who precisely had picked it out?

“Hello,” Kono was saying as she leaned back against the ugly desk facing him. “Earth to Steve.”

He frowned up at her, trying for intimidating. From the expression on her face, he thought he had barely achieved unhappy. “Honestly, Kono. I never agreed to run for governor.”

“I know that, Bossman. But it’s too late. And the election is in six weeks. We win – we get to be in charge. We lose – we go back to 5-0. Either way it’s all good.”
“You can’t surf whenever you want if we win,” Steve pointed out, hoping to make her cheer the hell down. Not that he had ever succeeded in the 17+ years he had known and loved her. But this. This situation called for serious. Could she even do serious? Yeah, he was pretty sure she could.

“My mean boss wouldn’t let me surf whenever I wanted anyway,” she pointed out with a laugh.

“What does Charlie think?”

“That I should do whatever I want. He loves taking care of the kids. So,” she said with a shrug.

“Kids? You have kids?” he teased, making her laugh.

“Not that you’d notice,” she said.

“How many do you have now? 13? 21?” he asked, smiling up at her.

“I have no idea. You’d have to ask Charlie,” she said with a shrug.

“Didn’t you actually give birth to them?”

“Oh. Right. Right. I knew I had some part in it. Let’s see. There’s you. And Danny. Plus the two boys I gave birth to. And the three girls. That’s five full time and two part time.”

“I thought I was Danno’s responsibility,” he said, laughing.

“Sure. Except when he dumps you on me,” she reminded him, straightening when Sebastian knocked on the open door and entered at the same time. “What’s up?”

“Kaok Waol from Hawaii Today is here. She’s in the studio setting up,” Sebastian told them.

Steve nodded like he was interested when really what he was doing was studying Sebastian. He was a short, squat man who reminded Steve of the weebles John and Emma used to play with. Except Sebastain had way too much hair, and beady eyes. His over-abundance of hair was dark brown and never fully under control. Steve thought he was around 50 or so years old although there was no grey in his hair.

Whether or not Sebastian knew what he was doing was of no interest to Steve. Just his presence annoyed him. But he had inherited Sebastian with all assurances that he was the best campaign manager in Hawaii if not the entire United States. Steve was not one to argue with success but honestly. Did it have to be Sebastian who ordered him around?

“Thank you. We’ll be right there,” Kono told Sebastain who nodded and left. She turned to Steve, laughing at him. “Stop trying to think of all the ways you can kill him with a piece of tape and a paperclip and come with me.”

He managed to focus on her, frowning even more. “Doesn’t he annoy you?”

“Grates on my last nerve,” she agreed cheerfully. “But that does not make it okay for you to kill him.”

“I haven’t killed anybody this week,” he told her proudly.

“Not yet,” she laughed, taking him by the hand and dragging him to the studio so conveniently located down the hall from his office.

When they got to the studio, the folks from Hawaii Today were still setting up, making Steve and
Kono wait. It wasn’t that either of them had anything more urgent to do but making Steve wait was always a risky proposition because a bored Steve generally turned into a destructive Steve.

“No, I do not want to know how to use coffee grounds to make explosives,” Kono told him, not entirely sure if he was kidding or serious.

“Could come in handy,” he told her, sitting on the leather couch someone had thoughtfully put off to one side of the set in the studio.

“I’m sure it could,” she agreed from where she was having the last of her make-up applied. “I’ll leave the majority of the chaos and destruction to you.”

“Thanks,” he said. His face broke into a huge smile when the familiar sounds of his family arriving echoed through the hallway leading to the studio.

“Shhh…” he heard Danno telling them. But it was pointless. The four children came rushing toward Steve, tumbling over each other like so many happy puppies.

“Are these yours?” Steve asked Kono as the kids piled on him, all of them laughing, Danny looking down at them in amused dismay.

“Mine are much better behaved,” she claimed, shaking her head.

“That’s so not true,” Alicia informed her brightly, laughing up at Kono.

Kono shrugged, kissing Alicia on the forehead before kissing John and Emma. Zacchary did not look to be in the mood for being touched and Kono respected that. “How were your days?” she asked them as they sat on and around Steve and Danny. They all answered at once, Kono able to keep up with their responses, replying with amazing accuracy each time.

“I’m sure Danno will find you new shoes, Emma. No, John, Danno does have a point. Steve didn’t tell me that, Alicia. Zacchary,” she said finally with a laugh, hugging Zach back when he hugged her around her waist.

“How does she do that?” Steve asked Danny not for the first time.

“I think women learn to do it in the delivery room. One of those secrets only they are allowed to know,” Danny said. “Yes, Ali?”

“I’m hungry,” she said, leaning against his knees to look down at him. “Are you feeding us?”

“You are always hungry,” John reminded her, laughing when she tried to hit him.

“So are you,” Alicia told him.

“Am not,” John responded, flopping down on the couch next to Danny.

“Yeah, you are,” Danny informed him with a laugh. “What do you want for dinner?” he asked them all.

There was some friendly squabbling, the children finally deciding that Danny should take them home and feed them the spaghetti he had made that weekend.

“All right,” Danny agreed. “But we can’t leave for another hour. I bet if you go to Steve’s office, you’ll find some trail mix.”
They agreed that was a fine idea and raced off, sounding more like a herd of horses than four children.

“When are we returning the two strays?” Steve asked Danny with a laugh.

“Rachel and Stan said they would be back Tuesday,” Danny replied. “I better go watch them so they don’t destroy the entire building.”

“Steve can make explosives out of coffee grounds,” Kono volunteered, making Danny frown at them both.

“Why did I think it was a good idea to leave you in charge of him?” Danny asked her.

She could only smile, laughter sparkling in her eyes.

“Hey Danno. Did you know Kono has five children?” Steve asked with a laugh.

Danny didn’t bother to answer, shaking his head and going toward Steve’s office in hopes of preventing it from being condemned by the health and/or fire department.

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Despite Steve’s continual protests and resistance to the entire idea, he was elected governor of Hawaii by a landslide. He felt a little sorry for his opponent who seemed like a nice enough man but had gotten barely 20% of the votes. Robert Grey was gracious in defeat, knowing the better man had won. Steve wasn’t so sure but it was done now.

“I am not packing for you, Babe,” Danny said as he put the last of his clothes in the boxes the transition team had provided to them. The house could have been packed up by the moving company but none of them really wanted to leave their stuff in the hands of strangers, as careful as they knew they would be.

“I’m not going anywhere,” Steve said. He was laying on top of their bed, fully dressed including his boots. He was frowning up at the ceiling looking as though it had betrayed him.

“Steve,” Danny said with a sigh, sitting down next to his hip. His warm right hand eased up under Steve’s tee shirt, stroking the hard muscles there. “We are expected in the Governor’s mansion tomorrow.”

Steve took a deep breath, pouting at Danny. “This is your fault.”

“Without a doubt,” Danny had to agree. “Please start packing. I need to check on the kids.”

“What about the kitchen?” Steve asked, slowly sitting up.

“We’re leaving it. We don’t need any of it for the mansion. And when we come here to escape, we’ll want it here to use it.”

Steve nodded at that, looking around their bedroom. “I’m sorry I’m being a five year-old.”

“You’re always a five year-old,” Danny reminded him with a light kiss. “Can I trust you to put your clothes in those wardrobe boxes?” he asked, pointing over at them.

“Yeah. Although Sebastain said I don’t need to bring most of my cargoes. Even though I won the election wearing them,” he said unhappily.
“I know, Babe,” Danny said in sympathy. “Your suits will be delivered to the mansion. Are you wearing your uniform for the inauguration?”

“Yeah. I called the Secretary of the Navy to make sure. She said it was appropriate.”

“She? As in the Secretary herself?” Danny asked. Steve shrugged, all innocent. “Is she coming?”


“Surely we’d have heard them if they did,” Danny laughed, leaving the bedroom once he was sure Steve was actually going to start packing.

Danny went into Emma’s room to find her and John packing it up. “Need any help?” he asked from the doorway.

Emma smiled over at him before shaking her head. “Nope. We’re nearly finished. And John’s room is all done. Is Daddy finally packing?”

“Finally,” Danny said. “Will you two go keep him company while he finishes?”

“Yeah. Where are you going?” John asked.

“I need to tag the living room. They’ll be here first thing in the morning,” he reminded them. “Then you need to do your schoolwork for a couple of hours.”

“Will you help us?” Emma requested. “If Daddy sits with us, we’ll never understand the assignments.”

Danny laughed and shook his head. “You know that’s not true, Em. He can come down to our level when he needs to.”

“It’s still easier with you, Danno,” John said, holding out two of Emma’s dresses. “These?”

She shook her head, considering the stuffed animals on her bed. “I guess I’m too old to take these.”

“If you want them, you should take them,” Danno told her, kissing the top of her head.

“You sure?”

“Of course I’m sure, Princess. You should take whatever you want.”

She nodded at that, accepting an empty box from John for her toys.

“Make sure you mark Alicia and Zacchary’s boxes,” he reminded them.

“Done,” John agreed, putting more of Emma’s clothes in the box.

“Thanks,” Danny said, turning to leave. He back-tracked to check on Steve, relieved to find him actually packing while talking on his phone. To Mary apparently. “Is she coming?”


“I’m sorry, Babe. It’s probably just as well. We don’t need a scene at the inauguration.”

“Are you sure I can’t just kill him?” Steve asked.
“Fine by me,” Danny told him, Steve’s laughter following him down the steps.

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“Hey Danno,” Steve said that night as they lay in their own bed for the last time. At least the last time for who knew how long.

It was well past midnight, the kids too wired to go to sleep before 11. The fact that Mary had been dropped off at 9:30 didn’t help. Her plane had been late, of course. Elizabeth from the transition team had been dispatched to pick her up and bring her back to their house.

Between Mary’s arrival and the kids excitement about the move the next day, Danny thought he’d never get them all in bed, including Mary who was as excited as the kids.

“Yeah Babe,” Danny replied, as always enjoying the chance to just look at his goof-ball husband. Even after all this time, he could feel the love swell up at the sight. God he adored this man.

“You okay with all this?” Steve asked, uncertainty on his face.

“What do you mean?” Danny asked, his thumb sweeping Steve’s eyebrows and smoothing the line in between.

“Well,” Steve said, gathering his thoughts. “All this. It’s all, you know, all about me,” Steve said, the color rising on his cheeks telling Danny how hard this conversation was for Steve to have. Danny thought he had a pretty good idea of where this was going and needed to honor Steve’s desire to say it.

“Okay,” Danny said with a nod.

“And you…I don’t want you to think I take you for granted,” Steve said, a hopeful expression in his eyes.

“You want me to help you out here, Babe?” Danny said in a warm, teasing tone, Steve nodding gratefully. “I’m second banana. I have been since you forced to be your partner. No,” Danny said, laying a finger over Steve’s mouth when he tried to speak. “Let me finish. I’ve chosen this. If I hadn’t wanted to be your back-up all this time, I wouldn’t have. When we decided to have the kids, I chose to be the ‘mom’ in the relationship. And I haven’t regretted it for a single minute. Not one. Now that you have been elected governor, I’m going to be First Gentleman or Her Royal Highness or whatever. And I’m okay with that. So completely okay with it I can’t even tell you. I love you, jackass. With all your flaws and your screwed up brain and your never ending need to prove you are right. I love all of it. And both of us can’t be public Alpha male in this relationship. You get that honor. Because we both know that you wouldn’t survive without me any more than I could survive without you.”

“Jackass?” Steve said, knowing it would make Danny rant even longer.

“That’s what you take from this? I pour my heart out to you and your only response is ‘jackass’?” Danny demanded. “You really are stunted emotionally. After all this time, I thought I’d finally taught you some social skills. I see I was wrong.”

Steve could see the laughter in Danny’s eyes for all it sounded like he was yelling at Steve. “I love you too. And I wouldn’t survive without you. I want to make sure you know that.”

“I do, Babe,” Danny assured him, kissing him soundly.
Chapter End Notes

I'm going to continue this chapter's storyline, including the inauguration and "stuff." I just kind of ran out of steam on this installment. The next chapter will be like 12.5. Ya know?
Danny felt the emptiness of the bed before he was fully awake. He wasn’t really surprised that Steve wasn’t asleep next to him. When Super SEAL’s brain went into overdrive, it took a lot of time and effort for get him to gear it down. Danny figured that wouldn’t happen for another couple of days then he would crash. Hopefully the inevitable crash wouldn’t be too hard or cause too much damage.

“Hey Babe,” Danny said, approaching Steve who was standing in the open doors to the balcony that faced their beach, the very earliest light from dawn just beginning to brighten the sky.

“Hey,” Steve replied, looking down at him when Danny was standing in front of him. “Go back to bed.”

“I will in a minute,” Danny said, turning his back to Steve to lean against him, knowing Steve would support him. Steve’s arms winding around his waist confirmed Steve’s need of him, as Danny suspected. “Talk to me.”

Steve’s arm tightened nearly imperceptivity and his breathing stopped for just a second.

“Talk,” Danny requested softly.

“What if I fuck this up?” Steve finally asked, staring out over Danny’s head at the ocean.

“I won’t say you won’t make mistakes, Babe. Of course you will. But not out of stupidity or malice. You will do exactly what you think is best for this state and her people. That’s all anyone wants from you. That’s why you were elected. They trust you. I trust you. I sure wouldn’t have had children with you if I didn’t.” Danny waited. He could feel the wheels turning, Steve considering his words, weighing, measuring.

“What do I know about running the state government?” Steve finally asked.

“You know about being in charge. You know about getting the best people to help you. That’s what being governor is really about. Despite what I like to claim, you do know people. You can size them up, understand what they can and cannot do, whether or not they are the ones you need to have in place.”

“Really?” Steve said smiling into Danny’s hair. “You tell me I can’t relate mammal to mammal.”

“That’s in a failed effort to keep you humble. Not that it’s helped. At all.”

That got a laugh out of Steve, his right arm tightening around Danny’s middle, his left hand snaking beneath Danny’s waistband. “Want me to take your mind off everything else?”

“I could be persuaded. Given the right motivation,” Danny claimed, thrusting his hips to increase the amount of contact with Steve’s hand.
“What sort of motivation?” Steve asked, nibbling on Danny’s neck.

“Do not give me a hickey, you animal. Everyone will see it tomorrow,” Danny protested.

“Here they won’t,” Steve said, biting Danny’s shoulder and sucking on the mark.

“You are such an animal,” Danny repeated, moaning without his conscious permission. His body was also responding without his permission.

“You like it,” Steve pointed out, working Danny’s boxers down until he could step out of them.

“I like you. Although I can’t really imagine why. Because you are so completely out of control. And you drive me out of my mind.”

“Don’t think I don’t know that,” Steve assured him, his hand encircling Danny’s erection. “You want me to blow you?”

“Do you need to ask?” Danny asked, moaning softly.

“We need to go further inside,” Steve told him, nodding at the guard patrolling the beach with his dog by his side.

“Yeah. I guess they don’t need a show,” Danny said, looking down at himself. “Think he can see me?”

Steve shrugged, backing up and taking Danny with him. When he was certain they were out of the line of sight of the officer, he went to his knees before Danny, his hands warm on Danny’s hips. Danny had his fingers buried in Steve’s hair, not directing, just holding on. Because, God, what Steve was doing with his mouth and tongue was sinful. Illegal. Mind-blowing. And Danny didn’t want it to ever end. He knew it had to because he’d lose his mind if it didn’t. But what a way to go.

“Babe,” he moaned in warning. Steve just looked up at him through his lashes, lust written all over Steve’s face in a language only Danny could read. When Steve hollowed out his cheeks, Danny was done. The only thing holding him up was Steve. There would be finger shaped bruises blossoming on Danny’s hips by morning, evidence of Steve’s presence.

“What do you want?” Danny whispered down to Steve when he could speak.

Steve ducked his head, his forehead resting on Danny’s hard stomach.

“Babe?” Danny prompted, carefully kneeling to face Steve. A soft finger lifted Steve’s chin, Danny studying his shuttered face. “What?”

Steve shook his head, leaning forward to kiss Danny. It was warm and gentle and nothing like what his mouth had just been doing.

“You aren’t even hard,” Danny said in apology. “Did you not want that?”

“Of course I did,” Steve assured him, pulling Danny to him. He easily shifted Danny until he was settled between Steve’s thighs, Steve’s back supported by the bed.

“Then what?” Danny asked, interlacing their fingers and holding on. He could feel Steve’s shrug against his back. “Can I guess? If I get it right will you confirm? Or even deny?”

Steve smiled against Danny’s shoulder before nodding.
“You have gone into Super SEAL pre-combat mode,” Danny said, his words caressing, knowing of
Steve. “You are considering all contingencies – what could go wrong. Where the flaws are. Where
the exits are located. When it’s strategically viable to send up the flares. What plan B will be if your
very carefully laid out plan A fails.” Danny twisted in Steve’s arms, meeting the slate grey eyes.
“Am I close?”

“Of course,” Steve agreed, his voice betraying some of his uncertainty, the fears he couldn’t even
admit to Danny.

“First, this isn’t combat. And you aren’t going in this alone,” Danny reminded him. “Kono will be
there. I know you hate Sebastain. Anybody with sense would but he does have the advantage of
knowing the ropes. A year from now, you can fire him.”

“I'll give you his pink slip as a Christmas present.”

“I’ll take it,” Danny agreed. “He’ll recommend the best people for the rest of the vacancies. Some
you’ll accept. Some you won’t. You already have an excellent core group. Listen to them. Make
them yours like you did with Five-0. Only with fewer explosions and less gunfire.”

“I can’t make any promises,” Steve said with a warm laugh against Danny’s skin.

“I know,” Danny sighed, trying to sound all put-upon.

“I won’t have you,” Steve said almost too quietly for Danny to hear.

“Oh Babe,” Danny breathed, shifting so he was facing Steve. “You won’t be without me. I know
you wish you could give me a ‘real’ job. And I appreciate it. That doesn’t mean I won’t be with you
every step of the way.”

“There’s already things I’m not allowed to tell you,” Steve reminded him.

“And I’m used to your ‘classified’ walls. I am not going to try and scale them. Have I ever?”

Steve shook his head at that, leaning his forehead against Danny’s. “This is so… huge.”

“I know it is. But it’s nothing my Super SEAL can’t handle,” Danny told him, making it sound like a
promise.

“You won’t be my back-up,” Steve whispered, his voice sounding so very far away.

“Wrong, Babe. I will be your back-up until you say otherwise. I don’t have a job, you may have
noticed. The only responsibilities I now have are to watch out for you and your various and assorted
children. Which can number from two to eleven, counting you. I will shake hands and cut ribbons
and christen ships until I’m blue in the face. Because that’s what the spouse of the governor does.
And at night, I’ll be in our bed, listening to you whether or not you talk. I’ll listen to your silences
and I’ll listen to your concerns. And I’ll tell you what your slightly off-kilter, completely untraditional
family did that day that you were forced to miss.”

“How did you get so smart?” Steve asked, kissing the red blotch he had left on Danny’s shoulder.

“I always have been. You just didn’t notice,” Danny claimed, smiling at him. “Now I either need to
get back in bed or find the boxers you divested me of. Because it’s not very much longer until full
dawn and your daughter will no doubt come bursting in here to drag you down to the ocean for your
ridiculously early swim.”
“For the last time,” Steve said, revealing more than he intended in those words.

“Except the residence has a pool. Where you can swim without your faithful SEAL companion. You and baby seal can swim to your hearts’ content.”

“It’s not the same.”

Danny sighed and shook his head, getting to his feet and reaching down his hand. Steve took it but rose without Danny’s help, much more gracefully than Danny appreciated. “I know. Things are changing. But we aren’t banned from coming back here. As long as we bring our detail with us we can sneak out and come home. Now,” Danny said, his hands on his bare hips as he looked up in love at his goof-ball. “Bed? Or beach?”

Steve leaned down enough to kiss him, turning when they were done to take the last pair of swim trunks he had saved out of the boxes.

“Of course,” Danny grumbled. “I knew you loved the ocean more than you did me. I’ll go get your daughter then I’ll start the coffee.”

“Thank you,” Steve said with a smile. “Ask my son if he wants to come.”

“I will,” Danny agreed, pulling on his jeans and not bothering with a shirt. There would be enough time for appropriate dress. For now, he was home and wasn’t going to pretend otherwise.

~o0o~

After they finished swimming and having breakfast and packing, it was time to leave the house. The kids were excited about the new adventure their life was about to become but still felt like leaving the house was in some way incredibly monumental even if they weren’t able to articulate their thoughts.

“I think they feel nostalgic,” Steve suggested. “Even though they don’t know what that means.”

“Yeah,” Danny agreed, hugging John and Emma to him, Steve hugging them all.

“You’re squishing us,” Emma complained, trying to shove Steve but not with any true intent of making him back away. “You aren’t your squishies.”

“Your squishies?” Steve repeated. “I don’t even know what that means.”

“You don’t need to,” John said, looking over Danny’s shoulder to watch the approach of Henry, a determined expression on his face. “Uhm... I think we’re late.”

“Sir,” Henry said, looking up at Steve.

“Yes, Agent Weller,” Steve responded, waiting.

“You are expected at the capitol in half an hour. The ceremony is at 11:30,” Henry reminded them.

“Right,” Steve said, releasing the children and backing away. “You ready?”

They all nodded and with a last glance at the house, piled into the black sedans that would be their primary mode of travel for the foreseeable future.

~o0o~

The inauguration went flawlessly, Steve looking splendid in his dress blue uniform. Danny beamed
with pride as he held the Bible so that Steve could swear to faithfully uphold the laws and
court of Hawaii and the United States. It made Danny think of the first time they had met and
it was all he could do not to laugh out loud at Steve. So inappropriate, he knew.

Emma and John sat on the first row, watching their fathers with pride shining from their expressions,
Mary next to them. On the second row were Rachel and Stan with Grace, her husband Aomu next to
her, Zachary next to Aomu, and Alicia on Zach’s other side. They had been concerned that Zachary
couldn’t handle the public nature of the ceremony but he was so happy for Steve, he had no trouble
focusing on what was going on around him.

Kono, Charlie and their five children were on the third row. She would be sworn in as Lieutenant
Governor as soon as Steve’s ceremony was complete. Danny told her that she looked spectacular in
her blue and green dress that managed to be a perfect combination of native fabric and formal
authority. She laughed, her eyes sparkling as only hers could.

Chin and Malia were on the second row as both a member of Steve’s ohana and because Chin was
head of the 5-0 taskforce. Which Steve had promised Chin would once again have full immunity and
means, while Danny made Chin promise that would not include any more than three or four
explosions per day. Chin laughed and assured him ‘no problem brah.’ Danny wanted to be surprised
that Chin was at the inauguration wearing his typical tropical print shirt but in truth he knew that
Chin would. That this one was more subtle than usual and made of silk was impressive. Malia’s
dress reflected the colors, highlighting them both and the love that arched between them.

Chin riled up Danny by telling him he had expected Danny to wear a suit and tie, Danny telling him
that would have been appropriate but Steve had told him no. If Steve was going to wear his Naval
uniform, Danny needed to wear his police uniform. Chin offered to help Danny run as many extra
miles as necessary to fit back into it but Danny chose to ignore him, relieved that the pants would
fasten and all the jacket buttons would close without any extra miles, thank you so much.

Once the ceremony was complete, Steve had no choice but to make his official speech, Danny
forced repeatedly to tell him beforehand that no he could not make a speech consisting of protect,
yadda yadda yadda, defend, blah blah blah, prosperity for all, blah yadda blah, dude let’s all go
surfing. Although Danny was fairly certain that if Steve did give a speech that sounded like that
Sebastian would have an actual heart attack. Not that Danny wanted him dead. Just no longer giving
them endless orders and suggestions and not terribly subtle hints on how to act appropriately. Danny
told Steve that he might not be able to wait an entire year for Steve to fire Sebastian, nothing personal
of course. Oh wait. It was very personal. Steve just laughed, his eyes crinkling at the corners and
melting Danno’s heart a little bit more.

The ceremony and speech were followed by the traditional parade, all of them walking behind the
floats and bands and other appropriate parade-like paraphernalia. They waved until they thought their
hands would fall off and smiled until their faces froze and greeted the cheering crowds lining both
sides of road. Steve thought it was all just so much nonsense but he knew he had absolutely no
choice, even before Danny had reminded him of it. Repeatedly.

“You will walk in the parade. You will smile. You will look like you are enjoying yourself.”

“Oh?” Steve asked, laughing at his Danno.

“We won’t have sex until you’re out of office,” Danny warned.

“That’s steep,” Steve said, shaking his head.

“And when we go to the Ball, you will, you know,” Danny said, waving his hand to encompass
Steve, their children, and all of Hawaii.

“Act like I’m enjoying myself?” Steve asked, distracting Danny with his kisses. “Is that it?”

“Yes, you animal. Stop with the kisses. We need to get ready for the inauguration.”

As ordered, Steve waved and smiled and looked like he was having the time of his life as they walked in the parade. Next to him, Danny kept one eye on Steve, one eye on the children although Chin and Mary were officially in charge of them. Steve’s fingers curled around Danny’s hand, holding like he had no intentions of ever letting go and Danny was fine with it.

Steve would have liked to have worn his hat, both because it was an official part of his uniform and as a way to partially hide from those staring at him. But Danny knew his tricks and with his hat low on his forehead, he would look more formidable than welcoming. He did allow as how Steve could carry it under his arm, understanding that Steve was a stickler for regulations even those for the service from which he was retired. Carrying it fulfilled Steve’s need to obey and Danny’s need to see all of his goof-ball’s beautiful face.

They arrived at the residence with several hours to spare before the Ball. The ten kids would not be persuaded to nap, not even Kono and Charlie’s three year old Malu. They all tried to persuade her to nap but none of her actual or extended brothers and sisters were sleeping so she wasn’t either. That settled, they fed them all a late lunch, everyone gathered around the huge table with much laughter and talking and stories shared.

The children were divided by gender rather than parentage, the boys under the watch of Chin, the girls going with Malia. There were campaign workers dispatched to assist with the changing and the primping and preparing. All of the dresses and outfits had been purchased by Steve and Danny despite the protests of the “real” parents. Steve and Danny turned a deaf ear to the protests, letting the children decide what they wanted to wear. Power of veto was reserved but not needed. Even though Malu decided she should wear a fairy princess dress. Steve wasn’t so sure but Danny was okay with it. Kono and Charlie thought it was adorable. And she was only three. So to no one’s surprise, Malu prevailed, picking out a surprisingly low-key princess dress of lavender with an appropriate amount of sparkles and a matching tiara.

They all convened in the foyer of the residence, the children chattering excitedly. Steve and Danny, in their tuxedos, formed a two man receiving line, inspecting each child as he or she strolled by, youngest to oldest.

With their approval, they all went to the Ball, waiting until Sebastian said they were ready to enter. As they had for ‘inspection,’ the children entered by age, the guests cheering as each child was announced. Chin and Malia entered with Zachary, ensuring that if it was too much for him, they would intervene. Zachary descended the steps like a champion, smiling at the group of his school friends that had been included.

Grace and Aomu entered with Mary just before Kono and Charlie, Steve and Danny following them. Rachel and Stan were already at the ohana table, choosing not to make any sort of entrance. They preferred that the children be honored prior to Steve and Danny.

Steve and Danny were greeted with thunderous applause and cheers, Danny seeing the color rising in his cheeks, his ears painted a pale pink from embarrassment.

“This is your fault,” Steve reminded Danny as they stood alone at the top of the enormous staircase. His smile didn’t falter even as he was giving the glare of death to Danny.
“I do know that,” Danny assured him, squeezing his fingers. “Come on, Governor. Your fans await.”

“So much hate for you,” Steve claimed, starting down the steps as the anthem began to play.

“No you don’t. You adore me. If it weren’t for me, you wouldn’t have three perfect children. You would probably have died a dozen times if I weren’t your back up.”

“Nobody can die more than once, Danno,” Steve said as they continued their slow way down the steps.

“You’d find a way, Super SEAL,” Danny said. “Look at our children. Then you won’t care who else is here.”

Steve nodded once, focusing on the ten children waiting breathlessly for him to arrive at their table. The littlest ones were waving, the older ones trying to stop them. But there was not stopping their enthusiasm. And Steve and Danny were okay with it. Because Sebastian would not be able to stop the kids now.

The evening passed mostly in a blur, with food and greetings from friends and supporters, dancing and champagne, photos and remarks. The kids were having a wonderful time, Malu falling asleep on Mary’s lap. Next in line Laelkeik followed his sister several minutes later, his head lolling on Chin’s shoulder. Their oldest, Ian, finally persuaded all of the Kalakaua-Fong children to leave with him. Malia left with them, Kono not able to leave the Ball. And Charlie wouldn’t leave because Kono couldn’t.

It was past 1:00 a.m. when Sebastian finally told Governor and Detective Williams-McGarrett they were free to go. Danny carried Emma, Steve waking up John to let him know it was time to go home. With thanks and kisses and a slow good-bye, they were finally able to leave the Ball behind, sighing in relief when they arrived at the residence. The security detail assured them that they had done a sweep of the residence and it was completely safe for the family to enter and go to bed.

Danny settled Emma and Steve helped John undress for bed. Certain the children were comfortable and already asleep, Steve and Danny entered their own oversized bedroom, barely managing to stay awake long enough to remove their tuxedos before tumbling into bed. Steve landed mostly on top of Danny, long arms and legs tangling with Danny’s and pinning him to the mattress. Despite his grumbling about the oversized octopus he’d married, Danny wrapped warm arms around his goof, holding tight as they fell asleep for the first time as the Governor and his significant other.
Chapter Summary

Let's call this the obligatory amnesia story. Because don't we all need to write one? Danny forgets who he is. This condition takes an interesting turn.

Chapter Notes

I promise I'm not going to post a new chapter every day. Weekends provide extra writing time, you know?

Two other semi-important items:
1. Thank you thank you thank you to everyone who has commented and/or provided kudos on this story! Wow!! Love the love you are showing this story!
2. Some of you have mentioned that because these chapters aren't in chronological order, the timeframe can be confusing. Just to avoid that this time, this chapter happens before Steve and Danny admit their feelings for each other. This is the earliest chapter in their story that I've written so far.

Of course Danny was shot in the thigh moments before the drug runners shoved him from the boat he and Steve had boarded. Thank God he had on his life preserver. As much as he hated wearing them, he knew this one was actually going to preserve his life, just like the name claimed.

He watched in some horror as the boat kept going, no evidence that it was slowing or circling back to reclaim him from the water. That was bad on so many levels he couldn't even begin to count them. Mostly what it meant was that Steve had also been incapacitated by the scum or he would have brought the boat back around. Great. Just great. Danny had known from the minute Steve pointed his gun at him inside his garage that first day that Steve really would end up being the death of him. He would have been perfectly happy being wrong about that. But no. Right again it seemed.

Danny did everything he knew to ignore the searing pain in his leg and the competing pain in his head. The headache was worse only because it throbbed with each movement he made with any part of his body. The blurred vision wasn’t helping much either. Not that there was much to see except miles and miles of empty blue water.

He supposed the salt water had at least partially cauterized the gunshot wound in his thigh. The bleeding seemed to have slowed and the pain had been reduced to nearly bearable. He figured that’s how Victor Hesse had survived – falling into the ocean after Steve shot him. And he’d read The Bourne Identity. Jason Bourne had survived multiple gun shot wounds before he was dumped into the ocean. A novel, sure. But the knowledge that he had lived, even if he was a fictional character, was immensely comforting to Danny. As comforting as anything could be as he tried valiantly to remain afloat and not panic while wondering if he would live to see Gracie again.

All right, he told himself firmly. I can do this. I can survive until Chin and Kono find me. They know where we were going. It’s only a matter time before they show up. I only have to survive until then.
His thoughts were not as comforting as he would have liked. He tried again to concentrate on remaining conscious and alert so he couldn’t slip out of his life jacket by accident. First order of business was to kick off his shoes. That would help prevent some of the downward drag.

Now, what would Steve McGarrett do in this situation? He would stay calm. He would assess the situation. He would determine which way land was so he could start toward it.

Despite what Steve had claimed on numerous occasions, Danno could swim. He could swim for survival. Checking the location of the sun, Danny began to slowly and painfully propel himself in the direction of the island they had left behind half an hour earlier when he and Steve had stowed away on the boat. Not their best idea but Steve had decided that the drug runners would take them to the bosses and taking them down would cut off the supply.

Danny concentrated on Steve’s reasoning, or lack thereof, as he swam with one leg, not thinking about how much pain he was in or how thirsty he was or how there could be sharks in the water circling him at that very moment. He could block all of that out. He could ignore the pain and the weariness and the fear. He didn’t know fear. He refused to acknowledge pain. He could go into warrior mode and survive this. That was all there was to it.

His lungs were bursting. His arms were cramping. His injured leg was numb. But he didn’t stop. Wouldn’t stop. His training wouldn’t let him. Survival. It was all about survival. He would be found. His team would not leave him to a watery grave. They were coming. Just like they always had….

~o0o~

Steve was reading aloud the latest pre-season baseball assessment from the Sporting News. Not that he cared which team had the best starting pitching or needed a new third baseman. But reading aloud had become a part of their wait – waiting for Danny to emerge from his coma.

It had been a week since Chin and Kono had found Danny and rescued him. Steve would have joined them on their search but the drug runners had left him behind on the boat when they fled on a second one. Once Steve had freed himself, he had coaxed the barely working boat back to the harbor, the damage extensive, especially to the radio onboard. It was only after Steve had arrived at the harbor did he learn that Danny had been shoved overboard. He thought the drug runners had taken him on the second boat. Before he could convince the EMTs that he was fine and had to join the search, Chin and Kono radioed the HPD officers with Steve that they had found Danny.

Steve had met them at the hospital, feeling guilty that Danny had been so badly injured and tossed overboard while he was incapacitated and below deck. It didn’t factor into Steve’s thinking that he couldn’t do anything to help Danny while he himself was being beaten for refusing to reveal how much info 5-0 had gathered on the cartel.

By the time Chin and Kono had found Danny, his face was blistered by the sun, his hands and arms a frightening shade of angry red. The diagnosis was not a surprise to any of them – dehydration, blood loss, concussion.

The doctors had put Danny into a drug-induced coma to allow his body to overcome the trauma he had experienced while being in the water, wounded and concussed. The brain swelling was the most worrisome and the coma gave it a chance to subside.

Over the last four days Danny had still remained comatose, the doctors concerned but not overly so. It was natural, they said. He by rights should have died in the ocean and no one could figure out how he had conjured the will to survive under such horrific circumstances. Steve wished he would wake up already, to smile at them with eyes bright and a rant on his lips, about hospitals and the ocean and
Hawaii in general. But still he remained nearly motionless in the bed, looking far too small and vulnerable.

Steve returned to reading the chances of the Yankees making it to the World Series. The 5-0 team had been reading to him since they were allowed to sit with Danny. The hospital had enough history with them all to know they would not be able to make them leave, and acknowledging that having their familiar presence would help Danny emerge from the coma. Because there was no question in any of their minds that he would wake up. It was only a matter of time.

It was Steve’s turn to sit with Danny, where he would remain without eating or drinking or doing any of those things he couldn’t remember to do until Chin or Kono or Grace reminded him. Grace would be arriving in a couple of hours and she and Rachel would hold their vigil until Chin came to take the overnight hours. Grace understood what was going on as well as any eight year old could. It wasn’t the first time her Danno had been in the hospital unable to respond to her. She wanted him to wake up but remained much calmer than any of them had believed possible.

Steve was about to move from the Yankees to their possible National League opponents when he felt Danny stir. They were accustom to him moving restless, muttering words they couldn’t quite make out. But this was different. This was more purposeful.

Steve stood so he could see all of Danny, watching his eyelids try to flutter. Steve took Danny’s hand, holding to it tightly. “Come on, babe. Wake up for me. Come back. We need you. Gracie needs you. Come on. Wake up,” Steve repeated, watching closely.

His heart stilled for just a second when Danny opened his eyes, staring directly at Steve. Steve could only smile.

“Hi. Welcome back.”

Danny frowned, closing his eyes. “Bright,” he croaked, his voice unused and rough.

Steve understood all too well and after pressing the call button pulled the curtains over the windows and lowered the overhead lights. “Better?”

Danny squinted up at him and nodded once, flinching slightly at the minimal movement. “Wha’ happened?”

“You were shot and ended up in the ocean.”

Danny seemed to consider that for a moment, frowning again. He looked like he was about to say something else when the door opened to admit the duty nurse.

“Everything okay?” she asked Steve, approaching the bed.

“Better than okay,” he said, gesturing to Danny with a smile. “He’s awake.”

“Excellent news,” she agreed. “I’ll get the doctor.”

Steve nodded absently, looking down at Danny and taking his hand back into his. Steve wished Danny’s hand was warmer but knew soon it would be waving about, punctuating Danny’s words in his own particular manner.

“How long?” Danny asked, trying to focus on Steve.

“You’ve been out for a week,” Steve told him, watching for any reaction. Danny just nodded.
Danny used the hand not wrapped in Steve’s to point at Steve, all of his words used up for now.

“Me?” Steve asked, Danny nodding. “I’m fine. They tied me up but I wasn’t shot.”

Danny lifted their joined hands, looking at the fading bruises on Steve’s wrist, frowning at the vibrant colors still there. He also pointed to Steve’s face, several purple and yellow splotches visible.

“I’m fine,” Steve assured him. He stepped out of the way as the doctor strolled in, his face warm and friendly. He took his responsibilities to his patients very seriously but not himself. He laughed more than any doctor Steve had ever met and he was glad for it.

“Hello,” Dr. Brownley said, smiling down at Danny. “How are you feeling?”

“Fine,” Danny said with a shrug. “Ready to go home.”

“Not so fast,” the doctor said, shaking his head. “First things first. Do you know where you are?” he asked as he carefully shone his pen light into Danny’s eyes. He nodded at Danny’s even and responsive pupils.

“Hospital,” Danny said, looking around him as though it should be obvious.

“Where?” the doctor asked kindly.

“Hawaii,” Danny responded.

“Do you know what day it is?”

“No,” Danny decided.

“That’s understandable. Can you tell me your name?” the doctor asked, certain that everything was it should be.

“Steve McGarrett,” came the answer from the bed. It was said with the same authority as was hospital or Hawaii.

“Steve McGarrett,” the doctor repeated calmly, glancing up at Steve where he stood beside him. Steve looked…shocked. Or frightened? Or…the doctor wasn’t quite sure. “Who is this?” the doctor asked, pointing at Steve.

Danny frowned at the question, looking up at Steve, the frown of concentration returning to his face. “Mmm… ‘m not sure,” he finally admitted.

“Do you know who Grace Williams is?” Dr. Brownley asked, familiar with Danny’s devotion to his daughter. From all of the times he’d treated the members of 5-0, he knew their immediate and extended families, their favorite foods, and how long he could reasonably expect them to stay confined to bed. Not long was the invariable answer.

Danny nodded in response to the doctor’s question about Grace but didn’t say anything.

“Who is she?” Dr. Brownley prompted.
“Daughter,” Danny finally said, looking down at his peeling hands rather than at the doctor.

“Whose daughter?” the doctor asked.

“His?” Danny asked, glancing briefly up at Steve.

“What do you do for a living?” Dr. Brownley asked, patiently waiting as Danny considered that question.

“Head up 5-0,” Danny said.

“And before that?”

“SEALs. Classified,” Danny told him, a distinct ‘don’t ask me any more questions’ expression on his face.

“All right,” Dr. Brownley said with a smile and a nod. “Your partner and I are going to step right outside your room.”

“Talk about me here,” Danny demanded.

“That’s not in your best interest,” Dr. Brownley said, his tone even firmer than Danny’s. “He’ll be back in five minutes.”

“Five minutes,” Danny said, making it sound remarkably like an order not to be ignored.

“Yes. Would you like to try eating something?” the doctor offered.

“No. Water?” Danny asked.

“Of course. I’ll have the nurse bring it to you. Little sips. Your body isn’t used to processing anything.”

Danny nodded, watching as they left him alone.

Dr. Brownley carefully closed the door after asking the nurse to go in and help him drink some water.

“Well?” Steve demanded.

“It’s not unheard of,” Dr. Brownley informed him calmly. “It’s a form of trauma induced amnesia.”

“He hasn’t forgotten. He thinks he’s me,” Steve said in anger. But why he was angry wasn’t clear to even him.

“I know this is a shock to you, Commander. I understand that. But look at it from his point of view. He was shot and knocked in the ocean. He didn’t know if there was any realistic possibility he would be found in time - if at all. Who does he know that would stand the best chance of survival under those circumstances?” Dr. Brownley asked kindly. He watched as his words made an impression on Steve.

“I would,” Steve said slowly, recognizing the truth of what the doctor was telling him.

“Yes. Danny did precisely what he thought you would do in order to survive. He had a pretty severe concussion and significant blood loss. It went from doing what he thought you would do to becoming you.”
Steve nodded, glancing at the closed door to Danny’s room. “Will he remember? That he’s not me?”

“I’m certain he will. He doesn’t have SEAL training. He didn’t go to Annapolis. He’ll realize the pieces don’t fit quite right. There is no way to tell how long that might take,” the doctor said before Steve could ask.

“What about Grace?”

“She may be the key. She may be the one that makes him remember that he’s her father, not you. Or he may still think you’re her father. You’ll need to explain it to her. I feel sure she’ll understand.”

“Yeah,” Steve agreed, glancing at his watch. “She’ll be out of school in half an hour. I’ll call Rachel and ask if I can pick Grace up. Bring her here.”

“Excellent idea,” the doctor agreed. “Make sure you tell Danny where you’re going. I don’t want him to think you’ve just left.”

“I will. People are going to call me Steve. Is that going to be a problem?” Steve asked.

“It will be confusing,” the doctor said with a warm laugh. “But don’t pretend you aren’t.”

Steve nodded at that. “What about people calling him Danny?”

“He’ll deny it. Correct them. Mostly people will probably not call him anything,” the doctor reminded him.

“True. All right. Thank you,” Steve said, bouncing on his toes, a normal state when he was too agitated to stand still.

“He’s going to be fine, Steve. You will be too,” Dr. Brownley assured him.

Steve watched the doctor walk down the hallway before entering Danny’s room to find him anxiously watching the door. “I’m right here.” He barely noticed that the nurse slipped out once Steve was back inside.

Danny didn’t respond except for relaxing imperceptivity.

“I’m going to go pick up Grace from school,” Steve said when he stood next to Danny’s bed. “I’ll bring her here to see you. She’s been worried about you.”

“Is it your day?” Danny asked.

“Not normally. But Rachel will make an exception, I’m sure,” Steve told him.

“What day is it?” Danny asked.

“Tuesday. You were shot a week ago,” Steve told him.

“Have Chin and Kono been by?”

“Of course,” Steve assured him. “I’ll call and let them know you are awake. Tell them to come right over, if that’s okay with you.”

Danny nodded at that, looking up at Steve again. “What is your name?” he asked quietly, his blue eyes intense.
“Steve,” Steve said simply.

Danny shook his head at that. “No.”

“It is,” he said, reaching into his cargo pants for his driver’s license. “See?”

Danny accepted it to study it closely. “This is a fake. I’m Steve McGarrett,” Danny said, handing back the forged ID.

“Then I guess we both are,” Steve said with a shrug. “I’m going for Grace. We’ll be back in about half an hour.”

“Okay,” Danny agreed.

Steve called Rachel and explained about Danny. Rachel automatically agreed that Steve should pick up Grace and take her to the hospital. She was worried about Danny not knowing who he was but she’d experienced enough severe injuries to understand that the ultimate outcome was not up to them.

Next he called Chin, giving him and Kono the same information.

“I’m not ready for two of you, brah,” Kono said making Steve smile.

“I’m sure you’ll still be able to kick his ass,” Steve assured her.

“And yours,” she said before they hung up.

Steve got to the school just as the kids were getting out, calling for Grace who came to him warily.

“Hey,” she said, looking up at him with huge brown eyes.

“Danno’s awake, Monkey,” Steve told her, talking her into his arms to hug her tight. “He’s going to be okay.”

“We knew he would be,” she said with a nod, her arms around his neck. “You taking me to see him?”

“You know it,” Steve agreed, carrying her to the Camaro. When he had her buckled in, her backpack secured behind her, he entered the car and angled himself so he was facing her as much as possible. “Do you remember what I said about Danno being hit on the head?”

She nodded, watching him closely. “You said he has a cacasion.”

“A concussion,” Steve agreed. “Sometimes when we get concussions, it makes us have amnesia. We forget things.”

“Did Daddy forget something?” Grace asked. Steve could see she was considering their conversation very seriously and not for the first time he wished he was better at this – at giving complicated information to Grace in a way he could be sure she understood. Danny told him he did fine when he was talking to Grace but Steve worried about how much information was too much, and he never wanted to be guilty of patronizing her. He would never intentionally talk down to her.

“In a way,” Steve said. “He, well, he’s confused about who he is.”

“Confused,” she repeated, waiting for Steve to tell her the rest.
“When Danno was shot and fell into the ocean, he did what he had to so he would survive. He apparently thought about what I would do in the same situation.”

Grace continued to stare up with Steve, the trust in her eyes almost heartbreaking to Steve.

“Dr. Brownley said that he’s pretty sure that Danno thought so hard about what I would do if I had been the one knocked into the ocean, that now Danny thinks he is me,” Steve finally said, watching Grace carefully.

“I don’t understand,” Grace said simply.

“Danno played a kind of ‘let’s pretend.’ He pretended he was me. Because he had a concussion, he forgot that he is really your Danno and thinks he is me instead,” Steve said, hoping that would make it clearer to her. But he wasn’t entirely sure if it had helped.

“He thinks he is you,” she said slowly. Steve nodded, sure she had something else to say about it.

“Does he know everybody? Chin and Kono?”

“I’m not sure. They weren’t there when I left. They were on their way. The doctor asked Danny who I am. He said his partner but doesn’t know my name. We also asked Danny if he knows who Grace is. And of course he does,” Steve said with a smile.

“Does he know he’s my daddy?” Grace asked, as perceptive as always.

“He knows you are someone’s daughter. He’s not sure whose. He thinks maybe you’re my daughter.”

“Does he call you Danno?” Grace asked.

“No, Monkey. He doesn’t call me anything. I showed him my driver’s license, to show him that my name is Steve but he thinks it’s fake.”

“Will he remember? Will he know he’s Danno?” Grace asked, a look of concentration on her face.

“The doctor said it is very likely Danny will remember,” Steve told her.

“Okay,” she said finally. “Can I go see him now?”

“Of course,” Steve agreed, starting the car and taking them both to see Danno.

Steve held tightly to Grace’s hand as they walked down the familiar corridor. She didn’t seem especially worried which was a relief to him. He supposed that being the child of a policeman had made it harder for her to be fazed by too much.

As they approached the door to Danny’s room, Grace slowed then stopped, tugging on Steve’s hand.

“What is it, Gracie?” he asked as he knelt down next to her.

“I don’t want him to be scared,” she said.

“Scared?” Steve repeated gently. “Why would he be scared?”

“If he doesn’t know who I belong to,” she said, her eyes rounder than usual even for her.

“He won’t worry about that. He’ll be thrilled to see you. You are his Monkey no matter what he thinks his name is,” Steve assured her.
She thought about that before nodding. When Steve stood up, he was holding her on his hip, Grace not prepared to face her father without Steve’s solid comforting presence.

Steve opened the door, Chin and Kono immediately greeting Grace. She smiled at them before turning to look at Danny. “Hi,” she said, smiling shyly at him.

“Hi Gracie,” Danny said, his smile as warm and happy as it was whenever he saw his Grace. “I’m okay.”

She shook her head before turning to whisper in Steve’s ear. He nodded, setting her carefully on the edge of Danny’s bed. “I’m glad you woke up.”

“Me too,” he agreed, reaching up to run his fingers through her brown hair.

“Did you see the pictures I drew for you?” she asked, pointing to where they were taped on the wall next to his bed.

“I did. They are beautiful,” Danny said. “Thank you.”

“When will you be able to go home?” Grace asked.

“I’m not sure. Another few days, I guess. Why?”

“You need to listen to the doctors,” she told him, sounding very much like her mother when she said it.

“I promise,” Danny told her. “And as soon as I’m back home, you can come over, to play on the beach and take a swim.”

“Good,” Grace agreed. “How’s your leg?”

He shrugged at that, moving the cover aside to show her the bandage.

“Looks like it hurts,” she decided.

“I’ve had worse,” he told her, yawning before he could stop it.

“Can I stay a little while longer?” she asked Steve, looking up at him in pleading.

“Of course you can, Monkey. Your mom will come get you at 6:30 so you go home and have some dinner. How does that sound?” Steve asked.

“Good,” Grace decided, turning back to Danny to tell him every single thing that had happened during the week he had been out. They noticed that she didn’t stop talking even after he had fallen asleep. She understood that hearing her voice was probably the best medicine of all.

“Any improvement?” Steve asked quietly from where they were sitting on the floor not far from Danny’s bed. Except for shaking their heads, Chin and Kono didn’t respond, not knowing what to say in this situation. “Did he know you?” Steve asked, studying them.

“Once we told him our names, he knew who we were,” Chin said.

“He’ll remember, boss,” Kono assured him. “Like Dr. Brownley said, things won’t add up and he’ll figure it out.”

“I hope so. I’m not sure what to do if he still thinks he’s me when he’s released. He obviously thinks
he lives in my house,” Steve said. “Should I move his clothes in? Or…”

“You’ll need him at your house no matter what,” Chin pointed out. “The doctor isn’t going to let him return to work right away. Better he’s with you than by himself.”

“That’s true,” Steve agreed. “All right. I’ll go to his apartment and pack up some of his clothes.”

“We can do that,” Kono said, patting Steve on the shoulder.

“Thank you,” Steve said in relief. “You told the governor, right?”

“I called him,” Chin confirmed. “He said we have as much time as we need. They won’t call us unless they absolutely have to.”

“Good,” Steve said.

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Three days later, Danny was released with strict orders to remain home and to rest for the next week. And when he moved around, he needed to do so on the crutches. He tried to refuse to which Dr. Brownley responded that it was crutches or another 3 days in the hospital. That convinced him, a frown firmly on his face as Steve pushed the wheelchair out to the Camaro.

Once Danny was settled in the car, Steve pulled out and drove them carefully toward his house. Kono and Chin had moved some of Danny’s clothes into the guest room, opening those windows and dusting the furniture, making up the bed and putting a picture of Grace on the bedside table. They brought over more of Grace’s toys, ready for her to visit that weekend. Rachel said that of course Grace should be with Steve and Danny for the weekend now that Danny was out of the hospital.

“So,” Danny said, glancing over at Steve. He was considering his next words, a change from his usual habit of speaking and getting to the point eventually. Or never. Steve was chagrined to realize that he missed Danny’s rants, the sound as soothing as the ocean to him. Danny’s rants told him everything he needed to know about Danny’s mood without listening to the actual words – the pitch, the ebb and flow, the length. So long as Steve nodded and provided the occasional ‘uh huh,’ ‘right,’ or ‘really?’ Danny would continue until he ran out of steam or words.

“Yeah?” Steve prompted, momentarily forgetting that it was now required.

“You and I,” Danny said, looking over at Steve with a determined expression.

“You and I?” Steve repeated, glancing over at him.

“Are we…?”

“Partners,” Steve answered when Danny stopped.

“Outside of work?” Danny asked.

“You mean, do we date?” Steve asked, hoping Danny was not about to ask some potentially embarrassing questions.

“Yes. Are we a couple?”

“No,” Steve said, thinking he might need to add to that but not sure how to explain.
“Because of ‘don’t ask don’t tell’?” Danny asked.

“It’s more complicated than that,” Steve said. “We are best friends. We have been accused more than once of being married. But we’ve never taken the next step.”

“Because?” Danny prompted.

“Because you work… we work together. We aren’t sure it’s a good idea. And I’m pretty sure you’ve never had any sexual experience with men,” Steve admitted, hoping the color rising on his cheeks was not obvious.

“I’m in the Navy,” Danny said firmly as though it negated Steve’s comment.

“That doesn’t automatically equate to experimenting or hook-ups or….” Steve stopped, at a loss to explain that any further. “We’ve never discussed whether or not there is more in our future than friendship.”

Danny turned to look out his window and Steve could tell he was considering his answer. “Is it what you want?” Danny finally asked.

“That doesn’t matter. Since I don’t know what you want. I’m not in this alone. We both have to decide if it’s what we want,” Steve responded. He regretted sounding angry but this conversation was from one of his worst proverbial nightmares.

“Did you ever ask me?” Danny responded, a dog with a bone.

“Stop,” Steve finally requested, shaking his head. “I can’t have this conversation with you right now. I really can’t. This is not something we can talk about while you are still recovering. We’ll talk about it eventually but not just yet. Why you can’t just take no for an answer is beyond me. I swear I don’t understand you sometimes.”

Danny was still watching him, his eyes narrowed. “Do you always talk so much?” He was no less confused when Steve laughed and didn’t stop until they reached the house.

Danny looked up at the house as Steve got his crutches from the backseat, coming around to Danny’s side. Steve tried to help Danny out of the car but his assistance was brushed off with an impatient motion. Steve led him the short distance up the walk, unlocking the door and turning off the alarm, waiting for Danny to make his way in.

“I gave you a key and the code to the alarm?” Danny asked as he continued past Steve and into the living room.

“Something like that,” Steve said, closing the door and following Danny deeper into the house. He watched as Danny looked around the room, carefully moving closer to the bookshelves and examining the photos. Danny picked one up to study it before returning it. Three of the other photos received the same intent study before Danny looked over at Steve who was watching and waiting.

“That doesn’t matter. Since I don’t know what you want. I’m not in this alone. We both have to decide if it’s what we want,” Steve responded. He regretted sounding angry but this conversation was from one of his worst proverbial nightmares.

“Why are all these photos of you?” Danny finally asked, gesturing to the one of Steve in his high school football uniform. The other pictures had Steve in them, along with his father or Danny or Danny and Grace or members of 5-0.

Steve knew this was the first of many awkward questions and wished he knew how to best answer them. Dr. Brownley had said to be honest but in the face of Danny’s confusion, that was not as easy as Steve would have liked.
“Did you put them here?” Danny finally asked.

“Yes,” Steve answered honestly.

“Why?”

“Because it’s my house?” Steve said, wondering why it sounded like a question. Was he so unbalanced by Danny that he couldn’t answer a simple question?

Danny shook his head, sitting heavily on the couch. “I never thanked you.”

“For what?” Steve asked, not following the line of Danny’s thoughts.

“For staying with me in the hospital.”

“It’s what we do,” Steve told him, perching on the arm of the sofa. “You’ve done the same for me.”

“I’ll be fine by myself if you want to go home. Have some time to yourself,” Danny said. His tone implied that he would like the time to himself but was too polite to say it when it would sound so ungrateful.

“I am home,” Steve said casually, hoping he was hiding the tiny heartbreak he felt at Danny’s words.

“You live here. With me,” Danny finally said, looking up at Steve.

“I live here,” Steve confirmed.

“I see,” Danny said. Steve thought the look on his face would be best described as ‘pinched’ – displeased, strained, agitated.

“I was thinking of taking a swim,” Steve said before he could further consider Danny’s expression. “If you’ll be okay.”

“I’m fine,” Danny assured him.

“Do you want something to drink? Or to eat?” Steve offered, standing up.

“Some water?” Danny requested.

“Yes,” Steve agreed with a nod. “Then you can take your pain medicine and your antibiotics.” Steve got him a glass of water and his pills, fetching the TV remote on his way back. Danny accepted them, watching Steve take the steps up two at a time.

Steve entered his bedroom and very carefully closed the door before sitting on the edge of his bed. He didn’t know if he could do this. It was too surreal. Having to explain everything. Providing explanations he could only hope were reasonable. He regretted not accepting Chin and Kono’s offer to come over but he sensed that Danny did need some time to adjust. And Grace would be here as soon as school was out. Rachel would be dropping her off although she didn’t plan to come inside. Neither of them wanted to try to explain to Danny that she was his ex-wife.

Knowing he’d have a clearer head and a better attitude after swimming, Steve pulled on his board shorts and returned back downstairs. Danny wasn’t in the living room which worried Steve until he saw him outside sitting under a tree.

“Hey,” Steve said when he stood next to him. He felt Danny’s eyes on him, the look as tangible as a touch would have been.
“Hi,” Danny replied, squinting up at him.

“Feeling claustrophobic?” Steve finally asked.

“Something like that,” Danny agreed, turning his focus to the ocean.

“Did you come out here without your crutches?” Steve asked, his eyes narrowed. Danny ignored him, Steve shaking his head. “Dr. Brownley said you needed to be careful. You could still tear your stitches. What part of ‘walk on crutches’ was not clear to you?”

Danny made a brief movement of dismissal with his hand, making Steve’s frown deepen.

“I bet you didn’t take your pain medicine either, did you?” Steve asked. Danny didn’t respond but Steve could see the lines of pain around his mouth and eyes. “You don’t have to be brave. We aren’t going to be called for a case. I’m not going anywhere but to take a swim. There is no reason for you to be in pain when you have a way to stop it.”

“It’s not bad,” Danny lied.

Steve snorted, returning to the house for Danny’s crutches and pain medicine. When he stood next to Danny’s chair, he handed him the pain pill, daring him not to take it. Once Danny had swallowed it, Steve nodded in satisfaction.

“You don’t have to babysit me,” Danny said into the silence that was broken only by the waves.

“That was not my intention,” Steve assured him. “I’m only interested in making sure you are okay. And that you have everything you need.”

“I’m fine. Go swim,” Danny said.

Steve finally nodded, going down to the water and diving in. It did feel good to be in the ocean again, slicing through the water, nothing to think about but the rhythm of his breathing, the stretch and pull of his muscles as they worked to propel him forward.

He wasn’t sure how long he had been swimming when he decided it had been long enough. He was tired as he emerged but in a good kind of way. Not the emotional exhaustion he had been battling for the ten days.

Danny was still in the same place as he crossed the beach but he had fallen asleep in the chair. The pain pills had that effect so Steve wasn’t surprised. It was one of the reasons they both avoided them whenever possible, Steve even more so than Danny.

A quick check of his watch assured him that he had time to shower off the salt water before Grace arrived. He was coming back down the steps in clean cargos and a polo when the door opened to admit their little ray of sunshine.

“Hiya Monkey,” Steve said with a smile, squatting down to accept her hug.

“Hi,” she responded, squeezing tight. “How’s Danno?”

“He fell asleep under the trees,” Steve told her, taking her backpack to put it on the stairs. It would go upstairs with her when she was ready. “You want a snack?”

“Can I go see him?”

“Of course,” Steve agreed, walking with her to the doors. He stayed just inside, watching as she
continued down to where Danny was sitting. She stood by his chair, studying him before giving him a very light kiss on the cheek. Satisfied, she came back to the house to request her snack from Steve.

As they were finishing up, Danny came slowly back into the house on his crutches, smiling over her. “Hi Grace.”

“Hi,” she responded brightly. “Are you feeling better?”

“I’m fine,” he assured her, sitting at the table with her. Steve was washing the dishes they had used for their snack, listening but not interfering. “How was school?”

She told him, repeating most of what she had already told Steve. “And Tommy said the aliens will be here next week.”

“Tommy said that?” Danny said, a question for Grace and a request for help from Steve.

“Remember what we said about Tommy?” Steve said, leaning against the cabinet to face Grace as he dried his hands on a bright white towel.

“We put the closed sign on our ears,” she repeated dutifully.

“That’s right. Did you tell Tommy you weren’t listening to him?” Steve asked gently.

“I did, Uncle Steve. But he said he saw it on TV.”

“Uncle Steve?” Danny said, looking up at Steve in confusion.

“He’s my Uncle Steve,” Grace confirmed.

“Not your father,” Danny said in a considering tone.

“You’re her father,” Steve said, wondering again if he was doing the right thing. They had already discussed Danny being Grace’s father but apparently Danny either didn’t remember or didn’t believe it.

“You are my Danno,” Grace agreed, looking from Danny to Steve, the hurt on her face hurting Steve.

“Your Danno,” Danny repeated, the word unfamiliar to him.

“Yes,” Grace said a little too loudly. “Yes, you are my Danno.”

“Gracie,” Steve said gently, squatting before her. “I know you’re upset but that’s no reason to yell, is it?”

“He doesn’t know, Uncle Steve. He doesn’t know I’m his Gracie.” The tears that started falling were as heart-wrenching as they were unsurprising.

“He will, Gracie. He will,” Steve promised her, taking her into his arms to hold her tight against him.

“I’m sorry,” Danny whispered, looking up at Steve holding Grace.

“She’ll be okay,” Steve assured him, carrying her outside to sit with her on one of the beach chairs. “You don’t need to cry, Babe. Danny’s going to be okay.”

“He doesn’t know I’m his Monkey,” Grace said through her tears, her voice muffled by Steve’s shirt.
“I know. We talked about this, remember? How Danny has amnesia?”

“Uh huh,” she sniffled.

“Why are you crying? You’ve been such a brave girl up until now. What has changed that?” He dug his handkerchief out of one of his many pockets, using it to mop up her face. When he was done, she buried her face into his neck, her body tense against his. “What is it, Grace? Talk to me,” he requested, his right hand resting on the back of her head.

“Tommy said Danny isn’t my daddy any more.”

“Oh Gracie. Tommy says a lot of things, most of which aren’t true. Of course Danno is your daddy. Even if he doesn’t remember, he still loves you. Danno will always love you.”

“He will?”

“That will never change,” Steve promised. “He asked me if you could come after school and stay this weekend. He wanted you here.”

“He did?” she asked, growing calmer.

“He did. Your mom agreed because she knows how much Danno loves you. Okay?”

She sniffed, leaning against him before nodding resolutely. “I’m sorry I got your shirt wet.”

“It will dry,” he said, kissing her on the head. “Let’s go back in and see Danno.”

“Okay,” she agreed, holding tight to him as he stood. She didn’t usually want to be held or carried so much but these circumstances were far from usual and whatever provided her comfort was what he would gladly provide to her.

“I’m sorry,” Danny said up to them when Steve stood in front of the couch, Grace looking down at Danny.

“It’s okay, Danno. You can’t help that you forgot,” Grace told him. “Can we watch Finding Nemo?”

“Of course,” Steve agreed, settling her on the couch next to Danny. He started the movie, watching Danny study Grace with love lighting his eyes. That hadn’t changed. “If you two are okay, I need to go do some housework.”

“We’re good,” Grace said, leaning against Danny who automatically wrapped one arm around her and pulled her closer. She sighed, tension ebbing from her body as she became absorbed in the familiar movie.

It was about an hour later that Steve returned to the living room to find Grace and Danny laughing at the movie. Danny looked better than he had since before he was in the hospital and Grace looked completely at home with him.

“Kono and Chin called to check on you,” Steve said, sitting on the arm of the couch and smiling at the two of them.

“You tell them I have everything I need?” Danny asked, hugging Grace with one arm.

“I did,” Steve agreed. “They wanted to know if they can bring us dinner.”

“I’d like that. What about you, Monkey?” Danny asked her.
“Pizza!” Grace requested with a bright smile.

“Pizza it is,” Steve confirmed, taking out his phone and calling Kono. She said they would be there in 45 minutes complete with more beer and soda for Grace. They just wouldn’t tell Rachel.

As promised, Kono and Chin arrived with pizza, beer, soda, and ice cream. Their choices were met with great approval, everyone gathering around the dining room table to share their bounty. Chin regaled them with how Kono had wiped out on her first wave this afternoon, face planting in the sand. Kono tried to deny it but Chin only had to touch her hair to bring back fingers with a fine coating of sand. They all laughed, Kono threatening them with all manners of bodily harm. But the twinkle in her eyes was unmistakable. It was even brighter when Grace extracted her promise to continue her surfing lesson in the morning.

“Will you come get me?” Grace asked her.

“I’ll take you,” Steve told Grace as he reached over to wipe a stray piece of cheese from her cheek. His hand stilled as he watched Danny take another slice of pizza, one from the pineapple and ham pie. Steve’s surprise telegraphed it to everyone else, all of them turning to watch Danny take a large bite.

“What?” Danny asked in confusion.

“You’re eating ham and pineapple, Danno,” Grace finally said.

“Yeah?”

“You hate ham and pineapple,” Kono said evenly.

“I do?” Danny asked, looking at the slice still in his hand.

“You rant about it being an abomination, brah,” Chin confirmed.

“I rant?” Danny was considering all that they had said, looking at Chin in some question.

“It’s your normal form of communication,” Chin said making it sound much kinder than accusatory.

“Huh,” Danny finally said, returning his focus to his pizza. Everybody else resumed eating, wondering silently about this pseudo-Danny and if they would get the real one back.

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The next morning, Steve got up at his usual time, going out for his swim in the early light. He was a little surprised to emerge from the ocean to find Danno sitting in one of the beach chairs, sipping from a cup of coffee, a second on the arm of the empty chair.

“Good morning,” Steve said as he dried his face and wiped the towel over his body.

“Morning,” Danny returned, openly watching Steve and making no effort to disguise his admiration.

“Grace still asleep?” Steve asked as he sat next to Danny, pretending Danny didn’t have a hungry look in his eyes.

“She is,” Danny agreed. “She’s a very special little girl.”

“She is that,” Steve said with a smile.
“Who is her mother?” Danny asked, frowning in a way Steve had learned meant he was trying to figure it out.

“Rachel.”

“Your ex?” Danny asked.

“Yours. I’ve never been married,” Steve corrected.

“Why not?”

“Life in the service,” Steve said with a shrug.

“Yet I managed to marry and have a child as remarkable as Grace?”

“You were never in the service,” Steve reminded him. They had discussed this topic several times but it seemed one of those things Danny couldn’t or wouldn’t remember.

“I was in the Navy,” Danny insisted.

“What was your assignment?” Steve asked, keeping his building impatience at bay with some effort.

“I was a SEAL. Everything else is classified,” Danny told him.

“You were never a SEAL, Danny. I was,” Steve said, suspecting that some of his impatience was creeping into his tone.

“If I wasn’t a SEAL, how did I survive being shot and nearly drowned?”

“By doing what you thought I would do,” Steve repeated for, what, the 100th time? Amnesia didn’t usually mean you lost what you had learned while you were recovering from it. Steve was pretty sure this was Danny being stubborn, not actually failing to remember the truth. “We’ve discussed this. I’ve told you that you were never a SEAL. You were a policeman in New Jersey. You moved here to be with Grace when Rachel remarried. I know you lost some of your memories but you should be able to retain what I’ve told you since.”

Danny was staring at Steve, a look of confusion on his face. “None of that is the way I remember it.”

“You don’t remember. That’s the problem.”

“I’m sorry you’re angry,” Danny finally said, making Steve sigh.

“No, I’m sorry. I don’t have any right to be angry,” Steve said, shaking his head. “Tell me what you do remember. Tell me what’s going on inside your head.”

“It’s… uhm… you know….”

“I don’t know, Danny. Use your words and tell me,” Steve requested.

“I know, or believe, you wouldn’t lie to me. I know I trust you,” Danny said slowly, considering each word. “But none of it adds up.”

“What doesn’t?”

“I don’t know,” Danny said in frustration, looking intently into his coffee cup. “I… want but… I don’t know.”
“All right. I’m sorry. I need to go shower so I can make breakfast,” Steve said, not liking the sound of defeat in his own voice.

“I can do it,” Danny offered.

“Thanks. But you don’t need to stand up that long. I’ll make us pancakes. It’s Grace’s favorite breakfast,” Steve said with a fond smile.

“All right,” Danny agreed, remaining in the beach chair as Steve went back into the house to shower and dress.

When he was out and ready, he went into Grace’s room, one hand on her shoulder as he sat next to her on the bed. “Hey Monkey.”

“Hey,” she mumbled, barely opening her eyes.

“Wake up. We need to have breakfast so we can go surfing,” he reminded her, smoothing the hair from her face.

“Kay,” she said, snuggling deeper into the covers.

“Don’t fall back asleep. That brings the tickle-monster out of his hiding place,” he warned.

“Not the tickle-monster,” she said, more awake at the words.

“Oh yeah. I hear him coming. Oh no. He’s here,” Steve warned, tickling her through the covers. She squealed in delight, pretending to try to get away from him.

“I’m up. I’m up,” she squealed, laughing as she squirmed under his hands. “Call him off.”

“I don’t know,” Steve said, the tickles slowing but not stopping. “You aren’t out of the bed yet. What if you fall asleep as soon as he leaves?”

“I’m up,” Grace repeated, getting out from under the covers to stand on the bed. “See. I’m up. Call him off.”

“All right. Put your swim suit on and come down for breakfast,” Steve said with a laugh.

“Pancakes,” she agreed in delight, jumping on the bed.

“No Monkey jumping on the bed,” he said, snatching her up and twirling her around before depositing her on the floor. After kissing her on the head, he left her room to go down to the kitchen. The love he felt for her caught him by surprise once again, filling his heart in a way he never expected. And if he had started to have those same sort of feelings toward her father? Who could blame him? He and Danny had a connection neither of them had ever tried to deny. Two halves of the whole that slotted together seamlessly. Remaining distant from Danny had been difficult while he was recovering and he knew they would need to have a very serious discussion when Danny was back to himself. From the things Danny had said, Steve was pretty sure they would both end up with what they both wanted.

“I’m ready,” Grace announced as she entered the kitchen, a tee shirt and shorts over her swim suit.

“So I see. I’ll braid your hair after we eat if you want.”

“Kay,” she agreed, looking around the kitchen. “Where’s Daddy?”
“On the beach. You want to go get him?”

She nodded, racing out of the house and down to the beach. “Daddy,” she called, stopping beside Danny’s chair. “Good morning, Daddy.”

“Good morning, sweetheart,” he responded, kissing her. “You sleep well?”

“I did. Uncle Steve said breakfast is ready.”

“Okay,” Danny agreed, reaching down for his crutches. When he was sure they were steady under his arms, he followed Grace up to the house. Steve held the chair steady as Danny sat down, Steve refilling his coffee cup and giving Grace a glass of orange juice.

“Do you want to take a shower after we get back?” Steve asked Danny as Grace ate her pancakes.

“I would,” Danny agreed. “Can you rebandage my leg?”

“It’s not a problem,” Steve said. “The hospital gave us all the supplies we need.”

“Are you coming to the beach with us?” Grace asked Danny.

“I’d like to. But I think I better stay here,” Danny said. Grace nodded in understanding, requesting another pancake. “Where are you putting all those?” Danny teased.

“I’m a growing girl,” Grace told him happily, pouring more syrup on her pancake.

Danny was frowning down at his plate, not eating any of his food.

“Would you prefer something else?” Steve offered as he ate from his pancakes.

“Do you have any granola?” Danny asked.

Steve nodded, standing up to get it out of the cabinet, providing him a bowl, the milk and a banana.

“Thank you,” Danny said with a nod.

Grace looked from Danny to Steve with a tiny frown marring her face. Steve leaned down and kissed her on the head, reassuring her that it was all right.

When Grace declared she’d had enough to eat, Steve finished his pancakes and put their dishes in the sink to soak. “We’ll take care of them when we get back.”

Grace nodded, nearly dancing in excitement. “I’m ready. Let’s go.”

“So I see, Monkey. You have your towel? Your sun screen?”

“Yep. Oh. Will you braid my hair?” she requested, looking up at Steve with round excited eyes.

“Right,” Steve agreed, going with her into the living room. He sat on the couch, Grace standing between his knees as he brushed her hair. “One or two?”

“One,” she decided, waiting patiently as he divided her hair and expertly braided it into a perfect French braid. After he secured it with her hair tie, he happened to glance up to find Danny watching them, a warm smile on his face.

“You’re really good at that,” Danny said with naked affection in his voice.
“I have a little sister. I learned on her, perfected it on Grace,” Steve said with a shrug. “Okay, Monkey. I think we’re ready now.”

“Yep,” she said, grabbing his hand and pulling him toward the door. “We’ll see you later, Danno.”

“Have fun and be careful out there,” Danny said, watching them leave.

~o0o~

The house, as always, was way too quiet when Grace had left with Rachel. Grace wanted to spend Sunday night with them as well but Rachel thought that Steve and Danny probably needed some time to themselves. After many promises that Grace would be with them for dinner on Wednesday and a bonus weekend coming up, Grace left with Rachel.

Steve was in the kitchen, tidying up when he heard Danny come in. The quiet thump of the crutches make it impossible for Danny to sneak up on Steve, not that he had ever succeeded before he was injured.

“Hey,” Danny said, sitting at the table and watching the steady, sure motions as Steve washed the few remaining dishes.

“Hey. You want something to drink?” Steve offered.

“Just some water?” Danny requested. Steve nodded, getting a glass and filling it with cold water from the fridge before setting it in front of Danny. Steve turned back to the sink, keeping his hands occupied and wishing he could his brain as busy. “Can you sit down for a minute?” Danny finally asked.

Steve’s movements stopped, his shoulders going stiff. He didn’t like the tone of Danny’s voice, the sound sending warning signals out directly to Steve. “What’s up?” Steve asked, sitting at the table and trying to look relaxed. He doubted he succeeded.

“Yesterday you asked me what I remember,” Danny started, meeting Steve’s eyes.

“Yeah,” Steve said, nodding in counterfeit encouragement.

“It’s like broken links,” Danny said.

“Broken links.”

“On a webpage. You find a link you think will give you the rest of the information you need. You click it but it’s broken. It doesn’t go anywhere. That’s what it’s like.”

Steve nodded, Danny’s words making complete sense to him.

“I think about Grace and I know I should remember when she was born. How my life changed from the day she arrived. But I try to think about it and… nothing. The link is broken. I know you and I are friends. And partners. I try to remember when we met. But I can’t. I know I trust you with my life. And the fact that Grace is so comfortable around you means you’ve spent a lot of time with her. I don’t remember it but I know it.”

Steve waited, wishing there was something he could do to ease the tension etched around Danny’s eyes and mouth. But he couldn’t restore Danny’s memories to him. He could only wait and do what Danny needed him to do. He just wasn’t sure what that was.
“You said we are friends. And partners. Chin and Kono love you and respect you and are in some ways deferential to you. I take that to mean that we work for you. I don’t head up 5-0. You do.”

“Yes but it hardly matters,” Steve assured him.

“That’s what I figured,” Danny agreed. “When Rachel was picking up Grace, I knew her on some level. Not the way you should know your ex-wife. But I knew she was Grace’s mother even if I don’t remember being her father.”

“How can I help?” Steve finally asked, not able to stand seeing the pain on Danny’s face. Pain that had nothing to do with his physical injuries.

“I don’t know,” Danny admitted. “I wish I did. Have you ever had amnesia?”

“Once. On a mission.”

“How long?” Danny asked.

“A couple of weeks. We were in the middle of the operation and there was nothing we could do. My team had to keep me with them. I didn’t know their names but I knew I trusted them. The skills I needed were part of my muscle memory so I wasn’t a liability. If I had been…. ” Steve shrugged, not having anything else to add.

“Do you remember? Not remembering?” Danny asked.

“I remember feeling disconnected. Like I had come in the middle of the movie and didn’t know quite what to do with myself.”

“But you recovered those memories?”

“Almost all of them. I don’t remember being hurt. I’m told it was because of a hand grenade that exploded too close to my location. But I don’t remember it.”

“Probably just as well,” Danny said.

“Without a doubt. I was deaf in my right ear for a couple of months. I was afraid it was permanent but my hearing finally came back. Not 100% but I’ll take it.”

“I guess you are lucky you are as whole as you are,” Danny said, considering it.

“I am. You’ve kept me safe since we met.”

“You’re welcome,” Danny said.

“You claim it’s a full time job,” Steve said with a laugh.

“When did we meet?” Danny asked. Steve was glad that there was no pain reflected in the question.

Steve told him about pulling their guns on each other and how Steve decided Danny would be the first member of 5-0.

“You railroaded me?” Danny asked with a laugh. They had migrated to the beach, beers making them mellow and open to laughter.

“Pretty much. You hated me. Then you punched me,” Steve told him.
“Punched you,” Danny repeated, making Steve tell him the details. They both laughed at that, Danny shaking his head. “No wonder I hated you.”

“I deserved it. I was pretty much a hard-ass,” Steve admitted. “I’ve mellowed.”

“This is mellowed?” Danny asked, squinting over at him in disbelief.

“Totally. I’m a marshmallow compared to when you first met me.”

“I find that a little hard to believe,” Danny said, shaking his head.

“Ask Chin and Kono. They’ll tell you,” Steve assured him.

“I will. Providing you don’t kick our asses.”

“Never,” Steve promised. “We are ohana.”

“Family,” Danny said, surprising himself.

“Through thick and thin. Good and bad.”

“Sickness and health,” Danny said, not sure if he was teasing or not.

“Always have been,” Steve agreed with a nod.

They talked a while longer about the things they had been through, Danny laughing at some of their stranger adventures, unable to believe some of the things they had done. He listened intently when Steve confessed to being arrested for the former Governor’s murder, Danny not doubting for a minute that he had been framed.

“You broke out of prison,” Danny repeated, shaking his head.

“Yeah. You were pissed,” Steve admitted.

“I would think so,” Danny said. “You are something else.”

“So you tell me,” Steve said smiling. A glance at his watch confirmed that it was late so he reluctantly stood. “I need to get to bed. Some of us have to go to work in the morning.”

“I feel bad for you, big guy,” Danny said, laughing up at him.

“Yeah. Me too. You going to get back to the house by yourself?”

“I’ll be fine. It’s nice out here,” Danny said.

“All right,” Steve agreed. “Good night.”

“Good night, Babe,” Danny said, surprising them both. If there was a smile on Steve’s face as he went up to his house, he wasn’t going to deny it.

~o0o~

“McGarrett,” Steve said as he answered his phone. He was at his desk, frowning at his computer and wondering why the email he was trying to send was refusing to go through. What was up with that?

“Hey,” Danny’s familiar voice said. But there was an edge to it, one that put Steve immediately on alert.
“Are you okay? What’s wrong?” Steve asked, standing up and making sure he had his keys.

“I’m fine. Stand down, Super SEAL. I’m only calling to tell you that the links are all working,” Danny told him.

“Oh,” Steve said, knowing there was more that he should add. “I’m on my way home.”

“You don’t have to do that, Steve. I’m okay.”

“I know. But nothing’s going on here. I need to see that you are okay,” Steve admitted.

“All right,” Danny agreed. “I’ll see you in a few minutes. And for the love of God, do not exceed the speed limit. No sirens. No lights. Tell me you’ll drive safely, Steven.”

“I promise,” Steve agreed, smiling as he hung up. He told Chin and Kono about the phone call, promising that he would keep them posted. They would have dinner tomorrow night if Danny felt up to it.

Danny was still on the beach when Steve got home. He grabbed two beers before going out to join him.

“Hey,” Steve said, handing Danny one of the Longboards.

“Hey,” Danny said.

“What happened?”

“Nothing dramatic. I took a nap in the hammock and started dreaming. About you. And Grace. And us. That seems to have opened the flood gates. Once I stopped trying so hard to remember, I did.”

“Do you remember everything? Including thinking you were me?”

“Everything,” Danny confirmed. “I think I ought to feel embarrassed but I acknowledge I had no control over what happened. I do know that if I hadn’t decided I was you, I would not have survived being tossed overboard.”

Steve nodded, waiting. Danny had more to say. Steve knew that.

“I was sure you were dead,” Danny said quietly. “I hoped you were tied up and unable to come get me. But I was really afraid you didn’t come back because they had killed you. And that was something I couldn’t handle. I knew I had to survive to find them and kill them to make up for them killing you. I had no idea what to do when I ended up in the water. I did kick off my shoes. That seemed like a huge triumph. But other than that, I had no idea. Until I thought ‘what would Steve do?’ How would you handle the situation? That’s what saved me. You saved me,” Danny said softly, looking out at the ocean and unable to meet Steve’s eyes.

“Danno,” Steve said, one warm hand on his arm. “I understand. I understood the entire time. I wanted you back, whole. But it never bothered me that you thought you were me.”

“You had Aneurysm face,” Danny said with a bitter laugh.

“Only because you were not you. I missed you, Danno. Maybe it’s not fair but it’s true. I missed your rants. I missed you telling me all the ways I make your life hell. I even missed your constant complaints about all things Hawaii,” Steve admitted.

Danny laughed at that, shaking his head. “Can I tell you a secret? One you must swear to never
repeat? Because I will kick your ass if you repeat this to anyone.”

“What?” Steve asked, leaning closer with a smile on his face.

“I liked the ham and pineapple pizza,” Danny whispered. He frowned when Steve took his phone out. “What are you doing? I will kick your ass.”

“Calling 9-1-1. You are clearly sicker than I ever thought,” Steve said, laughing when Danny snatched his phone out of his hand.

“I will kick your ass,” Danny repeated, grinning at Steve.

“Not with one good leg, you won’t,” Steve reminded him, laughing with Danny. He felt himself relax in his chair. His Danny was back. Life was good.
Letters to Our Children

Chapter Summary

Letters written to the children from Steve and Danno. This chapter takes place before Steve is elected Governor.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Our dearest Grace,

You will always hold a special place in our hearts.

You were our first. Even though you were already eight when you entered your Daddy Steve’s life, he loved you from that first day, from the first minute he met you at the football game. Of course he had heard all about you. Anyone who gets within hearing distance of your Danno knows all about his Gracie – how much Danno loves you, how you are the center of his world, and how there is nothing he wouldn’t do for you.

Your Danno’s life changed forever the day you were born. He fell in love. Oh, he loved your mommy. And he loves his Steve. He loves his parents and sisters and his brother. But when he saw you the first time, with your cocoa brown eyes looking up at him, and your tufts of brown hair sticking up all over your perfect head, he knew his life and his heart would never be the same.

You were so brave when your Danno and your mommy decided they couldn’t live together any longer. You were too young to understand what ‘divorce’ meant. But what you have always understood is that they both love you and want only what is best for you. Not living together was hard but it was better for them and for you.

You also understood how your Danno felt about your Steve even before we did. You saw how we looked at each other and knew we were meant to be a family. Once we were finally smart enough to admit it, you gave us your blessings to get married and that was all we needed.

We know it hasn’t been easy being the eldest of the extended Williams-McGarrett/Edwards tribe. You were expected to watch out for the little ones when you would rather have been surfing with Auntie Kono or riding behind Uncle Chin on his motorcycle. You never complained. You never said it wasn’t your responsibility. You loved the other children and you protected them. There were times when you had to act more like their mother than their sister and we are grateful for that. And we are grateful for you. We cannot imagine our lives without our Gracie in it.

The other children knew that you would listen to them when they thought they had no one else to turn to. You convinced John that his fathers would still love him even when he crashed the Camaro. Of course you were the one he called. You wouldn’t yell. You would come to the police station and collect him. And you did. You kept him calm and you kept him safe until we could come for him. He was still upset when we arrived but as we talked to you, you reminded us that we were teenage boys at one time too. The car could be replaced. And he knew it was going to be okay. You had promised and you kept it.
You are the one who explained the intricacies of womanhood to Emma. We dreaded the day when she would come to us and say it had started. She wasn’t our baby any longer. We were as prepared to handle it as we possibly could be. Then you invited her to your apartment the day she turned 12 and told her what to expect, what would happen, what was already happening to her body. On that fateful day when womanhood came to her, she was prepared. One phone call to you and she was ready. ‘It’s handled, Dads,’ was all she said. And we never had to discuss it again.

When you decided to go to law school, we couldn’t have been more pleased with your decision. And then you chose to join the distract attorney’s office, helping to convict the criminals we track down and throw into jail. (Because you know we would never arrest anyone who isn’t guilty.) Law enforcement is even more like our family business now, and we sleep better knowing you are prosecuting the bad guys instead of chasing them down.

Now that you are all/mostly grown up, we can’t imagine where the time has gone, as cliché as we know that sounds. We have watched you blossom into the beautiful, amazing woman that you are. When you get married tomorrow, you will be adding to our family, not leaving it. You will be moving out of our house but not our hearts. You are bringing Aomu into the Williams-McGarrett/Edwards clan and we welcome him. You would not have said yes to him if he had not always understood that marrying you is accepting us all – accepting our inherent craziness, our arguments, our traditions, our love of one another. He has accepted that all five children have two sets of parents and we love you all. Now we will have six children to spoil and love and have with us for holidays and barbeques on the beach.

We love you, Gracie. You were our first and you will always hold a special place in our hearts.

~0~

Our dearest Alicia,

You will always hold a special place in our hearts.

You were our second child. There are those who would say we have no parental claim on you. We can’t agree with that. All five of the Williams-McGarrett/Edwards children have two sets of parents. Anyone who doesn’t understand that cannot understand how love-ties, not blood ties alone, make an ohana.

You know that Danno was disappointed when it turned out that you weren’t his blood daughter. The joy he felt when Rachel said he was your father turned into sadness and resignation when she realized that the timing of your conception was off.

That he did not give you life never meant he loved you less. Both of us love you as though we are your biological fathers. When you arrived in our lives, we knew you were going to change us both forever. And you have. You have taught us patience – something Steve needed more of from the beginning. You have taught us humor – how could we not laugh when you dyed John’s hair purple for his third birthday. You have reminded us of the beauty of ballet, because no one else dances with the heart and soul that you bring to each of your performances.

We wish we could be in attendance at every one of your dances. But you know that our jobs make that impossible. Only keeping Hawaii safe for you and your brothers and sisters would keep us away. Because nothing is more important to us than our family.

Thank you for looking out for John and Emma and Zacchary. We know there are times when you would prefer to be away from them but you never complain. You are never unkind to them, never make them feel like a burden, never show them anything but love and kindness and patience. Thank
Thank you for showing Emma the intricacies of mascara and eyeliner. We were willing but you were capable. Thank you for convincing John that having his eyebrows pierced would be painful and obvious and, well, stupid. We wouldn’t have killed him as much as we would have been tempted. Thank you for making sure the temptation was removed altogether.

Thank you for being the remarkable, incredible daughter that you are. We love you and are thankful that you are a part of our lives.

You will reside forever in our hearts.

~0~

Our dearest John,

You will always hold a special place in our hearts.

You were the first child born to us both. When we saw you that first time, we knew our lives would never be the same. You had Steve’s brown curls and Danno’s blue eyes. And you had our hearts from that first minute.

As we watched you grow, we were amazed by your intelligence, your kindness, your sense of humor. We know that no one could survive the craziness of the Williams-McGarrett/Edwards clan without a sense of humor. We could always count on you to make us laugh, to find the sunshine on the darkest of days.

You could have been eclipsed by the daughters older than you or the two children younger than you. That never happened. Because you have always been strong and certain of who you are. Some middle children suffer from ‘the forgotten child’ syndrome but that was never the case with you. You always loved your older sisters and the two littler kids. You amuse and entertain Grace and Alicia just as you watch out for Zacchary and Emma. You are a great big brother to them and never ever complain when they follow you around like two little shadows.

When other children were unkind to Zacchary, you stopped their taunting. You protected him and prevented it from reoccurring through humor, and by pointing out that everyone has a flaw for which they could be mocked. That’s all it took. They never singled him out again. Because they knew if they did, you would keep your promise and the blood that would be spilt on the playground would not be yours.

You know that you are named after your grandfather John McGarrett. I see a lot of my father in you and I am smile every time it happens. The tilt of your head, the knowing look you get in your eye, your unwavering sense of honor that will keep you on the right path throughout your life. Chin Ho says that there are times when you appear to be channeling your grandfather - all the best of your grandfather came to you. And that is a precious gift to me and to Mary.

The first John McGarrett would have been proud to have you as his namesake and I regret that he did not live to meet you. I am glad that through you his name will live on.

Your abilities on the football field comes as no surprise to either of us. It shows your patience, your intelligence, your ability to see and analyze all that goes on around you. That’s how you have been successful on and off the field. If you choose to continue playing in college and beyond we can’t promise to attend all of your games. We will watch as many as we can and we will root for you and brag about you and do all those things you claim to embarrass you. But that’s what happens when you have two such proud fathers.
And never doubt that we are proud of you. We love you for all that you are and all that you do.

~0~

*Our dearest Zacchary,*

You will always hold a special place in our hearts.

While your mom was still pregnant with you, she knew you were going to be special, different from the other children. She couldn’t tell us what the difference was but you were your own person even before you were born.

When you arrived, you didn’t act like other infants. You didn’t fuss but you never seemed happy either. The first time you looked at Steve was the first time you smiled. There was a bond between the two of us from that first moment. No one can explain it. No one questions it, not inside the Williams-McGarrett /Edwards tribe. It is the way things have always been between the two of us.

We know it’s not always easy being who you are. All children go through difficult times growing up but your life has been more difficult than most. You never resented the children who were unkind to you or the adults who did not understand you. The older Williams-McGarrett /Edwards children love and cherish you and that seems to cushion you from the sometimes harsh appraisal of strangers. They do not intend to be unkind. They are simply ignorant of what a remarkable person you really are.

Even though some of the simplest acts of social interactions defy your understanding, like they can with Steve, you know that your family loves you and there is nothing you could ever do that would change that. We know you secretly wish you were ‘normal,’ but we can assure you that none of us are really normal. There is no such thing. We all possess some aspect of human behavior that is a mystery to the rest of us, like Danno’s inability to know when to finally stop talking.

What most people don’t have is your genius for computers. None of us doubt that you will be the one that initiates the next generation of computers, in the same way that Bill Gates and Steve Jobs did. You already understand how they work far better than anyone your age should. Better even than Chin Ho does. And all of our computers are more powerful and more efficient because you have worked your magic on them. It’s only a matter of time before Zacchary Edwards is the one all other computer geniuses turn to for the latest in software enhancement and development.

There are those who cannot believe that your Stan isn’t jealous of the relationship you share with Steve. They cannot understand that you and Steve share a bond that goes beyond blood. It is spiritual, and it is indefinable. And Stan understands the nature and reality of it.

When anyone has the nerve to ask Stan, he tells them about the weekend you spent with us when you were two and a half years old. When you got to our house, you were in diapers. When you went home with Stan and Rachel, you were potty trained. You decided that if Steve wore big-boy underpants, you needed to as well. He still has the Superman briefs that he bought to match yours. Even though Danno has tried to throw them out a hundred of times, Steve won’t let them go. When you make your first million dollars, which we know will be before your 21st birthday, you can buy him new ones. And we won’t tell anyone if you buy yourself Superman briefs to match.

Never doubt that all of the Williams-McGarrett /Edwards love you unconditionally. They long ago promised to watch out for you, give you a hand when you need it, accept your help when they require it. We know that you love all of your ohana even when you are overwhelmed by them. We overwhelm ourselves sometimes so we understand when you need a time-out away from the madness of the tribe. We will always welcome you with open arms and open hearts when you are ready to return.
We love you. You will never have reason to doubt that.

~0~

*Our dearest Emma,*

You will always hold a special place in our hearts.

As the youngest of the Williams-McGarrett/Edwards tribe you will always have to put up with two over-protective fathers, two very protective big brothers, and two doting sisters. You could have been overwhelmed by those who came before you but you never were.

We would never say you have taken advantage of your place as the baby sister. You do have a remarkable capacity for using the lessons learned by the older members of the ohana to avoid having to train your fathers. By the time you were born, we knew how much leeway we could give you without spoiling you. When we could say yes when our first instinct would be to say no. When to stay tough and when to pretend your smile changed our minds.

As much as we know you love being the baby sister, we also know that you could have been overwhelmed by those who came before you. You could have taken the easy way and followed in their footsteps, do what they have always done, be a reflection of the older children. Instead, you made your own path and you follow your own spirit.

While all the other children love to swim, you are a true aquababy. You are never happier than when you are in the water. We have no doubt that you will be the first female SEAL because we have seen for ourselves that once you make up your mind, nothing will stand in your way. The other children are in awe of your ability to swim almost endlessly, keeping up with Steve and even tiring him out when he’s been away from the water for any length of time.

As much as we (mostly Danno) like to grumble about the constant parade of friends you bring to the house, you know the truth - that we love having them with us for picnics and dinner and afternoons on the beach. Their joy is a reflection of yours – the happiness you bring with you wherever you go. Laughing is your default setting which is one of the many reasons your friends, and even strangers, flutter around you like so many moths drawn to your light. Kono who is no slouch in the happiness department says she doesn’t know anyone as innately cheerful as you are. When you tried to learn to surf, falling off the board more times than you could count, you popped up laughing each and every time. She’s never known anyone more resilient than you are.

We aren’t surprised. We have seen your determination, your strength, your ability to make the very best of any situation. Because it can’t be easy to be the only girl living full time in our house. We don’t really believe you have to cut through the testosterone with a knife as you like to claim. That doesn’t mean that we really want to let you practice putting mascara on Steve (even though I have the eyelashes for it, as you always remind me) or perfecting your curling techniques on Danny’s hair (or even straightening it for me) or getting John to help you make one more Barbie dress (he still doesn’t understand why he’s the one who had to learn to sew). As much as we like to grumble about what you ‘forced’ us to do, you know we wouldn’t trade a second of those times for all the tea in China. (Of course as you’ve often asked, what would we do with all that tea if we had it?)

You are our youngest, our last child. And we could not wish for anyone other than you to hold that very special place. Our lives are fuller, more complete because you are in it. Never doubt that we love you with all of our hearts and all of our souls.

*With all of our love,*
I may have messed up their ages in this chapter. I can't seem to keep the timeline straight in my head. I guess that's what I get for writing them out of sequence. Oh well. I apologize to the readers (and the imaginary children) if I have them wrong.
“Morning, Babe,” Steve said as he approached the Adirondack chairs. He had just emerged from his morning swim, looking as brain-melting hot as usual. But Danny barely acknowledged him except for giving him the towel from the back of his chair. Steve accepted it to give a cursory swipe over his body before sitting in the vacant chair, leaning over to snag Danny’s coffee. Even that failed to get a rise out of him. “What are you doing?” Steve finally asked, looking over to study his unnaturally quiet partner.

“Making a list,” Danny responded, waving at the yellow legal pad perched on the arm of his chair.

“I can see that. What’s it for?” Steve asked, leaning closer to try and read what Danny had written in his tidy handwriting.

“The wedding,” Danny said in a tone that implied that it really ought to be obvious, even to Steve. He reached over for the coffee cup that had taken up residence on the arm of Steve’s chair, adding several items to the bottom of the list before sipping the coffee.

“Wedding?” Steve repeated, looking out over the ocean. “Whose?”

“Grace’s,” Danny said with heavy sarcasm.

“Seems a little young for a wedding,” Steve decided, a smile threatening to ruin his nonchalance.

“You…you are… never mind,” Danny said, waving his hand in dismissal, the insult too much trouble when he had far more important things to concern himself with.

“What do you need me to do to help plan this wedding?” Steve asked with a distinct smirk.

“Is your dress blue uniform clean?” Danny asked, glancing over at Steve and not giving in to the impulse to smile in response to the fact that Steve was looking at him like Danny was what Steve wanted for breakfast. And lunch. And possibly dinner.

“Yes. Am I planning to wear it some time soon?”

Rather than answer, Danny made a checkmark next to one of the items, studying the rest. “All right,” Danny announced, standing up and stretching. “I’ll see you later.”

“Where are you going?” Steve asked with a frown up at him.

“Out.”

“When will you be back?”

“Later. Try not to blow up the house while I’m gone,” Danny requested, leaning down to kiss
“No promises,” Steve said, looking up at him. “I can come with you.”

Danny shook his head, a distinctly patronizing smile on his face. “No you may not. This will take me half the time without you. Your job today is ask Chin to be your maid of honor.”

“Maid of honor?” Steve laughed.

“Yes. Kono’s already agreed to be my best man. Can you handle talking to Chin?”

“Yes,” Steve decided after pretending to consider it. “But why isn’t Chin my best man?”

“I called dibs,” Danny said with a shrug. “Kono said yes but was not going to be anybody’s maid of anything. So there you go.”

“Then we need to have two best men…people…something.”

“Whatever. Just ask him. He’ll say yes. But you still have to formally request he stand for you.”

“Okay. I can do that,” Steve agreed. “I’ll tell them to come to dinner.”

“The idea is sound. But what if you invite them instead?” Danny suggested. “You can’t order them to come eat with us.”

“I can try,” Steve said with a not at all adorable pout.

“Good luck with that,” Danny said. “Do I need to get food for dinner while I’m out?”

“No. We’re good,” Steve said, standing up and stalking him until Danny allowed himself to be engulfed in a strong hug, Danny pretending to grumble about wet SEALs and personal space and things that Steve easily ignored as he kissed the words out of Danny’s mouth.

Danny finally made it inside where he showered and pulled on his jeans and a tee shirt. He wasn’t surprised that Steve was in the living room when he came down, sipping his coffee and watching Danny with his usual precision focus.

“What?” Danny asked, making sure he had his phone and legal pad.

“You might need these,” Steve suggested, dangling Danny’s keys from his finger.

Danny shook his head, taking Steve’s cup to drink from it before returning it. “Kono’s coming to pick me up.”

“Is that one of the jobs of the best man?” Steve asked.

“It is this time,” Danny agreed, reaching up to kiss Steve. “Please stay out of trouble while I’m gone.”

Steve shrugged in complete innocence, stealing another kiss as they heard Kono blow the horn to signal her arrival.

“I should be back by 2,” Danny said as he opened the front door.

“Bye,” Steve said, watching until Danny closed the door behind him.
It was closer to 2:30 when Danny returned, entering the house with a box that seemed to be filled to overflowing.

“Hey,” Steve said, following Danny into the kitchen as he put the box on the table. “What’s all this?

“Need to know basis, babe,” Danny said, turning to smile up at him. “Glad to see the house is still standing.”

Steve shrugged at that, going back to the sink to finish washing the dishes he’d been working on when Danny returned.

“You call Chin?” Danny asked, getting himself a glass of water.

“Yeah. He said yes. And he and Malia will be here at 6:00,” Steve said. “Kono and Charlie coming?”

“They are,” Danny agreed, taking out a folder from the box, opening it to show Steve three sample invitations. “Which one?”

Steve looked over the samples, drying his hands before extracting the three elaborate packages. One was white with embossed doves holding ribbons in their mouths. He frowned before replacing it. The second one was pale yellow, flowers adorning the corners of the invitation. He shook his head and returned it. The last was white with dark blue writing, the envelopes dark blue, with no decorations at all. “This one.”

“I figured,” Danny said with a nod. “All right. I thought we’d need about 100. That sound right to you?”

“A hundred?” Steve asked, considering it. “Do we know 100 people?”

“I have at least 50 family members to send it to. I’m ordering announcements and invitations. Fifty of each.”

“When is this wedding?” Steve asked, peering into the box that held all sorts of things he couldn’t imagine ever needing. Some of them frightened him more than any explosives ever could. Live grenades he could handle. Tulle? Yeah, not so much.

“In six weeks. The Governor has given us the week off afterwards.”

“For our honeymoon,” Steve said, smirking at Danny.

“Exactly,” Danny agreed.

“Where are we getting married?”

Danny pointed outside the French doors to the beach before pulling out a small catalog. “Which dress do you want for Gracie?” he asked, turning to the first page with a post-it note. The dress looked suitable for a fairy princess, all ruffles and ribbons and rhinestones. The second one was understated, straight lines of silk.

“Shouldn’t she decide?” Steve asked, flipping from the first to the second to study them.

“I asked her. She likes them both so we get to say. They are both available in navy so either one will work.”
“I’m leaning toward the fairy princess. Since she is one,” Steve said with the smile that was always reserved just for Grace.

“Okay,” Danny agreed. “I’ll let her know.” Danny dug through the box to find his legal pad, making a note next to item #43 – Grace’s dress. He pointed to #11. “Mary will be here the Wednesday before. She’s going to stay in a hotel. A lot easier all around.”

“She can stay with us,” Steve said, leaning over Danny to look at The List. He could plainly see that it was going to take up a significant portion of their lives for the foreseeable future and deserved the capitalization he had given it in his head.

“She prefers a hotel. Less craziness all around,” Danny assured him.

“Are you mom and dad coming?” Steve asked, pointing at #12.

“They are. So are my sisters. They are thrilled,” Danny said, checking that off.

“What time are we getting married?” Steve asked, kissing the side of Danny’s neck.

“At 6:23.”

“Sunset,” Steve said with a nod.

“Yep. Cut that out,” Danny said, swatting at Steve’s nibbling mouth.

“Really?” Steve said, kissing him again and biting his earlobe.

“Yes, really. #33. Kamekona said he would cater the reception,” Danny said, pointing at The List. “#21. We need a photographer.”

“Max can do it,” Steve said, trying to distract Danny with more kisses.

“Max? We don’t need the wedding autopsied. We need it photographed.”

“He’s really good. You haven’t seen his albums?” Steve asked.

“No. I didn’t realize you and Max were so tight,” Danny said, making a note next to #21.

Steve shrugged against Danny’s back, arms wound around Danny’s chest. “Music?”

“#14. What do you want?”

“You can decide,” Steve said.

“Fine. Good. I don’t want 80s nightmare music. You don’t get to complain if it’s mostly Jersey rock,” Danny threatened.

“As long as you play ‘Sexy Eyes’ at least once,” Steve said, tickling Danny’s neck with butterfly kisses, fully aware of what that did to Danny’s libido.

“Stop. Stop right now with the flirting. I don’t have time for you and your crazy long eyelashes and your ever changing eyes. Stop,” Danny said, turning in his arms to kiss him because what choice did he really have? Once they had pulled apart, fighting gravity all the way, Danny took a deep breath and pointed at The List. “This Wednesday. At 4:30. We need to be at Alexander’s studio.”

“Why?” Steve asked, trying to find that on The List. He suspected it was #31 – engagement photos.
“So we can have our photo taken,” Danny said, making it obvious that Steve should have known.

“Why do we need engagement pictures? That’s so…cliché,” Steve decided.

“Because the press is already calling. We can have an official photo taken or they can use one from a crime scene. I don’t know about you but I’d rather not have the announcement of our engagement accompanied with one or both of us in a blood soaked shirt and TAC vest.”

“Blood and TAC vests seem appropriate,” Steve said just so Danny would rant at him.

“You are such an animal,” Danny said, shaking his head.

“What are we wearing for this picture? Not our TAC vests, I’m assuming,” Steve said.

“A suit. Black. No tie, I promise. You can even go barefoot if you want,” Danny said to forestall the unhappiness he knew Steve was the verge of expressing.

“Fine,” Steve said. “You’ll look like a waiter.”

“Babe,” Danny said, shaking his head. “That was…”

Steve grinned at him before kissing him, ensuring that all was forgiven. “I didn’t mean it.”

“I know. You can’t help yourself,” Danny acknowledged with an indulgent smile. “I swear it’s like having two children.”

Steve shrugged, looking again in the box of horrors. “What is all this?”

“Not to worry. Need to know basis. It’s all on The List,” Danny assured him.

“Don’t I need to know? Isn’t it my wedding too?” Steve asked, trying to sort out what some of the items could possibly be.

“If I tell you, it will just either a) confuse you or b) freak you out. I don’t need either of those right now.” Danny patted him on the arm before picking up the box. “Trust me. It’s better this way.”

“Where are you going?”

“Office. I have phone calls to make. And I need a list from you of everyone you want to invite that I don’t know.”

“If you don’t know them, why would I invite them?”

“Don’t you have any Army buddies you want to invite?” Danny asked.

“Navy. Maybe three or four,” Steve decided.

“Those then. If you know where they are.”

“What about the Governor? Did you invite him already?”

“I didn’t exactly invite him. I asked if he would officiate,” Danny said.

“Did he agree? Even though we are not necessarily two of his favorite people?”

“Me he loves. You not so much,” Danny teased. He put the box on the desk, taking out another folder and extracting a formal looking sheet. “Sign here.”
Steve did it before looking at it. “What is this?”

“Application for marriage license. We need to fill this part out,” Danny said, pointing at the line that said ‘Record married name(s):’ “What are we doing about our last names?”

“You don’t want to be a McGarrett?” Steve teased, kissing him before he could reply.

“I want to be a hyphenated McGarrett. I’m not planning to be the wife in this. Equals. Despite what you want to believe.”

“I never thought you’d be the wife,” Steve assured him.

“Hmm…Even so. I’m not giving up my last name. I’ll connect it to yours. As long as you connect yours to mine. Or did I just say that?”

“I can’t answer that. I stopped listening ten minutes ago,” Steve claimed.

“I haven’t turned in the license application yet. I can still stop this wedding, you know. If that’s what you want with your not listening and your trying to make me the wife and your…. you-ness.”

“My me-ness?” Steve laughed.

“Shut up. Do you want your last name first or mine?”

Steve shrugged. “What do you want?”

Danny put his hand in his pocket, taking out a quarter. “Flip for order?”


Danny nodded, flipping it expertly in the air, catching and slapping it on the back of his left hand. “Tails.”

“So we’ll be Williams-McGarretts,” Steve said with a nod.

“Works for me,” Danny agreed. “Okay. #19. Can I trust you to get the forms from the Navy to make me your next of kin?”

“You don’t have to. I already did it,” Steve told him.

“What? How did you do that?”

“Once ‘don’t ask don’t tell’ was repealed, I changed my beneficiary to you. We don’t have to be married to make it official,” Steve told him, his embarrassment apparent. Danny didn’t even bother to pretend he didn’t find Steve’s sudden bashfulness adorable.

“You are something else,” Danny said, reaching up to kiss him. “Thank you.”

“If something happens to us both, then it’s Grace,” Steve said, his cheeks still flushed from the blush he would deny ever having experienced.

Danny could only shake his head at that. “Of course.”

“What else do I need to do?” Steve asked, leaning one hip against the desk to study Danny as he studied The List.
“Do you think we could get new curtains in the living room? Something…brighter?” Danny requested. Changing anything in the house was still a tricky topic although Steve no longer treated it as the shrine it had once been. Baby steps Danny knew was the way to go.

“Those are kind of old,” Steve agreed. “Do you know what you’d like?”

“Not really. Kono volunteered to help if you want. Not that it means we are allowed to treat her like a girl because she will kick our asses if we try. But she does have a good eye for those kinds of things.”

“If she wants to help, I’m all for that,” Steve agreed. “I think we should get a new table and chairs for the kitchen.”

“I’ll put it on the list,” Danny agreed, adding them to the bottom. “I told Kamekona what he served was up to him. To a point. He promised to give us the menu to approve. I said the Spam was to be kept to a bare minimum.”

“And you gave him a budget?” Steve asked out of curiosity.

“I would have. But he’s paying for all the food. As his gift to us.”

“Wow. That’s… wow,” Steve said.

“Eloquent as always, Babe,” Danny teased. “Speaking of eloquent, our own vows or no?”

“Oh God, Danno.”

“So that’s a no. Okay. We’ll use standard Book of Prayer. Keep and cherish. Not blow up. Have to hold. No grenades in the glove compartment.”

“Some of those sound vaguely unfamiliar,” Steve pointed out with a smile that made Danny temporarily forget the topic of conversation.

“Hmm…I thought that’s what they always said. My bad,” Danny said with a shrug. “Do you want Mary as a bridesmaid? She said she would if you want. But she’s okay not.”

“What do you want? Will your sisters be mad?”

“It seems easier to have just Chin and Kono. But if you want Mary, that’s fine by me. My sisters don’t care. They were bridesmaids the first time. That was plenty for them. They said if they don’t have to buy another flouncy dress they’ll never wear again, all the better. And maybe if they aren’t bridesmaids, this marriage will, you know, last.”

“It will,” Steve said. That was apparently an order which Danny and the marriage had no choice but to obey. Not that Danny would ever let Steve get away. Nope, not going to happen.

“I like your thinking. Do you want Mary to be in the bridal party?” Danny asked.

“No,” Steve said. “Chin and Kono. And Gracie of course.”

“Of course,” Danny said.

“Are you letting Step-Stan come?” Steve asked with a lazy smile.

“I guess I’ll have to. Rachel seems determined to come. So…” Danny waved a hand like that explained everything. And maybe it did. “She said their nanny would watch Alicia.”
“Don’t say nanny like it’s a dirty word,” Steve requested. “We may have one someday.”

“To keep you out of trouble?” Danny asked, laughing up at him.

“Whatever it takes, Babe. Rings?” Steve asked, peering carefully at The List.

“Oh. Well. I didn’t think… I mean, I figured you wouldn’t wear one.”

“Why wouldn’t I? I want you to wear one to keep you safe from predatory men and women who eye-hump you every time we’re outside of this house.”

“That’s you not me,” Danny said. “When we go to Alexander’s studio, we can go to the jeweler’s next door. They should be able to suggest something appropriate.”

“Sounds good,” Steve said, straightening and stretching.

“You’re done with me now, aren’t you?” Danny asked with a knowing smile.

“Do you need me?”

“No. Go clean your guns. Finish the catapult for the boiling oil. Or reinforce the armaments on the roof,” Danny said, waving him away.

“One day you’ll be glad those gun turrets are there,” Steve said, kissing Danny on top of the head before wandering away.

“I feel sure that I will. Today is not that day,” Danny told Steve’s back, listening to his vanishing laugh.

~o0o~

After dinner and drinks and their friends had left, Steve and Danny lay curled together in bed. They were both teetering on sleep but not quite ready to fall over. Steve had one long arm flung over Danny’s waist, Danny drawing invisible patterns on Steve’s broad chest.

“Chairs?” Steve asked.

“#32,” Danny responded, yawning.

“A cake?”

“#2.”

“Plates. Napkins. Cups?”

“#24.”

“Champagne? And other libations?”

“#11. Libations? Who says libations?”

“Really #11? Or are you just making it up?” Steve asked, drawing back enough to see Danny’s face. It revealed nothing and Danny just smiled, a secret, innocent smile. “I have means of making you talk. Don’t doubt that I do.”

“Humff,” Danny snorted. “You think you scare me but you don’t.”
“I should,” Steve tried.

“I know, Babe. You are a very scary Navy man. I’ll work on being scared just as soon as I can work it into my schedule.”

“Will you add to The List?” Steve asked with a kiss.

“Consider it done,” Danny agreed, smiling lazily at him. “Now go to sleep.”
Chapter Summary

Part 1 of The Wedding in all its inherent craziness as you might expect when Steve and Danny are the ones getting married.

Chapter Notes

This chapter is completely out of control so I’m breaking it in half. I hope to post the rest tomorrow. If my muses will let it go already.

Lieutenant Commander Steven J. McGarrett,
and
Detective Daniel Williams
Request the honor of your presence at our wedding.
Despite what everyone believes, we were never married. Until now.
The exchange of vows will occur on the beach behind the Williams-McGarrett House.
Barring explosions, fire fights, and unexpected terrorist activity, the nuptials will be held at 6:23 of the evening.
Please plan to join us after the ceremony for the reception Catered by Kamekona and family.
Spam will be available but not the only meat-like substance served.
In lieu of gifts, we are requesting that you make a donation to the Honolulu Police Department Survivors and Orphans Fund, or the Naval Memorial Scholarship Fund.
If it goes against everything you believe is holy and right to attend a wedding empty handed, Steve is registered at all local Guns, Ammo and Artillery Depots. Danny is registered at several local pharmacies. Under X for Xanax.
RSVPs would be lovely so Kamekona will know how many pounds of Spam to order. His cousins will get him a discount, we feel sure.

~o0o~

T minus 12 hours and counting: Danny was leaning against the kitchen cabinet drinking his second cup of coffee. Ordinarily he would drink it while sitting in one of the chairs at the table. But they currently found themselves with neither chairs nor a table. It was his fault, really, although he was loathe to admit it even to himself. He and Steve had found a new dining set they knew would be perfect and had purchased it after receiving the promise from the store manager that it would be delivered yesterday in plenty of time for the wedding. But because the universe hates Danny Williams so very very much, the truck bringing their brand new sparkling chairs and table had been caught in a rare but unheard of flash flood and had tumbled down the side of one of the
mountains of which Hawaii was justifiably proud. The good news was that the driver and his assistant delivery guy had been pulled unharmed from the ravine into which they had plummeted. The bad news was that the promised table and chairs could not be rescued nor salvaged and replacements could not be obtained until Tuesday of next week at the earliest. The store manager was apologetic to an embarrassing degree but that did nothing to supply Steve and Danny a table and chairs to replace the ones Danny had insisted needed to be hauled to the dump before the new ones were scheduled to be delivered. Steve had been surprisingly willing to let go of the old ones, making no reference to whether or not his mother had picked it out nor to the hours that may have been spent there doing homework or eating freshly baked chocolate chip cookies. Maybe he had never had after-school chocolate chip cookies fresh from the oven with a huge glass of ice cold milk. Danny wasn’t about to ask and Steve certainly did not volunteer that information.

Ordinarily, Steve would also have been in the kitchen drinking coffee at 6:23, after having finished his swim of epic proportions. But since he had gotten home and into bed only three hours ago, no way was Danny going to wake him. Again, the universe was plotting against them. Or at the very least the kidnappers of the daughter of one of the Governor’s oldest friends were not respectful of their wedding plans. They had gotten that particular news in the middle of their rehearsal dinner, delivered in person at the restaurant by a member of HPD. Steve had frowned, Danny had frowned more; Steve, Danny, Kono, and Chin had left the dinner with profuse apologies to their friends and family, all of whom said naturally they understood, no apology necessary, you go and find her and make sure she’s safe and we’ll make sure everything that hasn’t been done yet for the wedding is taken care of, don’t you worry. Danny had entrusted The List to his mother, bless her heart, and between the saint that she was, his three sisters, and help even from Mary who appeared to be clean and sober to the surprise of anyone who had ever met her, they finished all of the last minute details. Because Steve was a SEAL and almost no details would be left to the last minute. This was one of the few times Danny had to thank the Naval gods for making his soon-to-be-husband the OCD over-organized pain the ass that he was.

The members of 5-0 worked 36 hours straight trying to find Layla Nishi when they finally caught a break yesterday evening around 4:30. It meant a stake-out, a quick helicopter trip to Moloka‘i, a trek across six miles of that island, and a flight back with Layla safely on board. None of which had involved Danny because Steve insisted that he, Chin, and Kono could handle it and Danny should go home so that at least one of the grooms was awake for the wedding and/or the preparations thereof. Danny had naturally tried to argue with him about being left behind, again with treating him like the wife, but Chin and Kono had sided with the Boss and had talked Danny into going home. Which he had. At midnight. Because someone had to stay at headquarters to give the Governor continually updates.

Midnight was still preferable to 3:30 when Steve had finally tumbled into bed with a grunt. He barely moved when Danny got up long enough to tug off his mud-coated Army boots. The mud-covered cargo pants and polo shirt were allowed to stay in the bed which meant the sheets they had been sleeping on would have to be thrown out as there was no salvaging them. When Danny had woken up at 5:53 a.m., Steve was inexplicably naked but still mud covered. That Danny found this fact surprising was in itself surprising because after all this time he didn’t know why he would have expected to find anything laying in bed beside him other than a naked Steve covered head to toe in mud.

Danny did have a text on his phone from the Governor solemnly promising that whatever emergency arose today would be handled by other members of law enforcement and that the Governor would still be able to officiate at their wedding because they had done their usual exemplary job and saved his friend’s daughter for which he was extremely grateful although there was the small matter of a helicopter that may not have been officially signed out to any member of 5-0 and that one did not usually ‘borrow’ a helicopter without the express permission of the owner of said helicopter. Danny
thought that sounded more like a technicality than an actual problem because according to Steve it was returned unscratched and completely unharmed albeit with an empty fuel tank. Danny couldn’t comprehend anything else Steve may have said about the helicopter because he was trying to absorb the fact that Steve had actually used the word *albeit* in a sentence. Who talks like that?

Danny sighed and drank more coffee, deciding there wasn’t enough caffeine in the Danny-hating universe to wake him up. Well, he’d done more on less sleep. He’d make it through his (second) wedding day with a smile on his face and a spring in his step even if he had to install actual *springs* in his shoes. He wondered what he should be doing that made him get up at the ass-crack of dawn but as his mother had neglected to return The List, he had no idea what had compelled him to get out of his mud covered bed. Maybe his job was to stand in his tableless kitchen drinking coffee and frowning at the universe on general principle. Because he felt sure he had that part handled even if it had never made it on The List.

He mentally reviewed the items that he couldn’t remember taking care of, certain his mother and her entourage had handled them. Because if they hadn’t, there was no way he could deal with them now. It was a little less than 12 hours to the wedding and less than 3 hours before the house would be engulfed in pandemonium. Deciding that worrying was a useless waste of what little energy he had to spare, he wandered out to the beach and sat on the sand since the Adirondack chairs had been carted off to who-knows-where in anticipation of the arrival of the tidy rows of white straight back chairs they had rented from one of Kamekona's cousins. They took it on faith that this particular cousin had purchased the rental chairs in question and not stolen them because who would steal 75 straight back white chairs?

He’d finished his coffee and was brooding about straight back chairs and mud-covered sheets when the reason for his preservations appeared at the back door. Danny felt Steve watching him and turned to smile at him. “Hey,” Danny said from where he still sat in the sand. “What are you doing up?” Danny was relieved that Steve no longer appeared mud-colored. That combined with the fact that his hair was wet meant he had taken a shower before appearing although that left the small matter of now having a mud-covered shower stall. Danny should have dragged him outside and hosed him off last night instead of letting him into their bed, *honest to God* why couldn’t be manage to do his job without bringing half of nature indoors with him?

Steve shrugged and crossed over to him, tugging on a tee shirt to go with the shorts he wore. “Once you left the bed, I couldn’t sleep,” Steve said, sitting behind Danny and wrapping him in arms and legs that seemed to go on forever.

“I’m sorry, Babe. I wasn’t sleeping and I didn’t want to disturb you by thinking too loud,” Danny said. “You aren’t swimming are you? Because I will not save your SEAL ass if you go down due to sleep deprivation and for the love of God do not tell me you are trained to swim in your sleep and you’ll be fine, Danno, don’t worry about it.”

Steve smiled against the back of Danny’s neck before kissing him. “Okay. I won’t.”

“I got a text from the Governor,” Danny said, showing it to Steve. “Apparently you should have *asked permission* before taking the helicopter?”


“Maybe he will buy you one after this,” Danny suggested. “You’d like that, wouldn’t you? Your very own helicopter. Which I know you would never let me drive.”

“I’d let you drive it but you’d have to take lessons first,” Steve said far too smugly. “Oh wait. You may not be tall enough to qualify.”
“Oh. That. You. I’m not marrying you. You can explain when everyone gets here,” Danny said, his tone barely changing as he tried to rail at Steve.

“Okay,” Steve said, shrugging against Danny’s back. “Will you come back to bed for a little while?”

“Will you change the sheets so I don’t feel like I’m out on one of your extra top-secret, ultra-classified, need-to-know maneuvers behind enemy lines?”

“Already done.”

“Then I will go back to bed with you,” Danny agreed, turning in the circle of Steve’s arms and legs to kiss him. “I may even marry you if you apologize for disparaging my height.”

“Disparaging? Really? And you made fun of me for saying albeit?”

“Far more people use disparaging than use albeit. Disparaging as a perfectly good word and just because you aren’t entirely sure what it means does not mean that I deserve your mockery for using it.”

“I don’t believe I engaged in mock-making,” Steve claimed.

“Yes. Yes you were. Mock-making about both my height and the word I used to describe said mockery.”

“Okay.” Steve stood up, reaching down a hand to help Danny up, keeping his hold tight as they returned to the house and went upstairs to tumble together in the freshly made bed, minus any trace of the wilds of Molokaʻi.

~o0o~

T minus 9 hours 30 minutes and counting: “Steve. Danny,” Mary’s voice called as she came up the steps. “You better not being doing the dirty.”

Steve groaned and rolled away from Danny who had also been doing nothing more than sleeping until her voice sounded the alarm. “Come in, Mary. We’re decent and not doing anything but sleeping.”

“Fine,” she said, throwing open the door. “You know I still think it’s way too creepy that you have sex in the bed where we were conceived.”

“Not nearly as creepy as you talking about it.” Steve was frowning at her as he slid up the bed to sit against the headboard. “What do you need?”

She pointed at Danny who was ineffectually trying his very best to disappear into the covers and not be discovered. Ever. “Danny.”

“What?” he asked mostly into the pillow he was clinging to like it was the last life raft on a sinking ship. Which come to that, it might have been.

“The chairs are here. Shamu is here with a bunch of whale spawn. Why is he so freakin’ early? Hello. The wedding isn’t until 6:30. Gawd.”

“Are you 13?” Danny asked her. Or the pillow which he was still addressing with his eyes closed and the covers up over his head.

“Are you getting up? Because if you don’t I will send Shamu and all of his cousins up here to find
you. Don’t think I won’t.” With that, she left the bedroom leaving the door wide open because really why should Steve and Danny have any illusions of privacy today of all days.

“Please tell me either you or Mary were adopted,” Danny requested.

“Not as far as I know. We were both conceived right here in this bed.” Steve was laughing as he said it, making Danny to very much want to punch him except that would require more energy and planning and effort than he really cared to put into it.

“I dare say we aren’t the first to have sex here after your much heralded conception,” Danny told him.

“I may have used it for that purpose,” Steve said. “But they didn’t mean anything. Only you, baby. You are the only one for me. Oh yeah yeah yeah.”

“Did you eat stupid for breakfast? Because I swear to God if you don’t shut up right now I will kill you. I have a gun. I have a permit for the gun. I will use it on you. And not even bother to hide the body because no jury in the world would convict me when I tell them what you said.”

“Get up,” Steve said, yanking the covers down and kissing Danny’s freckled back. One day he will kiss each freckle individually even if they had to stay in bed the entire day so he could. He was pretty sure Danny would agree to that plan or he wouldn’t tell him in advance just hold him down with one of his freaky ninja moves that left Danny breathless and aroused. Yeah. That.

“I am getting up. Not because you told me to but because I know with an alarming degree of certainty that your addlepated sister will send Komekona upstairs to find me if I don’t although I still cannot understand what part of I am not the wife in this relationship you and your co-conspirators fail to comprehend when I thought I had spelled it out succinctly with flow charts and visual aids.”

“Addlepated?”

“Addlepated,” Danny repeated as he forced himself out of bed. He stood next to it to frown at Steve who looked back with utter innocence. He may have even batted his eyelashes at Danny but Danny was too busy ignoring him and Steve would not admit it under any circumstances. Ever.

“I think I hear Komekona on the steps,” Steve said, laughing. “You better put on your frilly apron and go see what he wants, honey.”

“Don’t you honey me. Or the only honey you’ll have anything to do with is the kind I use to coat your body before staking you on top of a fire ant mound.”

“Hawaii doesn’t have fire ants,” Steve informed him.

“Maybe not. But I bet I can order them from the internet,” Danny said as he finally pulled on his jeans and his black ‘I am not the bride’ tee shirt Kono had given to him at their totally not bridal shower.

“Can’t transport dangerous insects across state lines.”

“Shut up,” Danny said as he tied his sneakers. “Are you getting up? Or are you lounging up here all day like his royal highness pain in the ass?”

“Was that one question or two?”

“What does that matter? Get up. If I have to deal with the madness of marrying you, you are not
exempt from it.”

“Okay, honey. I’m coming,” Steve said, proving it by leaving his side of the bed and pulling on his jeans. His black tee shirt said ‘Do I look I’m the bride?’ which Chin had been good enough to provide him at the same absolutely not bridal shower.

They went down the steps utterly (not at all) surprised to find the house engulfed in chaos. Mary seemed to be screaming at Kamekona which was completely unheard because who would ever yell at him? Not only would he kill you by sitting on you if you dared to sass him - he was Kamekona for God’s sake and what could he have done to deserve the level of screeching Mary was resorting to?

“What?” Danny demanded. He held his hand up in front of Mary, his other hand on Kamekona’s huge chest.

“Spam, Danny. He wants to serve Spam,” Mary spit out.

“You said it was okay wif you, brah,” Kamekona reminded Danny. The big guy glanced over at Steve who was wisely staying out of the discussion. He looked like he was about to use one of his top secret stealth maneuvers and quietly disappear into the wall of the living room but Danny’s glare stopped him in his tracks.

“We said you could serve Spam, yes,” Danny said. “As long as there were counterbalancing real meats as well. You know – chicken. Beef. Even kangaroo.”

“Kangaroo?” Steve said. “Are you expecting someone from Australia to come to the wedding?”

“Not helping, babe,” Danny informed him. “Tell me you aren’t serving only Spam.”

“Chicken and beef are in the Spam,” Kamekona said like that explained everything anyone needed to know.

“That’s true,” Steve offered.

“But the point. We have my family here. From New Jersey. Where they do not now nor will they ever eat Spam. I know it’s the official state food stuff of Hawaii. I am not disrespecting that sacred tradition. But we told you that you could not limit your menu selection to Spam and Spam only.” Danny was glaring equally at Kamekona and Steve when he finally wound down, Kamekona frowning at him in something akin to disbelief.

“I have chicken, brah,” Kamekona finally said. That there was an edge of doubt in his voice did nothing to mollify Danny and his fears that his family would be going hungry at the reception. “And shrimp.”

“Where? Where is this supposed chicken and shrimp?” Mary demanded. Danny wondered when she had decided to be on his side but he was not about to look the proverbial gift horse in the mouth.

“Danny, dear.” Danny’s mother decided that this was the opportune moment to appear out of nowhere. She was wearing jeans and a black tee shirt that proclaimed ‘I am not the mother of the bride’ also courtesy of Chin Ho Kelly who had a wicked sense of humor that was carefully hidden under that sense of calm he projected to everyone who didn’t really know him.

“Yes Mom,” Danny responded, not taking his eyes off either of his opponents.

“The truck with the chairs is here. Can you come show them where to put them?” she asked, all reasonable and charming like he wasn’t ready to pull his hair out.
“Steve will do that,” Danny informed them both.

“Of course,” Sylvia agreed as though she had just realized that Steve was standing there although how anyone could overlook his presence was a mystery to Danny. Except Kamekona blocked out the sun and could have managed to render Steve invisible as well.

“I’ll deal with the meat issue, Danno,” Steve said. “You take the chairs.”

“That’s fine,” Danny said. “They both better survive because we don’t have enough granola to serve everyone coming to the wedding.”

“I got this,” Steve told him, adding a kiss on the top of his head both to annoy him and placate him. “Go supervise the chair placement.”

Danny nodded, stepping back so that Steve could take his place as referee. Steve watched Danny leave the living room before looking from Kamekona to Mary and back. “Now. Tell me the truth.”

Kamekona shrugged. Mary glared.

“Kamekona,” Steve said in his ‘don’t make me start a countdown on your ass’ tone.

“I may have told little sis that I only brought Spam. She spazzed out.”

“I do not spazz out, Shamu.”

“Yeah, Mary, you kinda do,” Steve said.

“Thanks for your support. Good to know I can count on my own brother,” Mary snarked at him.

“Did you or did you not bring all of the food that we requested?” Steve was in interrogation mode and Kamekona had sense enough to come clean.

“Yes. I followed your instructions exactly. No worries.”

“See. No drama,” Steve said.

“I hate you. I hate you so so much right now,” Mary told Kamekona before turning and leaving the living room in a huge, loud huff.

“Stop inciting her,” Steve told the big man when they were temporarily the only ones in the room. “We have enough to deal with without you yanking her chain.”

“You’re right,” Kamekona said. “Now tell me where I’m supposed to prepare the foods for your wedding when there is no table in the kitchen.”

“Yeah about that,” Steve said, leading the way into the kitchen to study it. “Didn’t your cousins bring tables as well as chairs?”

“They did.”

“We can bring one of those in here. That will help you out, right?”

“Sure, brah. We can do that,” Kamekona agreed, leaving the house to yell at several of his cousins to bring two of those rental tables into the house and make sure they were the nice tables none of those ratty ones they tried to pawn off on the tourists who didn’t know any better.
With that crisis solved, Steve went out to stand on the back porch, finding Danny’s father there looking at the swarm of cousins following the combined and sometimes competing orders of Danny and his mother.

“Steve,” Burt said with a nod.

“How’s it going out here?” Steve asked, unconsciously mimicking Burt’s posture by putting his hands in the pockets of his jeans and leaning against the railing of the porch. He could easily see over Burt’s head as he was only an inch or two taller than Danny. Apparently the height limits for fire fighters were less stringent in Jersey than Hawaii because Steve was certain Burt would never have qualified for an island department. How did he stop the hose from blowing him backward? Being Chief helped now but he had come up through the ranks.

“I’ve seen riots better organized,” Burt said. “You should have eloped.”

“We considered it,” Steve told him. “Gracie’s the main reason we didn’t. Grace and your family.”

“Yeah,” Burt had to agree. Burt could feel Steve brace himself as Danny marched up the porch to glare up at them both.

“Would you please make yourself useful as well as decorative?” Danny demanded.

“Me?” Burt asked, knowing just how to push his son’s buttons. Steve thought he could take lessons from his soon-to-be father-in-law except he pretty much already knew where those buttons were and how to push them himself.

“Sure, Pop. I meant you.” Danny was still glaring at Steve who felt guilty although he had no idea of what he had done. Or more likely had not done to deserve Danny’s current state of dismay.

“Yes honey?” Steve finally said purely to piss him off more.

“The flowers, Steven. The flowers are not here. The florist said they would be delivered half an hour ago. And yet there are no flowers here. None.”

“Island time, Danno.”

“Do not ‘island time’ me. You need to call and make sure they are coming. My sisters will not be able to arrange said flowers in a lovely and decorative manner befitting this auspicious occasion if they do not arrive in short order.”


“He’s right,” Burt said. That seemed to calm Danny who stopped glaring at Steve with deadly intent.

“When did you start taking his side?” Danny wanted to know. At least he wasn’t yelling. Or glaring.

“He’s right,” Burt repeated as though that’s all that needed to be said.

Steve had the temerity to arch an eyebrow in response to Burt’s answer, Danny giving him the death glare in exchange.

“Please call them to make sure they haven’t forgotten or that in island time they think it’s tomorrow,” Danny requested in a much more reasonable tone.

“Yes honey,” Steve conceded, taking out his phone to go to the florist’s number that had been mysteriously programmed into his ‘wedding contacts.’ As he speed-dialed them, he traded looks with
Burt as Danny returned to the yard to provide a new set of instructions to the chair and table movers. Burt’s look said ‘welcome to my own version of hell’ while Steve’s answering expression pleaded for a diversion so he could re-borrow the helicopter for the next six or so hours.

When Steve concluded his phone conversation, he wandered down to the beach where Danny and Sylvia were arguing about the proper placement of the chairs and how close to the water’s edge was too close.

“It’s going to be high tide in four hours, Mom,” Danny was saying in a tone that implied it was the third or fourth or sixteenth time he’d said it already. “They will float away if we put them here.”

“The tide doesn’t come this far up,” Sylvia said, looking at the ocean in challenge and letting it be known that it was not, in fact, allowed to come this far ashore and ruin her son’s wedding.

“It does, Sylvia,” Steve said in the soothing tone he often had to resort to when Danny was on an especially prolonged rant.

Sylvia shook her head but backed up five long steps, five for her being two of Steve’s normal strides what with his unnaturally freakishly long legs. That Steve was an entire foot taller than Sylvia also accounted for much of the difference. “Here?”

“Three more steps,” Steve instructed. She did it, Steve nodding in confirmation. When she had the actual line drawn in the actual sand, Steve assured Danny that the florists would arrive in the next 10 minutes.

“Real 10 minutes? Or island 10?” Danny asked, squinting up at Steve.

“Real. They are less than a mile away.”

“Okay. Good.”

“You need to come in the house with me,” Steve said, the hand resting on Danny’s shoulder warming him through the tee shirt.

“Why? What’s wrong? Kamekona destroy the stove?”

“No. You haven’t eaten breakfast. And you are being snappish. You shouldn’t snap at your mom when she’s trying to help. Let her take care of the tables and chairs.”

“Snappish? I’ll show you snappish,” Danny warned him as he automatically followed Steve up the yard and into the house because as much as he would refuse to ever admit it he knew Steve was right and once he had some eggs and toast in him things would be much clearer and less urgent.
Chapter Summary

The actual wedding, finally.

Chapter Notes

OMG y'all - I never meant for this chapter to be so long!!! But the muses will do what they will and how can you ignore them?

T minus 4 hours 18 minutes and counting: “Oh. My. God,” Danny said as he entered the garage. “I should have known you were hiding in here.” His hands were expressing the outrage his voice failed to convey though there was not a tremendous amount left unsaid.

Steve straightened up from under the hood of the Marquis and smiled at Danny. It was the very best, sunniest, most innocent smile that resided in his arsenal of smiles. One that did not fool Danny for one minute. “Hi Danno.”

“Don’t you ‘hi Danno’ me. I am orchestrating the social event of the year, nah, the century, and you are tinkering with The Car That Will Never Run.”

“Nah?”

“Stop. Put down that wrench or I swear on Grace’s brown braids that I will take it and hit you with it, hit you until you…..”

“Until I what?” Steve asked far too happily.

“I hate you. So much. Grace just got here and wants to know where you are. Pop thinks you need to talk down Mary who keeps yelling at one of Kamekona’s cousins. Mom is trying to instruct Kamekona on the only true and proper way to boil shrimp which he does not appreciate not one little bit. My sisters have resorted to hurling stray blossoms at each other. And you. YOU are hiding in the garage.”

“I tried to escape in the helicopter but they had it locked down,” Steve claimed.

“It’s surprising to me that you weren’t able to destroy the lock with your bare hands,” Danny said, leaning against the grill of the Marquis.

“I tried,” Steve said, putting the wrench down only so he would have both hands free to hold firmly to Danny’s hips and prevent a new rant with a kiss. “I didn’t know the right helicopter-stealing code.”

“Double top secret huh?” Danny asked, his lips slightly parted as he panted for air. “Do that again.”

“Try to steal a helicopter?” Steve teased.
“Yeah. And when you get done, kiss me.”

“I’ll do that now and work on the helicopter after,” Steve decided, devouring Danny’s mouth with his own.

“We could just hide here the rest of the day. Or the rest of our lives. Either one. I’m sure you have enough emergency supplies in those cabinets. Potable water. Canned goods that are routinely rotated so that they don’t expire. Last in last out. A manual opener to back-up your Swiss army knife.”

“Yes,” Steve said, kissing him again. “We better go back out…there. I can hear Mary yelling at your dad.”

“Oh great. What could she possibly have to yell at Pop about? Seriously?”

“She mostly wants to know where you are so she can yell at you.”

“Okay. You’re making that up. You do not have super-sonic hearing. You don’t.”

“You know how you can always tell Grace needs you?” Steve asked. “I can hear Mary the same way.”

“Oh. That makes sense,” Danny conceded, turning to the garage door when it flew open with a bang. “Hey Mary.”


“You need us?” Danny asked innocently.

“No. Why would I? You’re only getting married in three hours. Three hours. Do you have any concept of time? At all?”

“Four hours,” Steve corrected, unnecessarily pointing at his wristwatch.

“So not the point. Hell’s caterers set fire to the tablecloth. And I am not even kidding.”

“Great. Anyone hurt?” Danny asked.

“No. Your father took care of it. Your mom made sure Grace was way away from it. Grace would really like to know where Steve is. Because apparently her friend Tommy said you were going to swim away before the wedding? God. I have no idea. Who is Tommy and why is he allowed out without constant adult supervision?”

“Okay,” Steve said, trying to stop a laugh because he knew it was not the place or the time. “We’re coming.”

Mary nodded in satisfaction and left the garage, glaring over her shoulder to make sure they were actually following her out and into the backyard where chaos was still the order of the day.

“Steve!” Grace yelled when she saw him. “You didn’t swim away.”

“Of course not, Monkey,” Steve assured her, catching her when she launched herself at him. “Why did you listen to Tommy?”

She shrugged, hiding her face in his neck as he hugged her close.

“I’m not going anywhere. I promise,” he told her, kissing her pink cheek. “Do you like all of the
“They’re so pretty. Are you going to braid them into my hair for me?” she asked him.

“Of course. Who else would I trust to do it?” Steve asked. “Danno has goofy thumbs and always makes your braid crooked.”

“I most certainly do not,” Danny retorted with a smile just for Grace. “Did you have lunch?”

“Uh huh. Mommy took me to that fancy restaurant. The one with the porch and the big birds. ‘Cause she said it’s a very special occasion.”

“It is a very special occasion,” Danny agreed.

As Steve listened to Grace tell him every single thing she had had for lunch, he glanced over the backyard to find Chin and Malia instructing Danny’s sisters on how to make genuine Hawaiian leis, not the inexpensive knock-offs they had received at the airport. Chin’s black tee shirt said ‘There is no bride in this bridal party,’ which Steve found to be the funniest one of all. Max was wandering around, happily taking photos of everything and everyone as though he was on a mission from God. Or at least Kodak. Kono and Charlie were talking to Burt although he couldn’t tell what the topic of conversation was which he supposed was really for the best all things considered. Burt was nodding so he guessed (hoped) Kono was not telling Burt about the latest thing she had happily blown up with Steve’s express permission and possible assistance because it’s vital that the explosives be placed for maximum impact and why shouldn’t he share that not-at-all classified knowledge with her?

“Danny,” his mom said as she came up to them, accepting Grace from Steve. “Is your friend Kono going to wear that for the wedding?”

Danny turned to look at his friend Kono who was laughing with his father. She was wearing the black tank top that proclaimed ‘I ain’t nobody’s maid of anything’ in sparkly silver letters. Underneath was one of her numerous bikinis, the pink and blue stripped one from the bits of it Danny could see. “You don’t think that would be appropriate?”

“Daniel,” Sylvia said in warning. Now Steve knew where he had gotten that tone. She put Grace down at her request so that she could run over and talk to Chin and Malia and three of her adoring aunts.

“Calm down, Mom. I’m kidding. She has a beautiful dress upstairs that she will be wearing. It’s navy blue just like Grace’s with significantly fewer ruffles and rhinestones.”

“Very good then,” Sylvia said with an approving nod.

“Was it a big fire?” Steve asked mostly because he knew Danny would frown at him for it.

“Oh it was hardly a fire at all, dear. Singed the edge. Burt dealt with it and there wasn’t enough smoke to set off the detectors.”

“Was the tablecloth ruined?” Danny asked although he could not begin to imagine why he cared.

“Sadly, yes. But your very large friend said that as it was really his fault he would not be charging you to replace it. I thought that was awfully generous of him,” she said.

“That is good of him,” Steve agreed, ignoring Danny’s unamused frown.
“You have such lovely friends,” Sylvia said, patting Danny on the arm as though she was immensely proud of him for developing enough social skills to work and play well with others.

“They are actually my friends,” Steve informed her in a loud whisper. “They don’t really like Danny all that much.”

“I see,” Sylvia said with a familiar twinkle in her blue eyes. “Then thank you for being generous enough to share your friends with my son.”

“You’re welcome,” Steve told her, leaning over to kiss Danny who was mostly ignoring them because he knew it really was the best way to handle Steve when he got like this, all giddy school-boyish.

~o0o~

_T minus 1 hour 08 minutes and counting:_ “Steve. For the last time, you have to get out of the ocean,” Danny said, fists on his hips, frown on his face. Danny thought Steve had already gotten out of the water while he was talking to the string quintet they had hired to play for the ceremony. The two men and three women were dressed in traditional attire and told him they had received their request for the music to be played. They were ready and would begin to play at 6:00 pm precisely.

“I do?” Steve asked, all open and innocent. He had Grace on his shoulders, Kono on Charlie’s shoulders as they played some sort of _lord of the sea_ game that Danny could not decipher.

“We are getting married in one hour. One hour Steven. You and your ocean companions need to shower and dress. Grace needs to get at least some of the sand out of her hair so we can braid it. Our guests are going to begin arriving in the next 30 minutes and you are frolicking like you have nothing else to do for the rest of the day.”

“I don’t believe Steve has ever frolicked,” Charlie said, helping Kono off his shoulders.

“You. I can have you fired,” Danny said, pointing in the general direction of Charlie and Kono. He managed to include Max who was standing knee deep in the ocean recording their childish antics for all time to come.

“I don’t think you have that authority,” Kono told him, laughing as she waded ashore, accepting the towel from Danny.

“No but I can get it if I have to,” Danny said, giving Charlie and Steve their towels before wrapping Grace in hers. “Monkey, you go shower in the guest bathroom.”

“Okay Danno,” she agreed, racing up to the house. Sylvia who had already returned from the hotel and was wearing her royal blue _not_ mother of the bride dress automatically followed Grace because that’s what a grandmother did.

“I’m hoping you two will shower together so it will take less time,” Danny said to Kono and Charlie.

“On our first date?” Kono asked in mock horror that fooled exactly no one.

“Right. You haven’t been going steady for the last 8 months,” Danny said.
“Come on, Kono. I promise to close my eyes the entire time,” Charlie said, taking her hand and going up the house, their laughter lingering on the beach.

“And you,” Danny said, looking up at Steve.

“And me?” Steve asked, leaning down to kiss Danny. “Nice tiki torches.”

Danny looked at the line of torches that ran from the house to the beach, ending at the flower covered arch where the ceremony would be held. On each side of the torches were tidy rows of chairs, the first two rows with festive bows and orchids marking them for the not bridal family. “Are the torches straight enough for your Army standards?”

“Navy,” Steve corrected without thinking about it. “They could be at more of a 90 degree angle to the beach,” he decided, stepping back when Danny threatened to hit him.

“Maybe if you hadn’t been frolicking in the ocean, you could have used your laser sighting compass to ensure they were parallel per your precise standards.”

“Perpendicular,” Steve said.

“What?”

“Perpendicular is a 90 degree angle. Parallel is like railroad tracks.”

“Do I look like I care?”

“Uhm… no?” Steve guessed, smiling at Danny’s frown.

“No. I do not care.”

“Oh,” Steve said, still smiling like he never had any intention of stopping.

“Come on you goof. We need to get upstairs.”

Steve nodded, looking over at the musicians. “You welcome them?”

“I did,” Danny agreed. “You want to speak to them?”

“Afterwards,” Steve said, taking Danny’s hand and going in the house with him.

Kono and Charlie were just coming out of the bathroom, wrapped in the robes when Steve and Danny got upstairs. “It’s all yours,” Kono said a wink before following Charlie into the bedroom that had been Mary’s. Grace was with Sylvia in Steve’s old room chattering happily about her new dress as Sylvia tried to get her to stand still long enough to dry her hair.

Steve went into the bathroom as Danny continued on to their bedroom to get their bathrobes. Normally they would go between the two rooms naked but they didn’t want to scar any of their family members for life.

The bathroom was already filled with delicious steam when Danny slipped in, taking off his clothes to join Steve under the hot water.

“You can’t be in here,” Steve whispered down to Danny.

“I can’t?” Danny asked, taking the soap to pour some into this palm.
“My boyfriend will be here any minute,” Steve told Danny in warning.

“Pfftt. I can take him,” Danny said, running his hands all over Steve’s beautiful body.

“I don’t know. He’s pretty tough.”

“I’m not scared,” Danny assured him, smiling up at him. “Anyway, you’re marrying *me*. What do I care about any of the boy toys you may have on the side?”

“I don’t have to give them up?” Steve asked with a grin.

“I don’t care as long as you don’t bring them to bed with you.”

“I can have sex with them when you aren’t around?”

“Sure. Whatever. Right in the bed where you and possibly Mary were conceived. Just change the sheets afterwards.”

“Don’t I always?” Steve asked all innocent.

“Yeah. You do. Which you then expect me to wash because God forbid you should actually ever do any of the laundry in this house. Why you can’t pretend it’s a war – you versus the dirt – I can’t understand.”

“I do laundry,” Steve protested.

“Yeah? When was the last time you spent quality time with our washer or dryer? Because I have seen more pairs of your cargo pants than I really need to in this or any other lifetime.”

“I do laundry,” Steve repeated.

“What brand of detergent do *we* use?” Danny asked in challenge.

“Uhmm… Arm & Hammer?”

“Not since it made you break out in hives. Over a year ago,” Danny said.

“I’ve never had hives.”

“Then what would you call those huge red welts that appeared on every part of your beautiful body that your clothes touched?” Danny asked, keeping his eyes if not his mouth closed as Steve washed his hair for him.

“You think I have a beautiful body? Will you hold it against me?”

“What? That’s not how the song goes as stupid as it is. And stop diverting. You don’t do laundry. Ever.”

“I did before I charmed you into doing it for me,” Steve said far too smugly.

“And I wonder why everybody keeps treating me like the *wife*,” Danny said all resigned indignation.

“I do all the dishes. And I vacuum. And I…uhm… I’m sure I do something else domestic.”

“You are barely domesticated,” Danny told him.

“Grocery shopping,” Steve finally said.
“Because you think I’ll only buy Cheetos and malsados if you don’t go with me. Which is totally not true.”

Steve shrugged as he reached around Danny to turn off the shower. “I scrub the bathrooms.”

“You nuke the bathrooms. Not that I don’t appreciate a sparkling clean toilet. But you go beyond clean. We aren’t going to be performing field surgery in them.”

“We might need to,” Steve said. “You never know.”

Danny just shook his head, opening the door after they had shaved and were wrapped securely in their robes. He decided he could ignore the voices he heard downstairs, friends arriving, being greeted and receiving a lei from his sisters and Mary and Burt who was following the script Sylvia had given him. ‘It’s lovely to meet you as well. Make yourselves at home on the beach.’

“We don’t have to go down there, do we?” Steve asked, standing near the top of the steps as the voices came up to them.

“I don’t think we can get married in our bedroom,” Danny said.

“I can text the Governor and ask him to come up,” Steve said as he followed Danny into their bedroom.

“You do that. Then you can text every single one of our guests and explain why you are hiding in your bedroom.”

“I’m not hiding. It’s a strategic retreat.”

“Oh huh,” Danny said, looking at their reflections in the mirror. He had to smile when he saw Steve’s. “You are such a goof.”

“Yeah?” Steve asked, leaning down to kiss Danny’s neck.

“Yeah,” Danny agreed, turning around to look up at Steve, love and warmth in his eyes. “God I love you.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah,” Danny said, leaning his forehead against Steve’s chest, comforted by the beating of his heart, making his own skip several beats.

“Good,” Steve said, kissing the top of Danny’s head, smiling into the wet curls. “You better dry your hair or you’ll never be ready in time.”

“Just because we don’t all have utilitarian haircuts that let us wash and go doesn’t mean you are allowed to make fun of mine.”

“I don’t even know what it is you said,” Steve claimed.

“You most certainly do,” Danny retorted, turning back to the mirror. He watched as Steve dropped his robe and wandered around their bedroom naked. “What are you doing?”

“Getting ready,” Steve said like it was obvious.

“No you aren’t. You are parading around like this is a photo shoot for the latest Naked SEAL calendar.”
“SEALs don’t make calendars. At least not naked ones,” Steve informed him, pressing up tight to Danny’s back and reaching around him to pull open one of the drawers of their dresser.

“They should. You would be SEAL of the month every month.”

Steve shrugged, pulling on his briefs. “You don’t know any other SEALs. Maybe we all qualify for the calendar.”

“Could be. I wouldn’t buy it if you weren’t featured every month.”

“Good to know,” Steve said, lounging on top of their bed.

“What are you doing?” Danny demanded, turning off the dryer to turn and stare at him. “What?”

“It’s going to take you another 20 minutes to finish doing your hair. Why am I going to put on my uniform now just to wait while you make sure every hair is in place?”

“It doesn’t take me 20 minutes to do my hair. Ever.”

“I challenge that,” Steve said, shaking his head. “Anyway, it’s only 5:52. I don’t need to sit around in my uniform for the next 31 minutes.”

“Can’t you say ‘it’s not quite 6:00’ like a normal person?”

“At least I didn’t say it was 17:52,” Steve pointed out.

“There is that,” Danny had to concede, reluctantly going to the door when there was a knock. “Yeah?” he said to Max who was standing on the other side smiling.

“I am here to take photos of you. Pre-wedding. Are you ready?” Max asked as though Danny wasn’t standing there in a bathrobe with half of his hair dry.

“Are we ready he asks. Really Max? I’m in my bathrobe. Steve is in his briefs. Are we ready?”

“I take that as a no then,” Max said. “Perhaps I will go check on your daughter.”

“You do that,” Danny said.

“You will alert me when you are ready?”

“Yes,” Danny sighed, closing the door and leaning his head against it. “I told you that wasn’t a good idea.”

Steve shrugged from where he was still sitting on the bed. “He’s fine.”

Danny didn’t bother to respond, simply drying his hair the rest of the way before adding just the right amount of product to ensure it would stay in place. For a little while anyway. “Now. Get dressed.”

Steve reluctantly left the bed for the closet, taking out his uniform and Danny’s. “Here.”

“Thanks,” Danny said, laying it across the bed as he pulled on his own briefs. “Stop frowning at your uniform like it did you wrong.”

“I’m not,” Steve claimed.

“You most certainly are. Did you hide nuclear weapons in there the last time you wore it that have
now gone missing? Is that why you are mad at it? Did it go off and consort with some other freakishly tall lieutenant commander behind your back?”

“The average height of the white American male is 1.776 meters or 5 feet 10 inches. That means I am only 7.62 centimeters or 3 inches taller than average,” Steve pointed out as he pulled on his crisp white shirt.

“And?” Danny said as he buttoned up his dark blue shirt.

“You always call me freakishly tall. I’m trying to point out that I’m not. You are 5 inches shorter than the average American male.”

“Don’t you call me freakishly short. Or I swear to God I will not marry you.”

“Just making a point, Danno,” Steve said, far too pleased with himself.

“Oh. My. God. I hate you so much right now.”

“I don’t know why you keep saying that,” Steve said, stalking Danny who was backing away from him.

“Because I do. I’m only going through with this because my family is here. And there’s all this chicken. And shrimp. And I will not disappoint Grace,” Danny said, trying to evade Steve as he was backed up against the wall. Steve took full of advantage of the fact that there was no room left for him to retreat and leaned down to kiss Danny silent.

“So do you still hate me?” Steve asked, biting his earlobe after asking.

“Maybe not,” Danny admitted with a smile. “Stop pawing me and get dressed.”

“Right,” Steve agreed, pulling on his pants and waiting as Danny did as well. “I’ll go get Max.”

“Fine. Whatever,” Danny said, all of his attention focused on the mirror he was using to fix his tie. He nodded to Max when he and Steve returned, not surprised that Max started snapping photos immediately. “How many have you taken already?”

“286 counting these,” Max said with a smile.

“We aren’t paying you by the photo are we?” Danny asked.

“You are not paying me at all. Except for the cost of the albums once you decide on the photos you wish to have printed.”

“We aren’t paying you for your time?” Danny asked, glancing over at Steve who shrugged.

“I would be here as a guest had you not requested that I take the photographs. I consider my services as a gift to you.”

“Thank you,” Danny said with a nod. “That’s very generous of you.”

“Not at all,” Max said with a pleased smile. He continued to take pictures as Grace came rushing into the bedroom in her sparkling navy princess dress. It had capped sleeves and was what Danny’s mom call ‘ballerina’ length. The tulle overlay was sprinkled with rhinestones, larger stones on the neckline and delineating her non-existent waistline.

Danny thought he had never seen a more beautiful sight in his life than his daughter with her cheeks
made pink with excitement and her bare feet with her painted and pampered toe nails. A brief glance over at Steve confirmed that Steve thought the exact same thing.

“Steve. Danno. Look at my dress,” she said in uncontained excitement as she twirled around like the ballerina inside her jewelry box. “Isn’t it pretty?”

“It is the most beautiful dress I have ever seen,” Steve told her honestly, kneeling in front of her.

“And you are the most beautiful princess I’ve ever seen,” Danny added, hugging her tight before releasing her so Steve could hug her just as hard.

“You do look very lovely indeed,” Max said, smiling at her before taking additional pictures of everyone in the room.

“Thank you,” Grace said with utter happiness. “Grandma wanted to know where my shoes were. I said you don’t wear shoes at a wedding in Hawaii.”

“That’s different from New Jersey, isn’t it, princess?” Steve said, still smiling at her.

“Uh huh. She asked me if you were wearing shoes. I said yeah. Not Kono though.”

“Not Kono what?” Kono herself asked as she entered in her own spectacular dress. It was the exact same color as Grace’s, held on her elegant shoulders with wide straps, the edges of the dress lined with tiny rhinestones. The front appeared to cross over, right over left, the dress falling in elegant waves to stop in an inverted V right above her knees. The back hem came to rest above her bare ankles, her toes painted the same color as Grace’s.

“You aren’t wearing shoes,” Grace announced, looking up at her. “You look so pretty.”

“Thank you, Gracie-face. You do too,” Kono said with a dimpled smile down at her.

“She’s right. You do,” Danny said, staring at Kono like he’d never seen her before. “You clean up real nice.”

“You too, brah,” Kono said unnecessarily straightening his tie. She looked Steve up and down before letting out a low wolf whistle. “Wow, Boss.”

“Thank you,” Steve said with a sunny smile. “That dress is perfect.”

“Thanks,” she laughed. She also smiled at Max when he told her how completely stunning she looked not that he was surprised because she always looked stunning.

“Steve, can you braid my hair now?” Grace asked, showing him the pikake and orchids she had brought in with her.

“Of course. Do you have your brush?” he asked as he sat in the chair in the corner, Grace standing between his knees, her back to him.

“Oh. I forgot,” she said.

“Here, Monkey. You can use mine,” Danny assured her, giving Steve his brush.

“One braid or two?” Steve asked as he brushed her hair.

“What do you think, Kono?” Grace asked, looking up at her.
“Two, I think,” Kono decided. She turned to the door when Chin appeared, greeting everyone. He wore a simple black jacket and a starched white shirt over creased black pants. “You look fabulous.”

“Thank you. I can say the same about you,” Chin said with a light kiss on her cheek. “You look beautiful, Grace.”

“Thank you,” she said, smiling at him but not moving overly much as Steve expertly secured her hair and the flowers in a French braid.

“Good job,” Chin said in approval as Steve started on the second braid. The flowers were evenly spaced and the braids precisely symmetrical. “You didn’t learn that in SEAL school, did you?”

Steve laughed and shook his head. “Learned on Mary. I’ve perfected it with Grace.”

“He does the best braids in the whole world,” Grace declared.

“So I see,” Chin said, watching Danny button up his Newark Police Department jacket. “Sharp.”

“Thanks,” Danny said, making sure everything was in order. He nodded, turning from the mirror to watch Steve secure Grace’s second braid. “Very nice.”

“Thanks,” Steve said, kissing Grace’s head when he was finished. He picked her up so she could see herself in their mirror. “That good?”

“Perfect,” Grace assured him, kissing him. “Did you see my bouquet? It’s so pretty. It’s white and purple.”

“I haven’t. I’m looking forward to it,” Steve told her as he set her down. He pulled on his jacket, ignoring the small gasps he heard. One he knew was from Danny who always reacted that way when Steve had on his dress blue uniform. He suspected he heard one from Kono as well but decided he would ignore it. Why embarrass them both? It was just a uniform.

“Are you wearing your sword, brah?” Chin asked him with an approving smile on his.

“No. Danno’s afraid I might use it on someone if I have it with me,” Steve said with a laugh. Danny just ignored him as he continued to listen to Grace talk about all the flowers and the presents on the table in the living room and could she help open them after the wedding was over or tomorrow because she was the best present-opener in the world.

“You can help us tomorrow,” Danny promised. “It will be very late tonight before everyone leaves.”

“Can I sleep over tonight, please?” she asked, huge brown eyes pleading up at Danny and Steve.

“We talked about this,” Danny reminded her. “You’re going home with Rachel tonight. You can come back first thing in the morning for breakfast.”

“Why can’t I just stay here?”

“Tonight is a very special night for Danny and Steve,” Kono finally said, kneeling down in front of Grace. “They need some alone time after the wedding.”

“Oh,” Grace said, considering it. “So they can talk and stuff.”

“Yes,” Kono agreed, hearing the sighs of relief coming from behind her. “Talk and stuff. We’re all going home and we’ll be back for breakfast.”
“Okay,” Grace finally decided. “And you won’t open any presents until I get here, right?”

“We promise,” Steve said.

“You know it’s going to be stuff for the house,” Danny told her. “Boring stuff.”

“I know. But I like opening presents even when they’re boring.”

“All right,” Danny agreed, smiling over at his mother when she entered the already crowded bedroom.

“It’s 6:15 my dears. The Governor is here. You need to get downstairs so the wedding will begin on time,” she told them gently.

“Right,” Danny agreed, straightening.

“I will go down and take pictures of the processional,” Max said.

“Thank you,” Sylvia said with a nod. “Here you are,” she said to Chin, pinning a boutonniere on his lapel that matched the flowers in Grace’s hair.

“Thank you,” he said. “That is a beautiful dress.”

She smiled and smoothed out an invisible wrinkle. “Burt couldn’t understand why I needed a new dress.”

“It’s perfect, Mom,” Danny said, kissing her lightly on the cheek.

“We had better go,” she said, herding them out and down the steps. Once in the living room, she gave Kono and Grace their bouquets, matching purple orchids and white pikake. She made sure that Chin had both rings and that he knew which was which.

“Yes ma’am,” he assured her with a nod, patting the inside pocket of his jacket.

“All right,” she said with a smile. “I’ll tell the musicians you’re ready then.” She stopped and gave Danny and Steve a warm kiss on their cheeks before leaving so they couldn’t see the tears staining her face.

“You ready?” Kono asked the guys. They exchanged a look that said they had been ready for a really long time. Maybe their entire lives even though it took a little longer than that to realize it. “I take that as a yes.”

They nodded in unison, huge, bright smiles on their faces. Kono told Grace to stand right outside the doors, a light hand on her shoulder until the quintet began to play Boccherini’s Minuet. With the first notes, Grace followed her cue and stepped out onto the navy carpet that had been secured between the doors and the beach where the Governor waited.

Grace’s smile was the brightest anyone could remember seeing as she walked up the petal strewn runner, her movements natural and not at all self-conscious. She could not prevent a wave at her mom who blew her a kiss. When Grace got to the end of the runner, she took her place to the right side of the flower arch under which the Governor waited. He had to smile at her, placing a light hand on her shoulder in appreciation. She beamed up at him before turning to watch Kono and Chin leave the house.

Kono’s left arm was loped through Chin’s right elbow, the purple and white bouquet in Kono’s right
When they reached the arch, Kono stood on the right side with Grace, Chin going to the left side, winking at Malia when he was in place.

At their arrival, the quintet wound down the Minuet and began to play the Navy Hymn. The guests rose as one as Steve and Danny left the house.

Steve was wearing his hat although not as low on his forehead as usual. It did not make him look as foreboding as it normally did, his smile brightening even the lower brim of it.

Danny was beaming at their friends and family as they slowly made their way down the carpet runner, Danny’s left hand firmly held in Steve’s right. If some thought they should not have been holding hands as they approached the arch, no one was going to tell them. Not after the ceremony. Not ever.

When they reached the end of the runner, the Governor was smiling at them as though they had never stolen a helicopter or wrecked three police cruisers or nearly blown up Iolani Palace which was really so totally not their fault. Not the last time at any rate.

The guests sat as the music faded away, the only sound from the ocean. Steve handed his hat to Chin who handed it to Malia. Maybe Steve and Danny had argued about whether or not he would wear it the entire time, Danny insisting that he wasn’t marrying someone whose face was obscured by his hat. Steve used words like protocol and propriety and petulance and quoting United States Navy Uniform Regulations: Chapter One - General Uniform Regulations: Section 1: General Information: Article 1101.4: Headgear. None of which made Danny any more willing to allow him to wear his headgear throughout the entire ceremony and the chances of Steve getting into trouble for not adhering to proper uniform regulations concerning headgear during his wedding were very close to nil. Steve had just smiled and Danny had taken it as a win.

They were smiling at the Governor who nodded in approval of so much more than just the day.

“Welcome ohana, loved ones, those who have escaped most of the fall-out of all that Steven and Daniel do and all that they are. We gather here today to finally make their long-term marriage official.” Governor Denning looked very proud of the couple and of himself as if he were the one responsible for them finally coming to their senses and getting married.

“On behalf of Steve and Danny, welcome to one and all have traveled from near and far. Thank you for your presence here today, and we ask for your blessings for continued long life, encouragement that their life include fewer firearms and fire fights, and lifelong support come what may.

“We are here to witness their formal commitment to one another, one that may seem in some eyes to be redundant. We are here also to offer our love and support to their official union, and to allow Steven and Daniel to start their actual married life surrounded by the people dearest and most important to them, just as they have been sharing their unofficial married life with us.

“Marriage has been defined as the greatest and most challenging adventure of human relationships. But as we are talking about Steve and Danny, I don’t know that I can agree. They have already survived this long as partners, through carguments; blood shed – both their own and that of others; doubts not of their own making; arrests; and being asked how long they have been married long before today.

“Steve and Danny, as you have learned from first-hand experience, a ceremony cannot and does not create a marriage. You have accomplished that already: through love and patience, both of which
are plentiful if not always obvious; through dedication and perseverance – dedication to one another and perseverance not to be driven crazy by the other; through talking – mostly by Danny - and listening – or least pretending to - by Steve; helping and supporting and believing in each other – something that is never in doubt; through learning to forgive, learning to appreciate your differences – not just in procedure or protocol or height difference; and by learning to distinguish which things matter and letting the rest go, or at least agreeing to disagree, which doesn’t need to be loud and angry and involve innocent bystanders every single time. What this ceremony can do is to witness and affirm the choice you make to stand together as lifemates and partners and enable you to finally answer the question: *how long have you two been married?*

“You will now declare your intent to marry or take your last chance to change your mind.” He paused dramatically, just in case, although he knew there was no chance in hell or otherwise that either of them would change their mind. “Will you, Steven, take Daniel to be your lawful and official husband?”

“I absolutely will,” Steve said, smiling brightly at Danny.

“Will you, Daniel, take Steven to be to be your lawful and official husband?”

“Absolutely,” Danny agreed with a matching smile.

“That settled, we’ll have the exchange of vows.” The Governor used the standard vows, deciding that his cleverly disguised lecture would suffice and that they knew what they were getting into by marrying each other. Better they confined their craziness to one marriage than allowing it to spread out was his thinking.

“May I have the rings, please?”

Chin Ho gave him the two rings, their size difference making it clear which belong to which man. The Governor nodded, holding them in his palm.

“Steven, please repeat after me: I give you this ring, as a daily reminder of my love for you.” Steve repeated it, picking up Danny’s ring and sliding it onto his finger. Following the Governor’s instructions, Danny did the same, the look on his face leaving no doubt in anyone’s mind that they didn’t need the rings as a reminder of their love for one another. They only needed each other.

“By the power of your love and commitment, and the power vested in me by the laws of the great state of Hawai’i, I now pronounce you wed in holy matrimony. You may kiss.” The Governor beamed as they joined for a quick, chaste, appropriate kiss, the guests sighing in adoration at the symbolic action. “Congratulations.”

“Thank you,” Steve said to the Governor, shaking his hand before Danny did the same. Together, they turned and faced their guests many of whom had tears in their eyes.

Danny bent down to hear what Grace had to say, picking her up to rest her on his hip. “Thank you, Monkey. You look pretty too,” he said with a laugh, hugging her tight. That broke the spell that had descended over their guests who made their way up the aisle, talking and chatting and laughing among themselves as they waited their turn to congratulate the bridal party.

Steve thought after the 43rd person hugged him and kissed him on the cheek that surely they would be able to escape the receiving line soon. If there was a God. He could glad-hand for a while but then he ran out of ways to say ‘yes the weather is perfect. Thank you for coming. We appreciate having you here with us.’
“Babe, just say the same thing over and over while you smile,” Danny advised him when there was a momentarily lull.

“I didn’t say that out loud,” Steve protested quietly.

“You body language did, you big goof. What makes you think you have to say something different to each person?”

Steve shrugged, accepting Grace from Danny because it was apparently his turn to hold her. Fine with him. He wasn’t above using his very nearly daughter as a shield.

“And do not use our daughter as a shield,” Danny whispered, again with the spooky mind-reading.

Steve mostly ignored him, smiling at the next person who approached although he wasn’t entirely sure who she was. Martha? Maria? Marcia? How did they know her? He had no idea. He had no idea that they knew so many people.

“Hi Miss Bennett,” Grace said cheerfully, smiling at the mystery woman.

“Hello Grace,” the woman who was apparently Miss Bennett replied. “This was a lovely wedding. I know that you are very happy for your father.”

“Uh huh,” Grace agreed with a nod. “Both of my daddies.”

“Yes, of course,” Miss Bennett said with a laugh. “Congratulations, Commander.”

“Thank you,” Steve said, thinking maybe she was Grace’s teacher. That seemed reasonable. He’d been to Grace’s class once and had a vague recollection of her teacher flirting with Danny. Yeah, that’s how he knew her. Grace’s teacher. “She’s your teacher?” Steve asked Grace when Miss Bennett had walked away.

“Uh huh,” Grace agreed, turning in Steve’s arms to greet Amy Hanamoa and Billy. “Let me down?”

Steve automatically did it so she could talk to Billy, chatting excitedly about the wedding and the food and what they had done in school that week and had he talked to Miss Bennett?

“Amy,” Steve said, hugging her when it was his turn.

“You are holding up remarkably well,” she teased, smiling at him.

Steve shrugged. “You know. Danny said to say the same thing to every person.”

“Exactly,” Amy agreed. “Will you save me a dance?”

“I would be proud to,” Steve said, kissing her before she followed Billy and Grace up to the tables groaning under all of the food that Kamekona had prepared for the reception. He smiled in thanks to Sylvia when she silently handed him a tall glass of water which he drank before returning it to her to chat with the next person in line.

“Steve, Danny,” Governor Denning said, still smiling at them when the line had finally wound down. “Congratulations.”

“Thank you, Governor,” Danny said. “We appreciate your assistance.”

“I’m glad to do it. And now I’m afraid I need to leave.”

“Thank you for your time,” Steve said. “I’ll see you out.”
The Governor nodded to accept Steve’s entirely unnecessary escort but as there were no more guests waiting to chat with the happy couple, he knew Steve could escape for those few minutes without Danny yelling at either of them.

When Steve returned from seeing the Governor to his car, he zeroed in on Danny’s location, his determined expression preventing anyone from waylaying his mission.

“You were gone for three minutes, you goof,” Danny protested when Steve wrapped his arms around Danny’s chest. Steve shrugged against Danny’s back, smiling at Kono over Danny’s head.

“Are you going to have your first dance?” she asked.

“Do we do that now or after everyone eats?” Steve asked.

“If we were having a served dinner, we’d wait. But since it’s a Kamekona buffet o’Spam, we can have the dance now,” Danny said.

“A lot of the guests have eaten,” Kono agreed. “You were in the receiving line for a while.”

“Yeah,” Danny agreed. “Then we can eat.”

“Are you hungry, Danno?” Steve asked, kissing his neck and watching the color rise.

“I’m not answering that,” Danny said, turning in the circle of Steve’s arms to look up at him. “Are you going to be octopus man all night?”

“Maybe,” Steve whispered against Danny’s mouth before kissing him. That brought applause and whistles from their guests, Steve’s face covered with the most adorable blush Danny had ever seen.

“Stop,” Danny protested without meaning it.

Steve just shrugged, nodding to Kono who went over to speak to the DJ they had hired. She was one of the Kalakaua/Kelly cousins and was delighted to keep their party going for them. At Kono’s signal, Steve and Danny moved to the wooden dance floor that had been placed on the grass near the house, the tiki torches surrounding it and casting it in a warm glow.

Steve and Danny had practiced dancing because Danny did not want to make it obvious that he was following Steve’s lead, again with being treated like the wife. But there was no way that Danny could lead Steve on the dance floor, not unless they danced naked and Danny had his entire arsenal of weapons to use on Steve to distract him. They had danced to random slow songs because Kono and Chin said they were choosing the first dance and it was a need-to-know basis and would they ever do anything to embarrass their friends one of whom was still their boss and could fire them?

As Steve and Danny stepped on the wooden floor, the first strains of *At Last* by Etta James floated over to them. They had to laugh at the appropriateness of that song being the one they danced to for the first time as official Williams-McGarretts.

Steve concentrated on the look on Danny’s face as they danced, using the love so openly given to him to block out the knowledge that everyone was staring at them. He knew he had no reason to feel self-conscious but that didn’t seem to matter to the part of him that would have liked to drag Danny upstairs and lock the door so it was just the two of them.

“Don’t you have anything to say?” Steve whispered into Danny’s ear.

“I’m absorbing it all. Living in the here and now. Thinking about how 95% of the people here wish...
“That’s not true. Why do you always insist on saying those things?” Steve asked, holding Danny that much closer.

Danny shook his head, beaming up at Steve. “It doesn’t matter. And you are doing remarkably well with the not freaking out.”

“Thank you, I think. I told you have I company manners when I need them.”

“Yeah,” Danny agreed, backing slightly away from Steve when the final note of the song faded away. They turned hand in hand to the applauding guests, smiling and inviting them to dance as the next song started. Danny picked up Grace to dance with her as Steve danced with Rachel who looked spectacular in a pink dress, pink flowers peeking out of her hair piled in curls on the back of her head.

When the song ended, they traded partners, Danny dancing with Rachel as Steve twirled Grace around the dance floor.

“I really am quite happy for you both,” Rachel told Danny as they danced.

“Thank you,” Danny said sincerely. “I appreciate that.”

She kissed his cheek lightly when the music faded away, dancing with Stan when the next song started.

“You ready to get something to eat, babe?” Steve asked Danny when they had made their way to the edge of the dance floor.

“Yeah,” Danny agreed, going with him to the buffet tables where everyone insisted that they go straight to the front of the line because it was their celebration and no way should they be standing in line for food. They graciously agreed, not taking a lot of food in acknowledgment that they wouldn’t have a lot of free time to eat it. Mostly they wanted something to drink and accepted both water and champagne from one of the cousins.

They sat at the table reserved for the not bridal party, Malia there alone as they sat down.

“Hi,” she said brightly up to them. “You both look spectacular.”

“You are a flatterer,” Danny claimed with a smile.

“Where’s Chin Ho?” Steve asked with the same bright smile.

She waved vaguely toward the house. “Cake duty? Not really sure. Kono dragged him off a few minutes ago. Did you really let them pick it out?”

“Not so much ‘let’ as didn’t have a choice,” Danny said.

“I see,” she said with a laugh.

“Do you know what it looks like?” Steve asked between bites of pineapple. “They wouldn’t tell us.”

“No. Double top secret is all he’d say when I asked.”

“Us too,” Danny confirmed. “But they knew Grace and my mom would be here so we trust them. Right? Steve?”

“What are you doing?” Danny asked, following his gaze to try and figure out what was holding his attention.

“Nothing,” Steve said, looking down at his plate and moving around his papaya.

“Don’t eat that. I won’t be able to kiss you if you do,” Danny said, pointing at the offending papaya.

“I won’t. The catering cousins put it on there,” Steve said, giving it to Malia with his thanks.

Danny leaned closer, pressing up against Steve’s side. “You overwhelmed?” he whispered.

“Maybe a little,” Steve admitted. “I’m okay.”

“I know you are, Babe. And it’s natural you’d feel that way.”

Steve smiled and nodded, looking up at Malia with a guilty expression. “I’m sorry.”

“Whatever for?” she said, reaching over to cover one of his hands with hers. “Danny’s right. It is natural.”

“Thank you,” Steve acknowledged, smiling up at Sylvia and Burt when they stopped at the table. “Hi.”

“You are needed over by the caterer’s tables,” Sylvia said with a secret smile. Danny looked at Steve who looked back, uncertainty on both their faces. “Oh stop with the expressions. It’s time to cut the cake. That’s all. You aren’t being thrown into the ocean in your uniforms.”

They nodded, both trying to hide their guilt, and followed Danny’s parents to the table that had been cleared to make room for the cake which Chin was very carefully carrying out of the house still covered with the bakery’s box. He sat it down and took one step back with a mischievous smile on his face.

“We special ordered your cake,” Kono announced unnecessarily to all those who had gathered around the tables. “No four layer confection covered tower for the two of you.”

“Thank you,” Danny agreed.

“Are you ready?” Chin asked, hands on the sides of the box, prepared to show it off.

“I think so?” Steve said sounding less certain than he would have preferred. Chin took that as a yes and lifted off the box, laughter and applause greeting the unveiling.

The cake was shaped like a Naval aircraft carrier with USS Williams-McGarrett spelled out with frosting along the side. At the end of the icing runway, a silver Matchbox Camaro teetered on the edge about to plunge any minute into the blue frosting ocean. Next to the car were two small figures - the one with the blond hair and the painted on tie had his hands in the air, his little painted mouth open. The taller figure, the one with the short black hair and black cargo pants and polo had a smile painted on with his pleased expression.

Danny and Steve could only laugh at the cake, congratulating Chin and Kono on their creativity and imagination. It was without a doubt the best wedding cake they or any of their guests had ever seen. After making sure Max got plenty of pictures of the marvel of a cake, Steve and Danny cut it, refusing to honor the tradition of feeding each other. Some clichés just didn’t need to be respected.
After they had turned the cake cutting and serving duties over to some of the catering cousins, Steve bent down to whisper something into Kono’s ear. She nodded and winked and glided away. “Come on,” he said to Danny, pulling him by the hand toward the house.

“What? We can’t leave yet,” Danny protested while still following Steve inside.

“It’s only temporary. We’re changing out of our uniforms and into something more comfortable.”

“Oh,” Danny said as he followed Steve up the steps. “Did we discuss changing? Because I don’t remember discussing it. I’m pretty sure it wasn’t on The List.” He only stopped talking when Steve kissed him breathless. “Or we could not change.”

Steve laughed, kissing him again. “Don’t ever change, Babe. You’re perfect just the way you are,” Steve sang as he unbuttoned Danny’s jacket.

“That’s not even a song,” Danny protested as he worked on Steve’s uniform.

“It might be,” Steve said, hanging up his uniform before doing the same with Danny’s.

“You aren’t wearing cargo pants back down are you?” Danny asked as he watched Steve move around their bedroom in only his briefs. They both needed to dress right away or they would never make it back downstairs.

“I ironed them,” Steve responded from inside the closet where he had disappeared.

“Not the point, Babe,” Danny said as Steve emerged, two pair of black jeans in his hands. “Oh. Okay.” Danny accepted his to pull them on before adding a new button down shirt in light blue. Steve’s shirt was aqua, Danny’s favorite color in him and he knew Steve knew it. Once they were dressed, Danny went to the door to return to the party to be stopped by Steve’s hand.

“C’mere,” Steve said, taking him to the balcony instead. He opened the doors, stepping out on it, Danny in front of him. “Look.”

Danny followed the line of Steve’s hand pointing at the ocean when he saw it – flickering lights in the shape of a heart floating just off shore. “Tealights on the ocean,” Danny said breathlessly. Steve’s kiss was the only confirmation he needed.
Darn You Autocorrect!

Chapter Summary

Pure silliness. Autocorrects because they make me LOL so hard! (I borrowed the idea from Scraplove who writes them for Star Trek. They are Pepsi-out-of-your-nose funny!) Some semi-questionable language. Nothing outrageous, I don't think.

EmmaWMc: Can you come pick me up?
LtCSteveWMc: Sure Princess. Where r u?
EmmaWMc: Saturn’s Moon
LtCSteveWMc: I’ll be there in about 3 years
EmmaWMc: OMG. Sarah’s mom’s.
LtCSteveWMc: Then I’ll be there in 10 minutes
EmmaWMc: Thx

KonoKF: Hey Bossman. I need tomorrow off
LtCSteveWMc: Sure. Everything ok?
KonoKF: Yeah. Charlie has to have his widened testicle removed.
LtCSteveWMc: Whoa. TMI
KonoKF: Wisdom teeth. *facepalm*
LtCSteveWMc: That makes more sense. C u Monday
KonoKF: Right. Monday

DannoWMc: Hey Babe. We need some C2
LtCSteveWMc: You planning to blow something up?
DannoWMc: Not C2. TP. Jeez
LtCSteveWMc: I’ll stop on my way home.
DannoWMc: Do NOT bring any C2 with you.
LtCSteveWMc: It’s in the garage
DannoWMc: Tell me you are kidding
LtCSteveWMc: Yes?

EmmaWMc: Hey Bro. Can you help me with my homework tonight?
JohnWMc: Sure. What’s up?
EmmaWMc: I have to write a paper on procreation.
JohnWMc: Uhmm…maybe you should talk to Dad.
EmmaWMc: Oh God. Prohibition. No alcohol. NOT having babies
JohnWMc: Sure I’ll help with that

JohnWMc: Hey Dad. Can I borrow the truck tomorrow?
DannoWMc: Sure. What’s up?
JohnWMc: I need to get rid of some dead bodies.
DannoWMc: There something you need to tell me, son?
DannoWMc: Good. That’s not illegal. I’d hate to arrest my own son.
JohnWMc: Me too
GraceW: What should I get Steve for Christmas?
DannoWMc: He wants a pair of helicopters
GraceW: Little out of my price range. LOL
DannoWMc: Yeah. How about hiking boots?
GraceW: That I can do. How do you get helicopter out of hiking boots?
DannoWMc: Cause it’s Steve?
GraceW: Probably.

ChinHoK: Everything okay?
KonoKF: Yeah. Why?
ChinHoK: Danny said you were going to the mortuary
KonoKF: Mortuary? Did he text you that?
ChinHoK: Yeah. You’d have told me if someone had died, right?
KonoKF: I’m at the maternity store. Not the mortuary.
ChinHoK: That’s a relief.
KonoKF: I’ll say. Can I get you anything while I’m here?
ChinHoK: I’m all set. Thanks.

LtCSteveWMc: I have plans for you after work.
DannoWMc: Oh yeah? What kind of plans?
LtCSteveWMc: Naked plans. That involve a lot of labor.
DannoWMc: Are we adding on to the house?
LtCSteveWMc: Not labor. Lassos
DannoWMc: Yeeha! Ride ‘em cowboy
LtCSteveWMc: Not lassos. Although that’d work. Laudnry
DannoWMc: I finished it last night.
LtCSteveWMc: LUBE dammit. Way to kill the mood autocorrect
DannoWMc: I’m down with that.

DannoWMc: I want you naked.
LtCSteveWMc: Oh yeah. What will you do once I am?
DannoWMc: Color you
LtCSteveWMc: With crayons?
DannoWMc: Carress you. Not color you
LtCSteveWMc: Go on
DannoWMc: Torch you
LtCSteveWMc: Ouch
DannoWMc: TOUCH you
LtCSteveWMc: I’d prefer it.
DannoWMc: Bike you
LtCSteveWMc: Hmm… do you have a helmet?
DannoWMc: WTF phone? Just get home and get underserved
LtCSteveWMc: I would if I knew what that meant
DannoWMc: UNDRESSED. OMG
LtCSteveWMc: Roger that

ChinHoK: You want to come out with us for babes tonight?
DannoWMc: I better pass. I’m a married man.
ChinHoK: Beers. NOT Babes
DannoWMc: Sure. You’re buying and I won’t tell Malia
ChinHoK: Done

GraceW: You got a minute?
KonoKF: Of course. What’s up Grace-Face?
GraceW: I think I’m going to have a massacre.
KonoKF: Oh dear. Sounds serious.
GraceW: Meltdown. How did that happen?
KonoKF: Sometimes the same thing. What’s wrong?
GraceW: Exams. 3 tomorrow. 2 on Freedom.
KonoKF: 2 exams on freedom sounds excessive
GraceW: FRIDAY. Phone - you are not helping.
KonoKF: I’ll come pick you up in 15 minutes. We’ll have some grand theft.
GraceW: I don’t think Danno would approve.
KonoKF: Girl time.
GraceW: He’ll be okay with that. Thx.
KonoKF: Any time.

KonoKF: Hey. I need you to pick up the kids.
CharlieKF: Sure. Everything okay?
KonoKF: Graces is strapped. I’m going to talk her down
CharlieKF: Is she threatening to shoot someone?
KonoKF: Oh God. Stressed. Not strapped. She may shoot someone though
CharlieKF: As long as its not you. I don’t want to have to explain to the kids.
KonoKF: Me neither. I hsould be home by 7 or eerie.
CharlieKF: Take you time. Be eerie as much as you need.
KonoKF: XOXOXO
Charlie KF: Haunt Grace for me.
KonoKF: Only if she shoots me
CharlieKF: Right

LtCSSteveWMc: Hey Princess. Where’s your brothel?
EmmaWMc: Uhmmm… dad?
LtCSSteveWMc: Oh. My. Lord. BROTHER
EmmaWMc: surfing. Why?
LtCSSteveWMc: I thought he was coming straight home. To finish his assassination.
EmmaWMc: Who is he planning to assassinate? The women in my brothel?
LtCSSteveWMc: Don’t even joke about that!! Assignment. As in homework. He was going to talk to the Speaker of the House.
EmmaWMc: Oh right. About that.
LtCSSteveWMc: Yeah?
EmmaWMc: She told him to f-off.
LtCSSteveWMc: Please tell me that’s an autocorrect
EmmaWMc: Nope. Won’t talk to him. Cause you didn’t sign the latest billions?
LtCSSteveWMc: I can’t sing a billion anything. Or sign.
EmmaWMc: You can’t sing at all. And you didn’t sign the BILL on wildlife protection.
LtCSSteveWMc: That was a ruse. To stop board hunting.
EmmaWMc: Are surfboards in season already? I need to go hunt some!
LtCSSteveWMc: Boar. You are grounded forever.
EmmaWMc: Yeah, I know. Are you going to talk to the Speaker?
LtCSSteveWMc: I’ll talk to John first. He’s grounded too.
EmmaWMc: Yeah. He knows.

LtCSSteveWMc: Emma tells me the Speaker won’t talk to you?
JohnWMc: She won’t. Cause she’s mad at you.
LtCSSteveWMc: I’m sorry. You want me to spear her?
JohnWMc: I'd rather you didn’t. You can speak to her.
LtCSteveWMc: Speak. Yeah. I can do that.
JohnWMc: Thx

DannoWMc: Where r u?
LtCSteveWMc: My office?
DannoWMc: Seb said you were awry.
LtCSteveWMc: Awry? As in askew? Astray?
DannoWMc: Away! As in not there.
LtCSteveWMc: I’m here as far as I know. Yep. That’s me. Here
DannoWMc: Fine. Do you know where your sun is?
LtCSteveWMc: In the sky. Center of our universe.
DannoWMc: Don’t make me come there and hit on you.
LtCSteveWMc: You hit on me all the time. And I’m not complaining.
DannoWMc: I hate you so hard.
LtCSteveWMc: No you don’t.
DannoWMc: Where is John???
LtCSteveWMc: IDK
DannoWMc: Couldn’t you have told me that to start?
LtCSteveWMc: You didn’t ask.
DannoWMc: I hate yo uso much
LtCSteveWMc: NOT
More Darn You Autocorrects

Chapter Summary

I had so much fun writing the first autocorrects, I decided to add some more. Here they are. (BTW if you have never been to damnyouautocorrect.com you need to go and read those. You will LOL!!!)

LtCSteveWMc: Hey Babe. I’m going to be late tonight.
DannoWMc: Everything ok?
LtCSteveWMc: Yeah. I have to market the government.
DannoWMc: I didn’t know marketing was one of your many talents. You learn that in SEAL school?
LtCSteveWMc: Meet with the Governor. Stupide autocorrect.
DannoWMc: Stupide?
LtCSteveWMc: IDK. It doesn’t fix that but turns meet into market?
DannoWMc: Sucks to be you Babe
LtCSteveWMc: You have no idea.

LtCSteveWMc: You need to find your own dinner tonight.
JohnWMc: We’ll order pizza. You throwing Danno out?
LtCSteveWMc: I was planning on taking him out. I’ll bring him home after we eat.
JohnWMc: That’s good to know.

GraceW: Danno, can you call Mom and talk some sand into her?
DannoWMc: Sand? Isn’t there enough of that in Hawaii already?
GraceW: SENSE. She is refusing to let me get my own armaments.
DannoWMc: Have you been talking to Steve again?
GraceW: Apartment. I don’t want to live at home while I go to collage.
DannoWMc: Lots of people collage at home, Monkey.
GraceW: You are not helping.
DannoWMc: I’m sorry. I’ll talk to her. About apartments. Not armaments.
GraceW: Thx.

GraceW: Hey, Danno said you’re mad at him.
LtCSteveWMc: Why would he tell you that?
GraceW: Are you? Madame?
LtCSteveWMc: I’m not a Madame as far as I know.
GraceW: Steve!
LtCSteveWMc: I am mad at him.
GraceW: Why? What’s up?
LtCSteveWMc: He refuses to give me the keys to the Commode.
GraceW: I can see how that would be a problem.
LtCSteveWMc: Camaro. Wow.
GraceW: Yeah. I thought you had your own sitter.
LtCSteveWMc: If anyone needs a sitter, it’s him.
GraceW: Your own set. What happened to those?
LtCSteveWMc: IDK
GraceW: I’ll give you mine. You have to promiscuity not to tell him.
LtCSteveWMc: I promiscuity.
GraceW: Epic fail, phone
LtCSteveWMc: I’ll say

EmmaWMc: Can you stop and get some cocaine? We’re all out.
DannoWMc: This is a good thing. We cannot have cocaine in the house.
EmmaWMc: Coke, The kind with burps.
DannoWMc: I don’t think the burps come in the cans.
EmmaWMc: BUBBLES
DannoWMc: That makes more sense.
EmmaWMc: Will you please stop for some?
DannoWMc: Of course.

JohnWMc: You have any $$$?
EmmaWMc: Depends. Why do you Neanderthal?
JohnWMc: I wasn’t aware that I Neanderthaled.
EmmaWMc: You are one. Why do you need the $$$?
JohnWMc: Christmas is in a few words.
EmmaWMc: It’s one word. Didn’t Danno give you shopping Monday?
JohnWMc: Some Mondays. But I used them up already.
EmmaWMc: That’s too bad for you. Ask Steve.
JohnWMc: Good to know I can coupon you.
EmmaWMc: If you used coupons, you might not be out of Mondays, Neanderthal.
JohnWMc: I’m telling Danno to disown you.
EmmaWMc: Good luck with that.

JohnWMc: Can I have some money, please?
LtCSteveWMc: Who is this?
JohnWMc: Dad!
LtCSteveWMc: My father? Back from the grave? Like a Christmas ghost?
JohnWMc: Very funny. Please, will you give me some money?
LtCSteveWMc: Didn’t Danno already give you some?
JohnWMc: Yeah. But I spoiled it.
LtCSteveWMc: If you’d put in the frig like we told you, it wouldn’t have spoiled.
JohnWMc: Are you high? Did you have a blow to the head?
LtCSteveWMc: No. Maybe.
JohnWMc: Never mind. I’ll ask Danno.
LtCSteveWMc: Bye Dad.
JohnWMc: Not even funny, Steve.
LtCSteveWMc: Maybe a little funny.
JohnWMc: No.

JohnWMc: I need some more money. For Christmas.
DannoWMc: Yeah, I heard.
JohnWMc: So you’ll give it to me?
DannoWMc: Only because I feel sorry for you. Having to put up with Steve.
JohnWMc: He’s quite a commodore.
DannoWMc: Lieutenant Commander.
JohnWMc: Comedian! Oh please.
DannoWMc: Welcome to my world.
JohnWMc: It’s a wonder you haven’t divorced him.
DannoWMc: Or killed him. I let him live for you chicklets.
JohnWMc: Now we’re candy coated gum?
DannoWMc: Sure. Two treats in one.
JohnWMc: No. Just no.

KonoKF: We still going Christmas shopping tamale?
EmmaWMc: Sure thing burrito.
KonoKF: Tomorrow. OMG.
EmmaWMc: Right. Charlie watering the kids?
KonoKF: He may take them surfing. They’ll get wet then.
EmmaWMc: Watching. Do you have your Listerine?
KonoKF: Isn’t my breath minty fresh already?
EmmaWMc: List. Your Christmas listen.
KonoKF: I’m listening.
EmmaWMc: Never mind. Pick me up at 4?
KonoKF: You’re on taco.

LtCSteveWMc: Did you order the presentations for Emma and John?
DannoWMc: What presentations? On how insane their father is?
LtCSteveWMc: Presents. For Christmas. We’re going to run out of timber.
DannoWMc: We’re getting them logs?
LtCSteveWMc: TIME. Don’t mess with me. I am already on the engine.
DannoWMc: You would be more comfortable in the backseat. Why are they making the Governor ride on the engine?
LtCSteveWMc: I can have you killed.
DannoWMc: You would missile me.
LtCSteveWMc: I just might.
DannoWMc: Wtvr.

DannoWMc: I got an email from LL Bean. The boots Emma wants are backhoe.
DannoWMc: Her feet aren’t that big.
DannoWMc: Backordered. What do you want to do?
LtCSteveWMc: Gift cardigan from the site?
DannoWMc: She does not want a Christmas sweater from any site. Trust me.
LtCSteveWMc: Gift card. Not cardigan.
DannoWMc: Oh yeah. We can do that.

EmmaWMc: Hey. I need you to pick me up.
JohnWMc: Why? I thought Danno was coming?
EmmaWMc: He’s busted.
JohnWMc: Oh dear. Steve arrest him?
EmmaWMc: Busy. Please come get me.
JohnWMc: I’ll be there in a few minutes.
EmmaWMc: Are you dancing your way here?
JohnWMc: Maybe. Do you want me to come or not?
EmmaWMc: Yes pies.
JohnWMc: On my way cakes.

LtCSteveWMc: You busy later?
DannoWMc: Depends. What do you have in mines?
LtCSteveWMc: Gold. Silver. Diamonds.
DannoWMc: You wish. In mind?
LtCSteveWMc: Dancing. Naughty bear naked dancing.
DannoWMc: I’m not dancing with bears. And I’d prefer you didn’t either. Not again.
LtCSteveWMc: It was only that once.
DannoWMc: One time too manly.
LtCSteveWMc: You think I’m manly?
DannoWMc: I think you are insane.
LtCSteveWMc: But you love me anyway.
DannoWMc: Sadly, I do.

DannoWMc: What do you want for dinner?
LtCSteveWMc: IDC.
DannoWMc: Okay. I’ll make human beef.
LtCSteveWMc: OMG. I thought you gave up cannibalism for lent.
DannoWMc: Hunan beef. I was never a cannonball.
LtCSteveWMc: Especially since Danno don’t swim.
DannoWMc: Get your own dinner. I’m done with you.
LtCSteveWMc: I’ll make it up to you.
DannoWMc: Yeah? How?
LtCSteveWMc: Blow pop.
DannoWMc: Cherry?
LtCSteveWMc: WTF? Oh. Blow job.
DannoWMc: I’ll take it. And I’ll make you dinner.
LtCSteveWMc: You are a prince.
DannoWMc: I know.

LtCSteveWMc: Be naked when I get home.
JohnWMc: WTF
LtCSteveWMc: OMG. That should have been to Danno.
JohnWMc: No kittens.
LtCSteveWMc: I’m sorry Bud. I hope you aren’t scarred for life.
JohnWMc: I know you do the nasty. And I don’t have any scars. Especially compared to you and Danno.
LtCSteveWMc: Or kittens.
JohnWMc: Right.

EmmaWMc: Meet me behind the bleachers at 3 and I’ll show you my tattoo.
DannoWMc: You have a tattoo? You are in so much trouble.
EmmaWMc: Oh crap. That was supposed to go to Dancy.
DannoWMc: A tattoo???
EmmaWMc: Totem. We made totems in art class. Chill Dad.
DannoWMc: Why are you meeting her behind the bleachers? Please tell me it’s not a sexual totem.
EmmaWMc: We’re meeting behind the bleachers because we have cheerleading practicum.
DannoWMc: They have cheerleading labs now?
EmmaWMc: Practice. Go away. I need to text Dancy.
DannoWMc: About your tattoo. Right.
EmmaWMc: I’m not Steve. Gawd.

GraceWMc: I am going to kill your father.
EmmaWMc: Welcome to the club. Which one?
GraceWMc: Both either. Mostly Steve.
EmmaWMc: What’d he do?
GraceWMc: He told Stan the truth about what happened to the vegetables.
EmmaWMc: Did you eat his zucchini again? LOL
GraceWMc: Very funny. Volkswagen.
EmmaWMc: Oh. Not good. What’d Stan sing?
GraceWMc: Off key. He tried to ground me.
EmmaWMc: Not likely. Since you don’t even live there.
GraceWMc: Yeah. If you see Steve first tell him he’s dense to me.
EmmaWMc: He can be dense to everyone.
GraceWMc: Dead.
EmmaWMc: Okay. I can do that.
Even More Autocorrects

Chapter Summary

More silliness. May be the last that are posted for a while. My muses seem to have run out of auto-correct steam. Not sure these are really post-worthy but here they are. Hope you enjoy them!

LtCSteveWMc: Yo. You seen my cargoes?
DannoWMc: You mean the 189 cargo pants in our closet?
LtCSteveWMc: Not cargoes. Car keys. Have you seen them?
DannoWMc: No
LtCSteveWMc: Thanks for your help
DannoWMc: I live to serve
LtCSteveWMc: No you don’t
DannoWMc: You’re right

JohnWMc: Hey Dad. How do you make a hormone?
LtCSteveWMc: Don’t pay her.
JohnWMc: Not a hormone. A hormone.
LtCSteveWMc: Glad we cleared that up.
JohnWMc: Jeez. A HAUPIA. The coconut pudding Kono made us
LtCSteveWMc: Recipe’s in the computer. Under desserts Danno pretends to hate
JohnWMc: Okay. Thanks.

ChinHoK: Hey Grace-face.
GraceW: What’s up?
GraceW: He’s listening to the whole Palace? LOL
ChinHoK: Something like that. You want to come over for dinner Wedding night?
GraceW: Are you getting married again? I hope it’s to Malia.
ChinHoK: How about Wednesday night? And I won’t tell Danny you were smarting off.
GraceW: Wednesday is good. Danno won’t be surrounded.
ChinHoK: Steve has him covered.
GraceW: Surprised. What can I bring? To the Wedding dinner?
ChinHoK: Never mind. You are no longer invited.
ChinHoK: Right. Can you bring desert?
GraceW: Sure. Sahara or Mojave?
ChinHoK: I’m done.

LtCSteveWMc: What are you making for dinner?
DannoWMc: Grilled buffalo children
LtCSteveWMc: Oh. Think I’ll pass.
DannoWMc: CHICKEN. OMG. Buffaloes don’t have children
LtCSteveWMc: I hope not
EmmaWMc: I’m going slutting after school.
DannoWMc: You most certainly are not!
EmmaWMc: Surfing. NOT that other word
DannoWMc: Why is slutting even in your phone?
EmmaWMc: John borrowed it?
DannoWMc: We are having a serious talk when you get home. You and your brother.
EmmaWMc: It wasn’t me. I’ve never used that word in my whole life.
DannoWMc: I’m still telling Steve.
EmmaWMc: It wasn’t me!!!
DannoWMc: You are grounded forever.
EmmaWMc: What else is new?

DannoWMc: I’m forwarding you a text I got from Emma. Let me know when you’ve read it.

…
LtCSteveWMc: Well. That’s something.
DannoWMc: Yeah. What are YOU going to do about it?
LtCSteveWMc: Let you hammer her.
DannoWMc: I should nail her feet to the floor? Is that what you are suggesting?
LtCSteveWMc: Handle her. No tools involved.
DannoWMc: You my friend are a chicken-sheet.
LtCSteveWMc: I don’t even know what that means.
DannoWMc: Me either. Stupid phone.

LtCSteveWMc: Danno’s still worked up about that text
EmmaWMc: Gawd Dad. He needs to take a freezing chill.
LtCSteveWMc: I agree. Why is slutting in your phone?
EmmaWMc: I told you. IDK
LtCSteveWMc: Color me dowdy.
EmmaWMc: You are many things, Dad. Dowdy is not one of them.
LtCSteveWMc: Doubtful. Were you texting with Dancy when you used it?
EmmaWMc: For the love of Goobers, let it go.
LtCSteveWMc: I’m not that big a fan of Goobers.
EmmaWMc: No but you are one.
LtCSteveWMc: Yeah. You’re probably right.

DannoWMc: What did Emma say?
LtCSteveWMc: That you need to take a chill pillow
DannoWMc: At least a chill pillow would keep me cool when you are baking me
LtCSteveWMc: You love it and you know it.
DannoWMc: Are you upset that it’s in her phone?
LtCSteveWMc: Nah. Kids will be kilometers
DannoWMc: I have no response to that
LtCSteveWMc: Me neither

GovSD: I hope you and the rest of your Team have a very Merry Christmas
LtCSteveWMc: Thank you, Government. Same to you.
LtCSteveWMc: Governor. Sorry.
GovSD: I understand. You’ll be back at work on Jasmine 4?
LtCSteveWMc: Yes sir.
GovSD: January 4. Clearly you underwhelmed that.
LtCSteveWMc: Yes. Understood.
GovSD: Stupid autocorrect
LtCSteveWMc: It can be tragic.
LtCSteveWMc: Trying.
GovSD: Right.
LtCSteveWMc: Mele Kalikimaka
GovSD: You two.
GovSD: too.

EmmaWMc: Hey Daddy. I need some tambourines
DannoWMc: Are you starting a 60s folk band?
EmmaWMc: Make this harder on me. Please.
DannoWMc: I’ll stop at the drugstore.
EmmaWMc: You need to get me the varsity pack.
DannoWMc: I don’t know how to respond to that.
EmmaWMc: Variety. Different sizes.
DannoWMc: That I can do.
EmmaWMc: Thx

KonoKF: Hey Bud. I can’t make it to your game Friendly Friday?
KonoKF: Right. Friday.
JohnWMc: Everything okay?
KonoKF: It’s fine. My umbrella is coming from Maine
JohnWMc: You’re getting a new umbrella from LL Bean?
KonoKF: Uncle. Mainland.
JohnWMc: That makes a lot more sense.
KonoKF: I’ll say.

GraceW: Hey Steve. Where is Danno?
LtCSteveWMc: I thought he was home. Why?
GraceW: He’s not answering his phonetics
LtCSteveWMc: He finished Fun with Phonetics last week.
GraceW: Vry funny. Have you called him today?
LtCSteveWMc: A few minutes ago. Maybe he’s swimming.
LtCSteveWMc: Bwhahahahaha…
GraceW: Very funny Danno.
LtCSteveWMc: I’m sorry Baby. What did you need me for?
GraceW: Never mind. I’m not talking to you.
LtCSteveWMc: Understood.

GovSD: You are needed at the 5-0 offices.
GovSD: Steve?
GovSD: We have a situation. You need to pick up your phone.
GovSD: You have 3 minutes or I’m sending a squad car to your house.
LtCSteveWMc: Apologies, Governor. I was…indispensible.
LtCSteveWMc: Indisposed.
GovSD: I tried Danny as well. Was he helping you be indispensible?
LtCSteveWMc: I’ll take the 5th
GovSD: Probably just as well. Meet me at your offerings ASAP
LtCSteveWMc: We’ll be there in 10.

LtCSteveWMc: Hey Monkey. Howzit?
GraceW: I’m okay. You and Danno don’t need to worship
LtCSteveWMc: We do worship you. That’s why we can’t help but worry.
GraceW: Danno was right. Kuane is an idiom
LtCSteveWMc: He did have a personality cliché
GraceW: I almost feel synonyms for him
LtCSteveWMc: I only feel antonyms
GraceW: At least you didn’t delete him.
LtCSteveWMc: I considered a strikethrough but Danno nixed that preposition
GraceW: Thanks. I feel better.
LtCSteveWMc: Just remember it’s all subjunctive
GraceW: Roger that.

LtCSteveWMc: Hey Mary. Are you coming to Hawaii for Christmas?
MaryMc: Nah Bro. Too much trombones.
LtCSteveWMc: Only in the brass section.
MaryMc: Trouble wiseacre.
LtCSteveWMc: I’ll buy you a title.
MaryMc: Can you make me a baroness?
LtCSteveWMc: Ticket.
MaryMc: First class?
LtCSteveWMc: Don’t push your luck.
MaryMc: I’ll think it over.
LtCSteveWMc: The kids really want to see you. Not your oven though.
MaryMc: The kids huh? You don’t care?
LtCSteveWMc: Of course I do. I want you here for Chilli.
MaryMc: Can I stay through Stew?
LtCSteveWMc: Just come.
MaryMc: I’ll think about it.

DannoWMc: What did Mary say?
LtCSteveWMc: She’ll think about cramming.
DannoWMc: I told her to study through the whole semester.
LtCSteveWMc: Yeah. She never listens.
DannoWMc: Must be a farming trait.
LtCSteveWMc: Plow ahead. See where it gets you.
DannoWMc: Are you saying I’m not getting lucky tonight?
LtCSteveWMc: Or ever.
DannoWMc: Harsh Babe. Real harsh.

DannoWMc: Hey. Can you stop for lube on your way home?
JohnWMc: Ummm…Dad? Did you mean to send that to Steve?
DannoWMc: I’m sorry, John. That was supposed to be lard. I want to bake old fashioned cookies.
JohnWMc: Lard? Really?
DannoWMc: Yeah. In the almond cookies.
JohnWMc: Does Steve know?
DannoWMc: No. And you aren’t to tell him.
JohnWMc: My silence can be bought for a pint.
JohnWMc: Price, Danno. What would I do with a pint of blood? Gross
DannoWMc: Just bring the lard.
JohnWMc: Right
Danny gets hurt and is angry. Steve tries to makes amends.

This chapter is different from most of the BPBB chapters. There is angst and h/c and... well. No relationship is perfect. Not even Steve and Danny's.

It crackled between them, the oppressive silence that could swallow them both. Danny stared out the passenger window. Steve’s hands, white-knuckled, clung to the steering wheel. He wanted to bridge that silence, the thunderous quiet that had engulfed the Camaro before both doors were closed.

I’m sorry. He could say it again. To what ends? Would the next time be the one that made an impression? That would ease Danny’s clinched jaw, his narrowed eyes? Would saying it stop Danny from holding his words at bay from Steve who wanted them now more than ever before?

I’m sorry. How many times had he already said it? The last time had been met with silence. No acknowledgement, no sign that Danny had heard.

He stopped the car in front of the house, undoing Danny’s seatbelt before dealing with his own. He quickly rounded the car to open Danny’s door. Danny refused to meet his eyes, made no sound as he awkwardly left the car. Steve attempted to put a steadying hand on Danny’s back but withdrew it when Danny hunched away. All Steve could do was follow silently, opening the door and allowing Danny to enter.

After a detour to the kitchen for some cold water, Steve went up the stairs. Danny was in the bathroom, looking down at the toilet. Staring at it as though it was to blame.

“I can’t even take a fucking piss by myself,” Danny said, his voice quiet and unfamiliar. No ranting, no bombast. Very little anger in the tone for all the anger in the words themselves.

Steve bit off the apology before it fully formed. Instead, he reached around Danny’s unnaturally still body and unzipped his trousers. Not touching him any more than absolutely necessary, Steve aimed, waiting as Danny emptied his bladder.

“Don’t,” Danny said when Steve began to zip them up. Steve nodded and took a small step back. Danny left the bathroom for their bedroom while Steve washed up.

“You need to take your medication,” Steve said in an even tone.

Danny’s icy blue eyes stared at Steve, looked at him over the silence. “I can’t be here with you right now.”

Steve blinked at the words, slowing his breathing and calming his racing thoughts. “What do you
“Grace’s room,” Danny said. He turned on his heel to go out and down the hall. Steve had to follow. With both of Danny’s hands heavily bandaged, he would not be able to undress himself.

Steve waited in the doorway. Danny would acknowledge him when he was ready. At the moment, he was staring down at the picture of the three of them that always sat beside Grace’s bed. Grace’s 9th birthday. They had spent it surfing and eating shaved ice and being goofy.

“Help me undress,” Danny finally requested, not turning to face Steve. He tensed at Steve’s approach, remaining motionless until Steve turned him by the shoulders. Danny stared down at Steve’s hands as they unbuttoned his shirt, easing it off his arms. He was vigilant with Danny’s hands, not knocking against them.

Danny sat on the edge of the bed so that Steve could untie and remove his shoes. Next came his socks and pants.

“Briefs?”

Danny shook his head silently, standing by the bed to look down at the covers. Handling them was impossible. He stepped aside without glancing at Steve.

Steve turned the bed back, moving so that Danny could climb in. His movements were awkward without the use of his hands.

Steve silently opened the two medicine bottles, shaking out the pills. Danny glared at them before closing his eyes and opening his mouth. He accepted the pills onto his tongue before taking in enough water to wash them down.

“Do you want me to stay?” Steve asked. He knew the answer but he wanted to be wrong.

Danny opened his eyes to glare up at him. Withholding his words.

“I am sorry,” Steve said. He didn’t think he had planned to apologize. But there it was.

Still Danny did not speak to him. Maybe his angry expression and pained eyes were all Steve was going to get. More than he deserved.

“You’ll let me know if you need anything,” Steve said. Everything in him told him to stay. Show Danny his sincerity with his presence. His concern. But truthfully he could not remain when Danny wanted him gone.

Danny lay down. His hands were outside the covers, the white bandages covering his fingers and wrists a beacon of reprimand to Steve. The emergency room surgeon said the cuts were deep and serious but Danny had escaped permanent damage. Once the combined 17 stitches were out of his palms and fingers, he would require physical therapy.

“This shouldn’t have happened,” Danny said as Steve reached the door. His voice was subdued, his tone defeated. If Steve hadn’t been listening he would have never heard the words.

“I know,” Steve said, guilt weighing on the words.

“Back-up was 7 minutes out.”

“I know,” Steve repeated.
“Seven minutes.”

“She is six, Danno.”

Danny sat up. The fire in his eyes would have torched a lesser man. “I fucking know how old she is. Seven minutes wouldn’t have changed the outcome.”

“You don’t know that,” Steve retorted. They had already done this. Apparently they were doing it again. “They were going to kill her. In 90 seconds.”

“They said that four times. Do you think you are the only one who was scared shitless that she was going to die at their hands?” Danny demanded.

“Of course not. I saw an opportunity and I took it,” Steve said.

“And then they were going to kill you. I had to climb over a barbed wire fence. Because your adrenaline crazed brain couldn’t wait 7 fucking minutes,” Danny said. His face was a mask of frozen anger. This was not the Danny that Steve had fallen in love with. This was not the Danny he had married. This was a fury, an apparition come to indict Steve for all the wrongs he’d committed. All the sins he had buried in classified and can’t discuss it and it’s over no point talking about it.

“I know I fucked up.” Steve didn’t know whose anger was emitting from his mouth. It couldn’t be his. He didn’t yell. He had no right to use that tone with Danny. “All I could think was getting to Ma’aula before they killed her.”

“What you did left fucked-up behind miles ago. And who paid the price? Who always pays the price when you decide you are Superhero Steve who is only slowed down by us mere mortals?”

“I don’t think…”

“No you don’t think. I am feeling some sort of way about you right now, Steven. I got to be honest.”

“What do you want me to say, Danny?” Steve demanded, his anger filling the space between them. Anger he had no right to feel but there it was, exploding without his permission. “I can’t undo what’s happened. If I could, I would. If I could be the one that needed stitches, I’d gladly take them. I’m sorry. I’m sorry I did what I thought had to be done. I’m sorry you are hurt. I’m sorry I’m such a fucking burden to you.” Steve was breathless when he finished, his face an unfamiliar blank slate.

“Do you even know….? No. You know what? Never mind. I’m going to sleep.” With that, Danny lay down and rolled onto his side, his back to Steve who stood rooted to the same spot. Danny blocking him out was infinitely worse than Danny yelling at him. Steve knew he was wrong. He knew he was to blame. But he couldn’t fix this. He couldn’t promise it would never happen again. Because they both knew it would. If he could prevent a death, even at the cost of his own life, he would. He was hard-wired that way and he thought Danny had accepted that.

Steve silently left Grace’s room, leaving the door open. If Danny needed to use the bathroom in the middle of the night, Steve would have to help him. For the next few weeks, Danny wouldn’t be able to do much of anything by himself. And that was Steve’s fault.

~00o~

“Hey,” a voice said some indeterminate time later. It sounded like Danny’s voice but since Steve was persona non-grata, he was only dreaming that Danny was talking to him. “Babe. Are you awake?”

Steve rolled onto his back at the broken sound of Danny’s voice, sitting up to look over at him.
“What’s wrong? Do you need to go to the bathroom?”

Danny shook his head, making shooing motions with his bandaged ghost hands. “Scoot over.”

Steve wiggled over enough to allow Danny to sit next to his hip. “You need pain meds?”

“I do. But before they make me woozy again, I want to talk to you,” Danny said.

Steve glanced at the clock. 3:21. Well, neither of them were going to work the next day. It hardly mattered what time it was. “I’m really sorry about….” Danny reached toward Steve with one of his bandaged hands, shaking his head.

“I know, Babe. What you did was stupid. Beyond stupid. But I understand why you did it. Ma’aula is probably alive only because of what you did.”

“You really think that?” Steve asked, wishing he didn’t sound so broken to his own ears.

“Yes. Which is why I shouldn’t be so angry. Shouldn’t have been. But you know what?”

“What?” Steve asked quietly.

“I am madly and desperately in love with you. Sometimes that makes it harder to be your partner on the job. Because if something happens to you, I don’t know how I would survive it. I knew back-up was 7 minutes away. I didn’t have to climb a barbed-wire fence. I could have waited. But when he held that gun to your head and…..” Danny stopped with a tiny gasp, seeing it all again in stark reality. The crazed man ready to blow Steve’s head off. Danny had to stop that from happening. It didn’t matter that there was a razor sharp fence between them.

“I know, Danno. I was prepared to die to let Ma’aula live. I didn’t want you to witness it.”

Danny shook his head, leaning closer to Steve and kissing him gently. “What I do know is that you would have sacrificed yourself for her. If she had been my daughter, I’d want to know you were out there keeping her safe. Even if I die a little inside each time you take such awful risks.”

“So you’re in love with me?” Steve asked in his teasing tone that said that things were going to be okay. Maybe they weren’t just yet. But what he had done wasn’t going to ruin things.

“Maybe a little in love, you big goof. Do you think you could help me pee and then put me back to bed? In here?”

“It would be my privilege,” Steve assured him, kissing him. “Thank you.”

“For what?”

“Forgiving me.”

Danny looked away from Steve before turning to meet his eyes again. “I shouldn’t have been angry. It was the fear and the pain speaking.”

“All right.”

“I guess if I asked you not to do it again, it would be useless, huh?”

Steve just gazed back, love and understanding passing between them in the silence.

before I can pee by myself?"

“Ten days,” Steve said, Danny sighing loudly.

“Fabulous. I’m not sure I believe you. I think it’s just a ploy for you to get your hands on me.”

“Could be, Danno. Could be,” Steve said, kissing the back of Danny’s neck as they stood together in front of the toilet.
JohnWMc: Hey. I need more rain for my laptop.
ChinHoK: Water’s no good for computers, Bud.
JohnWMc: Right. Ram
ChinHoK: I can hook you up. With RAM not rain.
JohnWMc: Cool. Thanks.

EmmaWMc: Can me n Danno go 2 movies?
DannoWMc: May Danno and I go to the movies? Is that what you mean?
EmmaWMc: When did you transfer to the Grammar Police?
DannoWMc: Very funny. I don’t have time to go to the movies today.
EmmaWMc: I meant me and Dancy. Or Dancy and I.
DannoWMc: After school?
EmmaWMc: Yeah. We want to go see Butterfield 9.
DannoWMc: What is that rated????
DannoWMc: That’s fine. Be home by 9.
EmmaWMc: Roger that.

DannoWMc: You need to talk to your son tonight.
LtCSteveWMc: Which one?
DannoWMc: How many sons do you have, smart asterisk?
LtCSteveWMc: Maybe I have sons all over the globe. And you think my asterisk is intelligent?
DannoWMc: You only have 1 son. And he is still smarting off to his.
LtCSteveWMc: His what? Father? Sisters? Uncles? Teachers?
DannoWMc: Maybe. I guess you’ll find out when you tackle him.
LtCSteveWMc: I’d rather talk to him.
DannoWMc: Isn’t that what I said to start?
LtCSteveWMc: Maybe?
DannoWMc: I hate you so hard.
LtCSteveWMc: I know.

LtCSteveWMc: Can you stop at the grocery story?
DannoWMc: You need a happy ending?
LtCSteveWMc: Store. We need juice and Preparation H.
DannoWMc: Well. I guess your ending isn’t too happy.
LtCSteveWMc: Pampers. For the baby.
DannoWMc: Oh. That’s more improtant but not as interesting.
LtCSteveWMc: Keep it up and you’ll never need that other one again.
DannoWMc: I’m not having this conversation with you.
LtCSteveWMc: You just did. Please get Pampers for the baby.
DannoWMc: Only because you asked so nicely.
KonoKF: Hey Boss #2. Emma just called me.
DannoWMc: Everything okay?
KonoKF: I thikn so? Boy trouble?
DannoWMc: I am going to kill that puke.
KonoKF: That’s a little xtreme. Killing and name calling.
DannoWMc: Punk. Was she crying?
KonoKF: No. Plastered.
DannoWMc: OMG. Pls tell me she wasn’t drinking.
KonoKF: No no no. Pissed, not plastered. I don’t think you’ll have to deal with Sean. I’m pretty sure John took care of him.
DannoWMc: No violins, right?
KonoKF: No string section. A few well placed fists?
DannoWMc: So I should expect a call from his princess?
KonoKF: Not unless you are royalty and never told me.
DannoWMc: Principle.
KonoKF: Yeah. Without a doubt.
DannoWMc: Great. Thanks.
KonoKF: No problem.

DannoWMc: Are you suspenders?
JohnWMc: I’m more a belt guy myself.
DannoWMc: Don’t smart off with me. Are you suspended?
JohnWMc: Oh. You heard from Kono.
DannoWMc: Yes. Answer the queens, dammit.
JohnWMc: The queens are calling?
DannoWMc: You understand you are already in serious-ass toruble, right?
JohnWMc: I’m not suspended. I never hit him.
DannoWMc: That’s not what Kono said.
JohnWMc: I may have had worlds with Sean.
DannoWMc: Alien worlds?
JohnWMc: Words. Angry forcefield words.
DannoWMc: It’s best to have a forcefield around alien worlds. But you’re not in trouble?
JohnWMc: No. You can ask Emma.
DannoWMc: I plan to. Come straight home.
JohnWMc: I know. I’m grounded forever.
DannoWMc: And possibly after that.
JohnWMc: Right. What else is knew?
JohnWMc: New.

DannoWMc: You are missing series Family drama.
LtCSteveWMc: You watching Lifetime TV again?
DannoWMc: Serious. Our family.
LtCSteveWMc: Do I want to know?
DannoWMc: Emma is mad at Sean. John yelled at him. Kono texted me. I texted John.
LtCSteveWMc: And I need to know this why?
DannoWMc: You’re their father.
LtCSteveWMc: I am? I had no idea Kono was my child too.
DannoWMc: Don’t brother coming home. I’m changing all the locks.
LtCSteveWMc: I don’t have a brother. I do have awesome Ninja skills. Locks are putty in my hands.
DannoWMc: Yeah I know.
LtCSteveWMc: I promise to listen to the Family Drama Series. And act appropriately symphony.
DannoWMc: You’re more a marching band kind of guy.
LtCSteveWMc: Yep
DannoWMc: Bring pizza.
LtCSteveWMc: Consider it done.

LtCSteveWMc: I need to be out of HQ tomorrow. At least for the morning
GovSD: That’s fine. Everything okay?
LtCSteveWMc: Danny’s been called to juice duty.
GovSD: Judging juices? Not pineapple I hope. LOL
LtCSteveWMc: Jury duty.
GovSD: He’ll be dismissed when they find out he’s a cop
LtCSteveWMc: Yes, sir. He tried calling but they said he had to repeat.
LtCSteveWMc: Report.
GovSD: Do you want to make a phone collar?
GovSD: Phone call?
LtCSteveWMc: No sir. He’ll serve his time until they realize he can’t be on a jury.
GovSD: You watching the kids?
LtCSteveWMc: Yes sir. I think I’d rather be on jury duty. But don’t tell Danno
GovSD: Secret’s safe with me. Do you need Kono as backup?
LtCSteveWMc: Thanks. I have it handled.
GovSD: Let me know if you need anything. Like a time-out for you.
LtCSteveWMc: Appreciate it, sir.

DannoWMc: Tell me the trust.
LtCSteveWMc: What trust? A trust fund?
DannoWMc: Truth. Tell me the truth.
LtCSteveWMc: What are we talking about?
DannoWMc: Right. Blame dump
LtCSteveWMc: I’m not blaming anything especially not a dump. I don’t know what you’re talking about.
DannoWMc: Don’t play dumb! Where were you last night?
LtCSteveWMc: In bed with you?
DannoWMc: Right. You expect me to buy that?
LtCSteveWMc: Are you high? I’m calling you. What is wrong with you???
DannoWMc: OMG. I’m sorry.
LtCSteveWMc: WTF Danno??
DannoWMc: I thought you were John.
LtCSteveWMc: WTF?
DannoWMc: John didn’t come home last night.
LtCSteveWMc: Yes he did. He was asleep in his own bed when I got home.
DannoWMc: He wasn’t there this morning when I went to walk him up.
LtCSteveWMc: Walk him upstairs? What?
DannoWMc: Wake him up. At 7:00.
LtCSteveWMc: I took him to school, Danno. You were still asleep and I didn’t want to distribute you.
DannoWMc: Distribute me where?
LtCSteveWMc: Disturb you. Why are you mad at John? He didn’t do anything wrong.
DannoWMc: He wasn’t home when I went to bedlam. At 11:30.
LtCSteveWMc: Yes he was. Just because you were in the crazy house doesn’t mean John wasn’t home. He was asleep, in his own bed, at 10:00.
DannoWMc: Then he got up and left out. He wasn’t there at 11:30.
LtCSteveWMc: Okay. I’ll test him.
DannoWMc: I hope he passes.
LtCSteveWMc: Text
DannoWMc: Yeah, I got that. Let me know.
LtCSteveWMc: Roger that.

LtCSteveWMc: You are driving your father crazy just so you know.
JohnWMc: OMG What now?
LtCSteveWMc: He said you didn’t sleep at home last night.
JohnWMc: Yes I did.
LtCSteveWMc: He said you were gone at 11:30 when he came up to bed.
JohnWMc: That’s crazy talk. I went to sleep at 10:00ish. You saw me.
LtCSteveWMc: Did you leaf?
JohnWMc: What?
LtCSteveWMc: Leave. Did you leave the horse?
JohnWMc: What horse?
LtCSteveWMc: After you went to bed?
JohnWMc: Did I go horseback riding?
LtCSteveWMc: Were you in bed all night last night?
JohnWMc: Yes. Didn’t we already dissect this?
LtCSteveWMc: Danno’s going to dissect you if he finds out your lying.
JohnWMc: Seriously? Check the video, Dad. You’re the f-ing governor. I can hardly pee without the entire state knowing.
LtCSteveWMc: I will. Do you have any idea what will happen if I find out you’re lying.
JohnWMc: When have I ever lied to you?
LtCSteveWMc: There is that. I’m still checking the taps.
JohnWMc: For water? They all work.
LtCSteveWMc: Where are you right now?
JohnWMc: the sitting room. With Emma and Grace.
LtCSteveWMc: Stay there.
JohnWMc: You better believe it.

LtCSteveWMc: I checked the tpaes. John didn’t leave the house last night.
DannoWMc: Oh.
LtCSteveWMc: I think you owe him an approximate.
DannoWMc: An approximation of an apology?
LtCSteveWMc: Something like that.
DannoWMc: Okay. I’ll makeup and tell him I was wrong.
LtCSteveWMc: You don’t need makeup. You’re beautiful just the way you are.
DannoWMc: Man-up. But thanks anyway.
LtCSteveWMc: Anytime. I’m going to try to be hoe by 6:00.
DannoWMc: Don’t you have people to hoe for you?
LtCSteveWMc: Home.
DannoWMc: 6:00 today? That would be a reward.
LtCSteveWMc: For good behavior.
DannoWMc: Or a record for the earliest you’ve been home in the last month.
LtCSteveWMc: I never wanted to be grover. I still blame you.
DannoWMc: I know. You wanted to be Elmo. Maybe next life.
LtCSteveWMc: I hate you.
DannoWMc: Whatever. Get home.
LtCSteveWMc: Apologize to John.
DannoWMc: Of course, Elmo. Consider it done.

DannoWMc: Hey Elmo. I apologized to your son.
LtCSteveWMc: Thanks. What’d he say?
DannoWMc: IDK. I wasn’t listening.
LtCSteveWMc: Excellent parenting skills.
DannoWMc: Thx. I learned everything I know from Sesame Street.
LtCSteveWMc: Explains alot.
DannoWMc: Yep. You still be home at 6?
LtCSteveWMc: I’m leaving my officer now.
DannoWMc: You need to take Henry with you.
LtCSteveWMc: Office. Not officer.
DannoWMc: That’s okay then.
LtCSteveWMc: C u soon.

KonoKF: Hey Grover.
LtCSteveWMc: I am going to kill Danno.
KonoKF: Wait until we’re out of office. Easier to hide the crime.
LtCSteveWMc: There is that. What can I do for you, Assistant Grover?
KonoKF: That’s Lt. Grover to you. There is talk of a fund-raising ball for Halloween. How are you feeling about that?
LtCSteveWMc: OMG. WTF?
KonoKF: that’s not really an answer.
LtCSteveWMc: This Sebastian’s ideal?
KonoKF: His ideal would be for him to be Governor.
LtCSteveWMc: In his dreams. What do you want?
KonoKF: World peace, an end to hunger, and the perfect wave.
LtCSteveWMc: Okay. The Ball?
KonoKF: Could be fun. We could dress up all the kidneys.
LtCSteveWMc: Or the spleens. Maybe the intestines.
KonoKF: You are not right.
LtCSteveWMc: You want to have the Ball?
KonoKF: Yes
LtCSteveWMc: All right. I’ll do it for you.
KonoKF: Thanks, Bass. I’ll let him know.
LtCSteveWMc: Ben?
KonoKF: What?
LtCSteveWMc: Ben Bass?
LtCSteveWMc: What? I don’t know what that means.
KonoKF: Several years. His ears are right where they should be as far as I know.
LtCSteveWMc: Okay. Good.
KonoKF: I’ll let you know if I hear different.
LtCSteveWMc: You did not just go there.
KonoKF: Yeah. I’m afraid I did.

ChinHoK: Hey Princess.
EmmaWMc: Howzit?
ChinHoK: you know. What’s new by you?
EmmaWMc: Not a lot. You still coming to school tomorrow?
ChinHoK: You know it. I have some very cool gears to show off.
EmmaWMc: Did you motorcycle fall apart again? LOL
ChinHoK: Funny. I’ll demonstrate the handcuffs on you.
EmmaWMc: Dad taught me to escapade.
ChinHoK: Steve is an escapade all by himself.
EmmaWMc: You’re right about that. You’ll stay for lunch?
ChinHoK: Sure. Been too long since I’ve had frozen fish stick-ups.
EmmaWMc: I’m pretty sure the food won’t try to rob you.
ChinHoK: Good to know.
EmmaWMc: Got to watch the tartar sauce, though.
ChinHoK: I hear that.
Christmas in New Jersey - or Not

Chapter Summary

Danny is on his way to New Jersey to spend Christmas with his family because he thinks that's what Steve wants. Steve wants him to go to New Jersey because he thinks that's what Danny wants. But Danny never arrives in Jersey. Where is he? (This chapter takes place before they ever admitted how they felt about each other.)

Chapter Notes

This was written for H50 Holidayswap on LiveJournal. My recipient is ciaimpala who requested: h/c with a happy ending; reunion fic especially Steve and/or Danny wrongly thinking the other is dead and then there's an epic reunion. Hope this fits the bill!

Merry Christmas, ciaimpala. Hope you enjoy it!

December 23, 4:21 a.m. HST

“Hello?” Steve said when he finally woke up enough to recognize the sound of his phone. He didn’t recognize the ringtone but the area code was 973. New Jersey. Maybe Danny was calling from his mom’s house to check in. Odd time to do it but he was always willing to talk to Danny.

“Lieutenant Commander McGarrett?”

He could hear the concern coming across the phone line. The woman on the other end was trying to keep it together but he thought her calm sounded tenuous as best. “This is Steve McGarrett.”

“This is Sylvia Williams. Danny’s mother.”

“Yes ma’am,” Steve said into the silence. Why was Danny’s mom calling him? Danny was with her, finally giving into Steve’s persuasion and spending Christmas in New Jersey. Rachel had taken Grace to England and Danny felt at loose ends without her. Steve thought it was incredibly selfish of Rachel to take Grace away from Danny at Christmas of all times and had encouraged Danny to go to the mainland to spend the holiday with his family. Not that Steve didn’t want Danny to stay in Hawaii but he managed to talk himself into doing what he thought was best for Danny, arguing for what he was sure Danny wanted.

“Is Danny there?” she finally asked. She sounded breathless or like she was moments away from crying.

“Danny’s with you,” Steve said, sitting up and frowning.

“He…uhm…he never got off the plane,” Sylvia said in a strained voice.

“What?” Steve asked. He took a breath and tried again. “I don’t understand. I dropped Danny off at
the airport.”

“That’s what we figured. We were at Newark at 8 this morning. The plane from Hawaii landed exactly on time. But….”

“But what, ma’am?” Steve asked. But he already knew. By the tone of her voice and by the hesitancy in her words.

“He wasn’t on the plane. We don’t know where he is. We’ve tried his cell phone. We tried his landline. He isn’t answering. We don’t know where he is,” Sylvia said with a tiny gasp.

“All right, Mrs. Williams. I’m sure there must be a logical explanation. I’ll find him.” If it sounded like a promise, Steve wasn’t going to regret it. He would find Danny. There was no alternative.

“Please call us as soon as you know anything,” she requested. He could hear her trying to gather her composure as she took a deep, hopefully calming voice.

“I will. As soon as I learn anything, I’ll call you first,” he told her. After the necessary exchanges had been completed, he disconnected, dialing Chin.

“This better be good,” Chin’s sleepy voice said.

Steve explained. Chin said he’d meet him at HQ in 10 minutes. Kono promised the same thing when Steve called to tell her.

December 23, 5:02 a.m. HST

Danny was pissed. More pissed than he could remember being in a very very long time. What the ever-loving hell? He’d been snatched right off the jetway. Under the nose of…well, nearly everyone. Okay, all of the other passengers had already boarded. And the attendants were around the curve. And was he really going to just walk past the little girl who had dropped Surfer Barbie? Even if she hadn’t had brown pigtails and huge, round eyes, he’d have stopped, to prevent her doll from becoming Road-kill Barbie – not on his watch. Her mother, with her hands full trying to sooth a fussy four year old, had smiled gratefully at him.

His mission accomplished, he’d looked up to find himself staring straight at someone who was dead. Chin had shot him months ago. Who had luck like Danny’s? He was minding his own business, getting onto a plane he didn’t really want to board to visit a state he still called home even if it no longer felt that way. If he’d gotten up enough courage, if he’d finally admitted to Steve, and to himself, that even without Grace, there was nowhere he wanted to spend Christmas except Hawaii. At Steve’s house in particular. But no. He’d chickened out. Steve had been so enthusiastic about his plans to go to New Jersey he was sure Steve preferred him gone. Not that he thought Steve should be spending Christmas alone. But anyone who worked so hard to get him to accept the idea of a Jersey Christmas clearly had no qualms about him being gone.

So yeah. Danny was pissed. And as soon as he was rescued, he had every intention of informing Steven J. McGarrett long and loud how this was his fault. It was McGarrett’s fault Danny was locked in a tiny windowless bathroom on a boat that wouldn’t quit fucking rocking. Did these people have any idea of how horrible vertigo was when combined with an enclosed continually moving space? Smart of them to stash him in the bathroom. Because he’d lost his dinner several hours earlier. It wouldn’t be long until he lost yesterday’s lunch. God he hated his life sometimes. And it was all Steve’s fault.
They had received the tapes of the departure gate from the local airport authority. It was easy to spot Steve and Danny standing at the end of the boarding line. Kono glanced over at Steve after they watched him go through the screening area but he had shrugged it off. Maybe using his 5-0 badge had been a misuse of his position to go where ‘ticketed passengers only’ were allowed. But 5-0 had done enough good deeds for the airport that none of the security personnel were going to stop him from escorting Danny all the way to the departure gate.

“I stood right there and watched him go down the jetway,” Steve said, pointing to Danny going through the doors. “If something had happened to him, the airport would know. People don’t leave that walkway without someone noticing.”

“There aren’t cameras in the jetway itself, right?” Kono asked, re-watching as Danny hugged Steve before walking out of camera range, nodding to the attendant who checked his boarding pass. If they weren’t so worried about Danny, she would have smiled at the way the attendant watched Danny as he disappeared around the corner. The woman was a ‘butt girl.’ Kono could appreciate that. Steve on the tape frowned at the attendant, shooting her invisible death rays before turning and leaving the gate.

“No. And we haven’t found the attendants on the flight,” Chin said.

“Why not? Where are they?” Steve demanded. His anger was not directed at Chin and they all understood.

“The chief attendant went on to London. He hasn’t landed yet. The one in Danny’s section isn’t answering her cell phone. The airline will keep trying until she does,” Chin told him.

“All right,” Steve said, taking a cleansing breath and tamping down his frustration. “What about an air marshal? Was there one on the flight?”

“They said they can’t provide that information,” Chin said, shaking his head. “I explained the circumstances. They said I’d have to call the TSA. You know anyone there?”

“I might,” Steve said, taking out his cell phone. After scrolling through his contacts, he hit one of the buttons, waiting. “Hey, Bakersfield….Yeah, it’s really me….I know. Way too long ….Listen, you know I need a favor….yeah, like you don’t already owe me a million ….yeah yeah whatever…. I need you to find out if there was an air marshal on a flight from Hawaii to Newark…Flight 555….Would I be asking if it weren’t important?… You’ll call me back as soon as you can?… Great…. Yes, absolutely. The next time I’m in DC…. Okay. Thanks.” Steve looked from Chin to Kono and back, their expressions expectant. “Navy buddy,” he said with a shrug.

“He works for the TSA?” Kono asked although it was clear he did.

“He might be in charge of the air marshals,” Steve said, not really committing to the fact.

“I see,” Kono said, looking at Chin who just shook his head.

“Did we get the tapes from Newark yet?” Steve asked to divert their attention away from his reluctant admission.

Chin checked the table, tapping on the file that had arrived a few minutes earlier. “Here,” he said, placing the recording on the overhead monitors. “This starts five minutes before they were allowed to
The weary travelers left, greeting friends and families with smiles and laughter and tears. On the edge of the crowd were two people who could only be Danny’s parents, their expressions going from excited to confused to worried. When the last of the passengers had left, Danny’s parents approached the counter to talk to the airport personnel. Whatever the man at the counter said was not what Mr. and Mrs. Williams had hoped to hear. In a very familiar manner, Mr. Williams was using his hands to emphasize the points he was making, the airport guy paying almost no attention to his request for help.

Mr. and Mrs. Williams keep talking to the disinterested worker until he finally picked up the phone. That brought a man in a suit with an air of authority to the counter, Mr. and Mrs. Williams apparently repeating to him what they had already told the first man. The second man spoke into his walkie-talkie, bringing a man in a security uniform into the conversation. The security officer shook his head, looking at the man in the suit. Mr. Williams was still explaining with a great many hand gestures until the man in the suit went behind the counter and picked up the phone. After a very brief conversation, he sat the phone down and shook his head once again.

Mr. Williams listened for a moment before taking out his cell phone and dialing it. They all waited as nothing happened. After hanging up, Mr. Williams dialed it again with the same result. Mrs. Williams had started to cry, Mr. Williams putting his arm over her shoulder. ‘There’s a reasonable explanation,’ was all they could imagine him saying to her. With that, they walked out of camera range, the three airport employees shaking their heads. The first man, who had originally been behind the counter, made the universal sign for crazy, circling one ear with a finger.

“Yeah. We need to find out his name so he can be fired,” Steve said, frowning at the screen.

“Where does this leave us?” Kono asked, biting her thumbnail, a line of concentration between her eyebrows.

“None of this makes sense,” Chin observed unnecessarily.

“Any chance we’ve found Danny’s cell?” Steve asked, leaning over the table where the program was trying to trace Danny’s phone.

“No. I’m starting to think it’s been destroyed,” Chin admitted quietly.

“I’m going to Danny’s apartment,” Steve decided, rocking onto his toes.

“HPD has it covered, Boss,” Kono reminded him, one hand on his forearm. “If there’s anything there, they’ll find it.”

“I need to do something,” Steve said unnecessarily. His energy was barely contained, his need to be physically engaged making him want to climb out of his skin. When his phone rang, he grabbed it out of his pocket, barking into it. “McGarrett.”

“Mr. McGarrett?” an unfamiliar voice asked.

“This is Lieutenant Commander McGarrett,” Steve agreed. “Who is this?”

“My name is Amanda Catten. I was assigned to the back third of Flight 555.”

“You received the photo of Detective Williams?” Steve asked.

“I did. He wasn’t on the plane, sir. The manifest said he should have been in seat 23H. Since it’s an emergency exit seat, we had to fill it when Mr. Williams failed to board.”
“You didn’t see him,” Steve said, his tone hard.

“No sir. He never boarded,” Ms Catten confirmed.

“All right. Can I reach you at this number if I have further questions?”

“Of course. I have the next few days off. I should be available,” she said, hanging up after he confirmed he’d be in touch.

“Okay,” Steve said, staring down at the computer table. “That means he disappeared from the jetway. Do they know which one was used for his flight?”

Chin typed into the table, pulling up the info. “Here is the one assigned to his gate. I’ll tell the airport to isolate it.”

Steve nodded, waiting impatiently as Chin made the phone call. That done, they all went out to the airport. The airport authority had agreed to allow them to enter the tarmac through the service entrance. Kono maneuvered carefully between the trucks and luggage carts, coming to a stop next to the correct jetway.

There was an airport representative waiting for them, telling them her name was Patricia Hobson. Introductions complete, she directed them to a stairway that would take them directly up the jetway. They entered it from the end that would be secured to the side of the plane, finding it to structurally sound. They went further down the jetway, coming to the door just before the blind curve in the walkway. That door was slightly ajar.

“Should this door be open?” Steve asked her, pointing at it.

“No. It is only for service personnel. It’s to be locked at all times.” She frowned at the door, reaching out to pull it closed.

“Wait,” Chin said. “There may be fingerprints.”

“Of course,” she agreed, withdrawing her hand.

“Chin,” Steve said, nodding at it. Chin got closer with his tool kit, carefully examining the door.

“Look.” Chin was pointing at the locking mechanism that was inoperable, the door unable to latch. “This must where he left.”

“That is unacceptable,” Ms Catten said. “How could he have left without anyone seeing him?”

“That’s a really good question,” Steve said, frowning at the door as Chin dusted it for prints. “How many people were on the flight?”

Ms Hobson checked the manifest on her iPad, getting those numbers. “There were 233 scheduled to take the flight. The crew reported that 231 boarded.”

“Do you know the other person who didn’t make it?” Steve asked. He watched as she scrolled through the information, tapping the screen.

“According to our records, the boarding pass was issued to Hian-mian Zhao,” she said.

“Ring any bells?” Chin asked Steve who had a look of concentration.

“No. Not that I know of,” Steve said, shaking his head. “What are the chances we can find and talk
to any of the 231 people who did board the plane? If Danny disappeared from the jetway, somebody had to have seen something.”

Ms Hobson studied her readouts, flipping through several pages. “It says that 144 had no connecting flights. Of the others, 46 went on to London, and the remaining 41 went to Paris.”

“I need contact information for all of the passengers,” Steve said.

“I don’t believe we are at liberty to provide that information to you, sir,” Ms Hobson said, her tone a mix of reluctance and stern refusal.

“If you don’t give it to him, he’ll just call the Governor,” Kono told her kindly.

“At least then I know I won’t be fire,” Ms Hobson retorted.

Kono glanced over at Steve, ‘give me credit for trying’ written in her expression. Steve called the Governor, explaining in clipped tones what he needed. “Thank you, sir,” Steve said before hanging up. “The COO will provide me the names and numbers.”

Ms Hobson stared at Steve like she couldn’t quite figure out what world she had woken up to that morning. This is not how her day was supposed to go. She was relieved when he was distracted from continuing to start holes through her when his phone rang. And it wasn’t like it was only two days to Christmas. She certainly didn’t have anything better to do than be intimidated by the tall, angry man who was on a search and rescue mission. She should have listened to her father. She should have become a lawyer. Or a carpenter.

“McGarrett… there wasn’t? Okay. Thanks.” Steve disconnected, looking at Kono and Chin. “No air marshal on the flight.”

“You can’t have that information,” Ms Hobson scolded. “That is classified.”

“You can have it when you are friends with John S. Pistole,” Steve said evenly.

“Oh. I see,” she said, her attitude deflating. That she had no other comment to make did not surprise any of them. Carpentry was looking better by the minute.

“We ready to return to HQ?” Chin asked when he straightened.

“You get photos of everything?” Steve asked Kono to make certain.

“Yeah,” Kono said, looking out over the tarmac from the opening at the end of the jetway. “Are there security cameras monitoring the service vehicles?”

“Yes,” Ms Hobson agreed reluctantly.

“We’ll need a copy of that footage,” Chin told her calmly. His tone seemed to reassure her that Steve would not be going over her head again if she would simply cooperate with their investigation.

“Of course,” she said, all defeat and surrender. “I’ll have it sent to you. You should have it by the time you are back at the Palace.”

“Thank you,” Chin said, picking up his tools with a smile for her. “We appreciate all of your help.”

She nodded vaguely, watching them climb out of the jetway and return to the red Cruze.

“You scared the living crap of her, Boss,” Kono said, way too pleased with herself.
“We’re investigating the disappearance of a member of the Governor’s task force,” Steve said in Stern Leader voice. “How does she think we aren’t going to have all the information we need?”

“Roger that,” Chin said from the back seat.

“Did you get any prints?” Steve asked, looking back at him.

“About a dozen. We’ll see if any of them are of any use,” Chin said.

“Yeah.”

December 23, 9:14 a.m. HST

Danny’s head had finally stopped hurting quite so much. He was pretty sure he didn’t have a concussion – thank God for small favors at any rate. He was still locked in the bathroom that would be insulting to utilitarian to use the word for it. There was a toilet and a sink. That was it. Danny had the choice of sitting on the open toilet – no lid for this fine example of modern plumbing – or he could squeeze himself into the miniscule floor space available. Neither were optimal solutions. His feet were free even though his hands were handcuffed in front of him, their position decreasing the amount of discomfort he could be feeling. Having use of his hands did him no good - the door was bolted from the outside. He was pretty sure he’d heard the sound of a padlock being placed on it. He’d been searched before taken onto the boat, his shoes confiscated. They had done him the courtesy of allowing him to retain his jeans and tee shirt but that was it. He figured Steve would have found some way to use his Levis as a crowbar and ninja his way out of the bathroom. But without Steve and his Super-Seal abilities, Danny was pretty much stuck until Steve found him.

One of the advantages of being held in the bathroom was that it was a bathroom – plenty of water for him to drink. There were worse places to be held hostage. Dry land would have been preferable but now that they were apparently out on the open sea, the rocking had been reduced. He hadn’t had the urge to puke for at least half an hour if his sense time was at all accurate.

Not having anything else to do gave him time to wonder who had taken him and why. He figured it had something to do with the not-dead gang member who had snatched him. Hadn’t 5-0 shut down their operations? Apparently not. Were they planning to use him to demand a ransom? Because they had to know that the Governor did not play that game. He’d regret it but he’d let Danny die first. Of course the Governor’s remorse would pale in comparison to Steve’s. Or Danny’s. But Danny would be dead and his secret crush on Steve would go to the grave with him. He should have told Steve how he felt a long time ago. Then he would have never tried to board that stupid plane. Yeah, this was totally Steve’s fault.

December 23, 11:03 a.m. HST

They had turned over the passenger list to HPD and were assured that as many officers as necessary would be put on calling. That done, Steve and Kono reviewed the tapes from the outside of the airport, looking for anything out of the ordinary. Chin was running the fingerprints and trying to determine if the other no-show passenger Hian-mian Zhao could have any connection. So far Chin had learned that Zhao was a professor of philosophy at UH and was on semester break. The chair of the philosophy department thought Dr. Zhao would have been in New Jersey where he had family. Calls to the professor’s cell phone went unanswered. They were waiting to get his Jersey number as soon as the department chair could find it.
Steve called Mr. and Mrs. Williams to let them know they hadn’t discovered anything useful as of yet but would call just as soon as they did. Danny’s parents were understandably worried but not verging on hysteria for which Steve was immensely grateful.

He had discussed with them whether or not he should call Rachel but they had advised that he wait until he had something solid to tell her. They would hate to have Grace upset before they knew what was really going on. Steve had to agree with their assessment, promising again he’d call when he had anything at all to report.

He looked up when Chin appeared in his doorway, putting on his game-face and trying to hide his concern. “What’ve you got?’”

“Charlie finished analyzing the fingerprints,” Chin said, coming in with his iPad. There were 10 distinct sets on display, nine with red Xs through them. “These belong to airport employees,” Chin explained. “Either they weren’t at work yesterday or they were elsewhere as Danny’s flight was boarding.”

“Oh Lord,” Kono breathed from where she was standing behind Chin. “They are a bad bunch.”

“That’s the understatement of the year,” Steve said, standing up abruptly. “Location?”

“Not yet,” Chin said. “I’m still working on that. You find anything?” he asked Kono. She nodded but not with any real certainty.

“I think so,” she said, leading them over to the table. She started the tape half an hour before Danny’s plane boarded. “See these trucks,” she said, pointing at the delivery trucks that had Servico painted on the sides. “They are the official servicing company of the airport. They do the cleaning, the catering, whatever. Each plane has two trucks assigned to it, unless there’s a problem.” They watched the trucks arrive, off load the equipment and supplies and then pull away. “Look at this third truck,” she said, pointing at it. “It’s the same size and color as the others but it doesn’t have any logo on it.” They watched the unmarked truck arrive a few minutes after the others and leave three minutes prior to the departure of the trucks that were marked. The truck was parked between one of the Servico trucks and the nose of the plane, out of the view of the cameras once it was at a standstill. “I called Ms Hobson who told me that Danny’s plane was only assigned two trucks.”

“Can you get any identification on that truck?” Steve asked staring at the screen.

“I can’t but every truck has to be checked in and out. I’ve requested those records. I should have them in the next half hour,” Kono said, looking from the monitors to Steve who was still staring at the screen. She glanced at Chin who shook his head once before he turned his attention back to the table. Whatever was going on in Steve’s head was his to work out. They were better off letting it lie until he told them.
December 23, 12:08 p.m. HST

Danny could hear voices outside his bathroom door. One spoke a language he figured was Chinese. His companion answered in English. That was courteous of the kidnappers, he thought. Let him understand at least half the conversation. They half he could understand concerned whether or not they should kill him now or wait. The Chinese half of the conversation seemed to be in favor of waiting. He liked that side better. The English side was apparently at fault for Danny being held prisoner in the bathroom. As he suspected, he hadn’t been the target. He was collateral damage. Again, this was Steve’s fault. Of course it was. Not that Steve was responsible for the mix-up in the jetway kidnapping but in general. Danny’s life had been so…boring before meeting Steve. He’d take boring. As long as it included Steve. If he was forced to choose, Steve would win. Every time. And as soon as Steve rescued him, letting him know that would be Danny’s first order of business. Right after a cup of really hot, really strong coffee.

December 23, 13:32 p.m. HST

“Boss,” Kono said from the doorway to Steve’s office. He looked up at her, temporarily ignoring the information on his computer. “HPD called. They’ve talked to about half the passengers. One remembered something weird happening. I have him on the phone.”

“Good,” Steve said with a nod. “You’ll send him through?”

Kono nodded, leaving his office to transfer the call. She watched through her window as Steve picked it up, listening intently.

“Thank you for calling, Mr. Paterson. HPD said you witnessed something on the jetway?”

“It may not have meant anything,” the man on the phone said, hesitant and uncertain. “But I recognized the photo of Detective Williams that the police sent.”

“You saw him on the jetway?” Steve prompted, trying to keep his growing impatience at bay. Yelling at this stranger was not going to get him answers any faster.

“He and I were the only ones there. Everybody else had boarded. I was running late. Detective Williams stopped to help a little girl who had dropped her Barbie doll. When she had it in her backpack, Mr. Williams started talking to a man who seemed to appear out of nowhere. He wasn’t on the jetway when we were going down it. One second he wasn’t there and the next he was.”

“What did the man look like?” Steve asked, holding his breath without realizing it.

“He was 20-25 I think. Asian. Cropped black hair. A little taller than Mr. Williams. He wore a short sleeve tee-shirt, black. And black pants.”

“Any tattoos?” Steve asked.

“Yes. Several. One on his forearm that seemed to be a dragon. Or a snake. It was hard to tell. And just under the sleeve of his shirt. They seemed to be symbols of some sort.”

“Could they have been writing? Chinese?”

“Possibly. I can’t say for sure,” Mr. Paterson said in apology.

“Were there any tattoos on his neck?” Steve asked.
“No. Just his left arm. He was talking to Mr. Williams like they knew each other. Mr. Williams didn’t seem especially concerned about the man being there.”

“What happened after that?” Steve asked. “After they talked?”

“I got onto the plane. I assumed Mr. Williams was right behind me. But I guess he never boarded?”

“No. He never got on the plane,” Steve confirmed.

“Oh dear. He seemed like a nice man. I hope nothing bad has happened to him.”

“So do I,” Steve agreed. “If we find photos we think may be the Asian man you saw, may we send them to you?”

“Certainly. This is my cell phone. I’ll be glad to help in anyway that I can.”

Steve assured him that he had already been a great help and after double checking that they did have the right phone number, hung up. “Does the man he described match Xiamou Huo?”

“Could be. He’s 5’8”, 29 years old.”

“Ink?” Steve asked.

Chin checked the photos they had on file, finding one of Huo’s arm. “He has the symbols but no dragon.”

“If he is a member of Lãnhchúa, he would have gotten the dragon with a promotion,” Kono pointed out.

“Paterson didn’t say anything about a struggle. Why would Danny go with him without trying to get away?” Chin asked.

“Huo probably threatened to harm the passengers if Danny didn’t cooperate. The other question is what do they want with him? If it was a ransom situation, they’d have called by now,” Steve said, shaking his head. “How does this make sense?”

“And you said you killed Huo in March,” Kono said to Chin. “How is he kidnapping anyone?”

“I didn’t stay behind to check the body bags,” Chin pointed out. “I got a shot off dead center. He shouldn’t have been able to survive it.”

“Apparently he did,” Steve said. “Send the photo to Mr. Paterson. Kono, any luck with the trucks?”

“We traced all but one - the unmarked one had stolen plates. The guards don’t remember anything special about it. The paperwork was in order even if the truck didn’t have the logo painted on it.”

“That mystery truck has to be how they got him out of the airport,” Steve said. “Did they remember anything about the driver?”

“Asian. Black hair,” Kono said.

“Tattoos on his left arm?” Steve asked. But he already knew the answer.

“Yeah,” Kono agreed. “Do we have an address for our dead suspect?”

Chin shook his head. “Xiamou Huo is officially listed as deceased. Convenient. I’ve sent his mug
shoot to HPD. They’re distributing it. The gang unit thinks they can get us the name of the current boss but it could blow the sting they’ve been working on for the past 13 months.”

“I don’t want to destroy their work. But our first priority is to find Danny,” Steve said.

“They understand that. They also know if it comes down to it, the Governor is going to take our side,” Chin confirmed.

“When do they think they can get us that intel?” Steve asked, looking down at his watch.

“Any time now. They’ve been tracking the Lãnhchúa and have a solid lead on their location. Na'n Kaommou would like in on it. Since he’s been working the case the whole time.”

“Fine,” Steve said. “I don’t care about the bust. I only want to get Danny back.”

“Roger that,” Chin agreed.

December 23, 2:27 p.m. HST

“Hey,” Danny said banging on the door of his bathroom with his bound hands. He could hear the men talking right outside and he had been more than patient. Really. He was ready for some answers. And something to eat. Now that his stomach wasn’t rolling with the boat, he was getting hungry. “Hey.” He tried not to smile when he heard the padlock open.

“What?” the man who had taken him demanded. He was pointing his gun dead-center at Danny’s chest. His companion had apparently left him to deal with their noisy prisoner.

“Aren’t you dead?” Danny asked.

“You thought so,” Huo confirmed.

“Yeah. Well it’s only a matter of time before Steve rights that wrong.”

“You hold onto that thought. Because the chances of your boyfriend finding you are practically non-existence,” Huo informed him. He was much too pleased with himself, Danny thought. Good. Over-confidence was always a weakness.

“How about something to eat, Huo? Now that I’ve stopped puking up my guts, I could really use some food.”

“You are hardly in a position to make demands, Detective,” Huo told him.

“Oh good God. How many crime dramas have you watched? That is so cliché.”

“Cliché or not, it’s true. Get back in your bathroom before I put a hole through you. One I’ll make sure kills you,” Huo said, waving his gun at Danny who backed up enough so that Huo could slam the door closed without smacking Danny in the face.

Danny sat back on the floor, considering all that he had learned. The engines were idling so they were stationary. That was good. It was still light out so he hadn’t been imprisoned quite as long as he had thought. He could hear only one other set of footsteps over their heads. That increased the odds. Now that he knew what he was dealing with, he could better plan his next move.
Na'n Kaommou had been very forthcoming with the information on his team’s effort to shut down the activities of the Lánhchúa. He and Danny had been friendly when Danny was still with HPD and Kaommou was not going to allow Danny to die to save their undercover operation.

“Huo was promoted when he didn’t die,” Kaommou told them, pointing to Huo’s picture on the screen. “He’s second to Shialao Xian.”

“Xian’s in charge of the drug running?” Chin asked.

“Yeah. That’s how they finance their other activities. Xian has a fleet of boats. Very convenient for getting drugs on and off the islands,” Kaommou said.

Steve nodded, looking at the man on the screen. “Where are they docked?”

“Ki'ehohenie harbor,” Kaommou said, pointing to the tiny boat harbor at the end of the island. “The Lánhchúa own it through shell companies.”

“That’s where we need to start looking. We should have been there already.” The hard edge of angry impatience was familiar to Chin and Kono but Kaommou looked at Steve with trepidation.

“It’s heavily guarded. We’ve lost two undercovers already who were trying to penetrate it. You cannot go in with guns blazing and expect to find Danny.”

Steve stared at Kaommou, the other man not backing down. “What do you suggest?” Steve finally demanded.

“We need to approach from the air. Do reconnaissance. Determine if any of their boats are out to sea. The chances are good that they wouldn’t leave Danny at the harbor. He’s too high a target,” Kaommou said.

“Fine. Helicopter then,” Steve said, taking out his cell phone.

“What is he doing?” Kaommou asked Chin quietly.

“Finding a helicopter,” Chin said with a shrug. “Are you coming with us?”

“Where?” Kaommou asked with a frown.

“In the helicopter. Steve will fly it over the harbor and then look for the boat,” Chin explained patiently.

“McGarrett will fly it?”

“Navy SEAL,” Kono reminded him. She was distributing their TAC vests and extra arms as Steve hung up.

“Okay. Let’s go,” Steve said as he pulled on his vest.

“Go where?” Kaommou asked as he followed the others out.

“To get Danny,” Kono said cheerfully making Kaommou wonder if she’d had a blow to the head.
December 23, 5:29 p.m. HST

“You’re too late,” Danny heard Huo say loudly from above him. He thought he had heard what
could only be gun shots but then decided he was dreaming it. Apparently not. The sounds were real.
Which could be very good or very bad for Danny. “He’s dead. Shark food.”

“So you are,” an oh-so-familiar voice responded. The next sound was unmistakably a fist
connecting with a face.

“Steve,” Danny yelled as loud as he could. “Steve. I’m okay.” Danny could hear all movement stop
above him. They were listening and waiting. “Steve. Down here,” Danny yelled. The next welcome
sound was of size 11s running down the steps.

“Danny?” Steve called, his voice sounding too distant still.

“Over here,” Danny said, banging on the door with his fists. “I’m over here.”

Steve’s footsteps grew closer before stopping just on the other side of the door. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah. I think so. Except for a headache. Get me out of here.”

“Okay. I’m going to shoot off the lock. Move out of the way,” Steve ordered.

“There’s nowhere for me to go. The bathroom’s smaller than my apartment. Can you smash the lock
off?”

“All right,” Steve agreed. “Stand as far back as possible.”

Danny decided that straddling the toilet was as far from the door as he could get. And that’s how
Steve found him. Standing over the toilet, his blue eyes wide in relief.

“Oh thank God,” Steve said, squeezing into the bathroom with his gigantic gun and his beautiful
body taking up any left over room. “Are you okay?” he asked, his right hand reaching out to touch
the dried blood just over Danny’s right eye.

“I’m fine. A little claustrophobic,” Danny said, trying to wave his bound hands at the lack of space.
“I knew you’d find me.”

“I’m just glad it wasn’t….” Steve shook his head, helping him maneuver away from the toilet where
he insisted on checking Danny for any other injuries.

“I’m fine you goof. I need to call my parents,” Danny said, standing still as Steve opened the
handcuffs. He massaged the red welts on Danny’s wrists, unable to meet his eyes.

“I was… I didn’t know what I’d do… I’m so sorry,” Steve finally said, meeting Danny’s eyes.

“You have nothing to apologize for. Even if I do want to blame you for all of this. This time it’s
really not your fault.” He smiled past Steve when Kono and Chin came tumbling down the steps.
“Thanks.”

“You’re okay?” Kono asked, elbowing by Steve to hug Danny. “We were so scared.”

“I’m fine,” he assured her, releasing her to hug Chin. “I never doubted you’d find me.”

“Of course,” Chin said. “Quite the accommodations you have here.”
“Right? I’m thinking of renting it permanently,” Danny joked. His laugh faded when he glanced up at Steve who was sporting way-past-Aneurysm face. “What? What’s with the homicidal expression?”

“Why didn’t you escape?” Steve demanded.

Danny sighed before taking a deep breath. “Let’s review here, babe. I was locked in a bathroom approximately the size of a phone booth. In handcuffs. I have my clothes. That’s all. If I could have gotten out, where would I have gone? We’re on a freighter. At sea.”

“Did you even try?” Steve asked.

“I’m not a SEAL, Steven. I couldn’t swim back to shore if I had gotten out.” Danny rubbed ideally at his wrists, shaking his head. “I’m sorry I don’t live up to your Army expectations.”

“That’s not it,” Steve said. “It’s just that….”

“You were worried about me and it pisses you off,” Danny said evenly, warmly.

“That’s right,” Kono said with a perky nod. “Stop being so mean to him to disguise the fact that you are really a marshmallow inside.”

“I am not a marshmallow,” Steve retorted. But it was lighter, less ominous. “Are you really okay?”

“Yes I’m fine. I’m pretty sure I don’t have a concussion even though the jackhammer crew has started back to work on my skull. I spent all of last night puking. Always a good time. I’m thirsty and hungry and really, really want to call my parents then drink a cup of coffee.”

Steve nodded at that, glancing at Chin and Kono. “Perimeter secure?”

“Yes,” Kono said, rolling her eyes and giving him a dimpled smile. “Huo and his stupid friend are handcuffed to the railing. Coast Guard will be here in 14 minutes.”

“Good. Let’s go,” Steve said with a nod.

“Go where? How did you get here?” Danny asked as he followed Steve across the empty cargo hold.

“Helicopter,” Steve said, climbing the steps, the others behind him.

“Of course. How else?” Danny said, shading his eyes when they were top-side. Even though the sun was going down, it was still way brighter than his bathroom had been. The sunrays were going straight to his head, helping the jackhammers crack more of the inside of his head. “Whoa.”

“Here,” Chin said, pulling out the sunglasses he wore when he rode his motorcycle. “These will help.”

Danny nodded gratefully and slipped them on. “I need to use your phone.”

Steve shook his head as he continued toward the helicopter.

“I’m not taking another step until you give it to me,” Danny said, standing on the hot deck, his arms crossed over his chest.

“It’s not a sat-phone, Danny. You’ll have to wait until we get on shore,” Chin told him.
“Oh. Somebody could have told me that,” Danny said, yelling at Steve’s back. “Don’t you love it when he gets like this?”

“Only over you, brah,” Chin pointed out, looking up at Kaommou when he stopped before them.

“Glad you are okay, Danny,” Kaommou said, a light hand resting on Danny’s shoulder.

“You provide the info they needed?” Danny asked gratefully.

“Yeah. Once these two are in a deep dark hole, we don’t have to worry about them blowing the sting we have set,” Kaommou said.

“Good,” Danny agreed. “They didn’t say too much but I can give you everything they did say.”

“I’d appreciate it,” Kaommou said, stepping back when Steve returned to loom over Danny, taking him by the arm and pulling him to the helicopter.

“Let go, you animal. I’m coming for God’s sake. What is wrong with you?” Danny protested, climbing into the copter, still ranting. Not as loudly as normal. That would have made his headache even worse than it was already.

“We need to get you to the hospital,” Steve said, staring straight ahead.

“I told you I’m fine,” Danny repeated, moving down the backseat as Kono entered to sit next to him. Chin took shotgun, Kaommou agreeing to wait for the Coast Guard. He would guard the prisoners and help with the inspection of the ship to see if it held any evidence they could use.

After Steve made sure everyone was buckled in, he flew them back to the island, calling the hospital on his headset to let them know he would be landing on their helicopter pad. That done, he glanced over his shoulder to find Danny stretched out on the backseat, sound asleep with his head resting on Kono’s thigh. Kono smiled reassuringly at Steve, her fingers not stopping their caresses of Danny’s hair. Steve nodded at her before turning all of his focus back to piloting the helicopter safely to the hospital.

The gentle bumping of the helicopter setting down roused Danny who opened his eyes only to slam them back shut. “Oh crap.”

“Your head worse?” Kono asked.

“No. But the vertigo has come back tenfold,” Danny said, the back of his hand pressed over his mouth.

“It’s because you are motionless,” Steve said from the end of the seat. “Can you sit up?”

“Not without puking on you,” Danny said.

“Not the first time someone has,” Steve said, reaching in and carefully lifting him until his was upright. “Deep breath.”

Danny shook his head, his hand still over his mouth. “Seriously. I’m going to lose it on your polo.”

“I can wash it. Come on, Danno. We need to get you inside,” Steve coaxed.

“No. Leave me here to die. Please,” Danny said, trying to lay back down.

“Stop being a drama queen,” Steve scolded. “Come on. Out of the chopper.”
“I’m not wearing shoes,” Danny reminded him, his eyes still tightly closed as he struggled to sit up.

“You don’t need shoes. We have a wheelchair,” Chin assured him, taking his right arm as Steve held tight to his left. “Come on. You’re almost there.” They guided him to the wheelchair, making sure he was secure before Steve went behind it to hold the handles.

“I’m going to…” Danny shook his head, leaning over the arm of the wheelchair to have dry heaves onto the roof of the hospital.

“Good thing you haven’t eaten,” Kono said, one hand lightly on the back of his neck.

“No jokes. Please,” Danny said, slowly straightening. “Kill me now. I’m begging you.”

“You’re going to be fine. No one has ever died of vertigo,” Steve promised him, pushing him toward the door where the orderlies waited for them. Steve would not surrender the wheelchair, pushing it directly onto the elevator and staring silently at the numbers as they counted down to the emergency level.

“Are you sure nobody’s ever died of vertigo?” Danny asked in a low voice, his eyes closed, strain on his face.

“Of course I’m sure. A little Phenergan and you’ll be good as new,” Steve told him as though he had received his medical degree in the short time Danny had been missing.

“Well, that’s reassuring, Dr. McGarrett,” Danny responded.

Steve may have responded with what could have been a snort but he’d deny it if it ever came up in conversation.

At the direction of the orderlies, Steve wheeled Danny into one of the exam rooms where he parked the wheelchair. Danny accepted the small metal tray, just in case, and watched the orderlies leave.

“They’re going to make you go,” Danny told Steve as he squinted up at him.

“Doubt it. Since I’m your medical contact.”

Danny shrugged and then instantly regretted the minimal movement. “Do SEALs ever suffer vertigo?”

“We’re ordered not to,” Steve told him, making Danny smile, a small tight smile but a smile nonetheless.

“Figures. Can you sit down and stop looming over me?” Danny requested. “And please call my parents.”

Steve sat as requested, taking out his cell phone and dialing the Williamses before passing his phone to Danny.

“Hi Mom….yes, I’m fine….It’s a long story and I’ll tell you all about it as soon as I can….Yes, I’m fine….Mom… Mom… stop crying. I’m fine…. Yes, Pop, he’s right here.” Danny handed the phone back to Steve and closed his eyes to fight the waves of dizziness. When he could focus on anything other than his own misery, he heard Steve talking to his father.

“Yes sir. We will come for New Year’s….Absolutely….yes sir. Merry Christmas to you too,” Steve said before disconnecting.
“We are going to Jersey for New Year’s?” Danny asked, squinting over at Steve.

“Yep. They want to make sure you are okay and I’m not letting you go without me.”

“I see. And I have no say in this?” Danny asked, the result of this conversation a foregone conclusion.

“None,” Steve confirmed, standing up when Dr. Welaha entered.

“You are not what I asked for when I talked to Santa,” Dr. Welaha informed them with a smile.

“I hear that,” Steve agreed. “He doesn’t think he has a concussion but he has severe vertigo.”

“Thank you so much,” Danny said up to Steve. “I have not lost my ability to speak.”

“That would be end-times for sure,” Dr. Welaha said, taking out his penlight. “Follow the light.”

Danny tried to be a good little soldier and do as he was asked. But following the light even one inch was more than he could manage. He grabbed his tray, clutching it as a lifeline.

“All right,” Dr. Welaha said sympathetically. “That pretty much confirms it. I need to check your pupils. Can you tolerate the light?”

Danny nodded tentatively, holding still as the doctor shone the lights straight into his skill, causing new fissures to be added to the ones already there.

“No concussion,” the doctor was glad to report. “I’ll give you a shot of Phenergan and Steve can take you home and put you to bed.”

Danny tried to nod at that, not entirely succeeding. He was too tired and too dizzy to do much of anything but wait to be told what to do.

“Come on,” Steve was saying, pulling on his hands. “Up.”

“What? Why?” Danny protested, barely able to stand even with Steve’s help. How could he be more seasick on land than he was on the boat? What kind of sense did that even make? And this had to be Steve’s fault too. He was sure of it.

“Phenergan has to go in your nice ass,” Steve told him, undoing his jeans for him.

“You think I have a nice ass?” Danny asked, wishing he could just shut up already. But that didn’t seem to be in the cards at the moment.

“Yes I do,” Steve said, lowering the back of his jeans and holding onto him.

“I’m afraid this is going to hurt,” Dr. Welaha said, swabbing Danny’s ass about which he had no particular opinion. And if he did, he sure wouldn’t admit it out loud where Steve could hear him. Everyone knew they had it bad for each other, everyone but them apparently. Dr. Welaha wished he’d paid better attention in his psych classes so he’d know how to knock some sense into them both.

“You ready?”

Danny flapped a hand which the doctor took to mean ‘yeah. Whatever.’ “Whoa,” Danny gasped as Dr. Welaha gave him the shot.

“I know. It’s not pleasant but it’s guaranteed to stop the dizziness,” the doctor promised.
“Good thing,” Danny said, his eyes wide at the sting from shot. “I can go now?”

“Yes. You’ll need to take it easy for the next few days. You’re very close to being dehydrated. No alcohol for the next 48 hours. Drink at least six glasses of water.” The doctor watched Danny nod but doubted he was hearing anything the doctor said. Dr. Welaha looked up at Steve who assured him he had heard and Danny would follow all of those instructions. “Very good. If you are still dizzy tomorrow morning, you’ll need to come back. It’s more than seasickness. But I’m pretty sure that’s all it is.”

“’Kay,” Danny mumbled into Steve’s arm that was still holding him up. “Home.”

“Right,” Steve agreed, settling Danny back in the wheelchair. “Kono should be right out front.”

“Yay Kono,” Danny said, propping his head on his hand to keep it from falling off and rolling down the hospital hallway. What a mess that would make.

December 24, 8:49 a.m. HST

“Hey,” Steve said softly as Danny finally decided to try opening his eyes. The room stayed mercifully still and he could focus on Steve’s smiling face.

“Hey yourself,” Danny said, shifting slightly and trying to decide where he was. Steve’s house. Steve’s bed. With Steve. “I’m easy but I’m not cheap,” he said into the soft pillow cushioning his head.

“I am all too aware of that,” Steve assured him, running very gently fingers through Danny’s hair. “How are you feeling?”

“Mmm…” Danny said, closing his eyes to consider the question. “My butt hurts where I got the shot. I’m thirsty.”

“Are you dizzy?”

“No,” Danny said, thankful for that response. “My head hurts a little. Like almost a hang-over but like I quit before I went past ‘one too many.’”

“That’s a relief,” Steve said.

“So,” Danny said, raising up on his elbows to look over at Steve.

“So?”

“This. Us,” Danny said, gesturing between them. He was undressed except for his briefs. He had the feeling Steve was as well. “Are we doing this?”

“What do you want?” Steve asked, his eyes guarded. Which meant he was guarding his heart from the possibility of having it broken yet again.

“I want you naked. Physically and emotionally,” Danny said. “I want the truth. I want to make love to you until we both can’t walk. I want to tear your sheets and disturb the neighbors. How does that fit with what you want?”

“Pretty much the same,” Steve said, his smile genuine and open. “Not sure how much emotional honesty I can provide to start but I do promise to try.”
“I’ll take it,” Danny said, untangling one hand to place it against Steve’s stubbled cheek. “Everybody knows I’m in love with you. Do you know it too?”

“I suspected,” Steve said, turning to kiss Danny’s palm. “The reverse is also true.”

“God you’re a romantic,” Danny teased.


“I bet you have,” Danny agreed. “Do you know why that low-life decided I didn’t need to go to Jersey?”

“He had been sent to kidnap Dr. Hian-mian Zhao. Dr. Zhao never showed up at the airport and you saw Huo. He took you so you couldn’t call us.”

“What did Dr. Zhao do to the Lãnhchúa?” Danny asked.

“He had assigned them to his class as a research project. He thought they were mostly disbanded. Turns out he found out how active they were when he read the term papers. All of which we now have. Dr. Zhao was downstairs with HPD when we discovered you were missing.”

“Well. That’s something,” Danny said. “Is Huo dead this time?”

“No. In maximum lock up with his friend. They are spilling their guts to Kaommou in exchange for not getting the death penalty for kidnapping a policeman.”

“Glad I could help out,” Danny said.

“I’m glad you are okay. When we couldn’t find you… when we didn’t know if we would find you… I couldn’t think of anything but what I hadn’t said,” Steve confessed.

“I know, you goof. I feel the same way. Now you need to feed me so we can come back here and celebrate my rescue,” Danny suggested, raising up on his knees. “Because no way can I kiss you until I brush my teeth at least three times.”

“Sounds about right,” Steve agreed, settling for kissing Danny on the nose before following him into the bathroom. “Very nice ass.”

Danny just laughed, delighted to be able to hear those words from Steve and anticipating how very shortly he would be showing his entire ass to Steve. “Merry Christmas to us,” Danny said, still laughing up at his goof.
A Day In The Life Of...

Chapter Summary

What it says - a glimpse at one day in the Williams-McGarrett family. Steve is governor. Danny is trying to keep him out of trouble. You know - the usual. (Wish I could say there was a plot but that would not be... well... true.)

“Detective,” the voice was saying. The sound followed a knock on the door. “I apologize for disturbing you, Detective.”

Danny groaned, stretching an arm out and encountering an empty bed. He knew he had been sleeping before the familiar voice woke him but he didn’t think it was morning yet.

“Detective?”

“Yeah Bobby?” Danny said into the pillow still cushioning his head.

“Are you awake?”

“Mostly. What’s up?” Danny rolled over to face the room, squinting up at the member of the security detail trying his hardest not to smile at the rumbled man in the bed. Bobby had been working as Sebastian’s assistance for the past 18 months and invariably volunteered to work overnight any time it was required. He said he didn’t mind and since he wasn’t married, it was easier for him than it would be for some of the others.

“The Governor.”

“Uhn… What time is it?”

“4:30, sir,” Bobby told him. Danny rolled his eyes at the news.

“Okay. Steve downstairs?”

“He is. He’s in the situation room,” Bobby agreed, stepping back as Danny made to leave the bed.

“Okay. I guess you tried, huh?” Danny asked as he pulled on a pair of sweatpants over his briefs. Only after he had the drawstring tied did he realize they were Steve’s pants with NAVY nearly washed off the right leg. Well. No matter. The elastic at the ankles would prevent him from tripping over them.

“I did, sir. As did the Lieutenant Governor. Neither of us were successful in convincing him to stop for the night,” Bobby said, following Danny out of the bedroom.

“Tell me again what they are working on?” Danny requested as they made their way down the private staircase, three flights to the basement.
Bobby gave him the thumbnail version of the legislation that had kept Steve occupied and cloistered with representatives from both State houses for the better part of three days. Danny was sure it was vitally important to the welfare of the State but the decision making could wait until the next day, at a decent hour. Or that same day, he supposed.

“If I can get him to sleep for 8 hours straight, the government won’t shut down, right?” Danny asked to make sure. They had stopped outside the doors, plain wood that did not speak of the many important decisions made within.

“No sir. The continuing resolution doesn’t expire until the end of the month,” Bobby assured him. “In addition, John’s football game is tonight, correct?”

“Yeah. I don’t think Steve’s forgotten. But you know how uber-focused he can get.”

“Indeed.”

“At any rate, there are still 13 days to hammer this out. He can sleep, get to John’s game, and prevent the government from shutting down.”

“The Governor was of the opinion that sooner was better.”

“That’s Steve,” Danny agreed, knocking once before opening the door and entering like he had every right to be in that room. He did not fail to notice the looks of relief that flickered across all eight faces around the table. Steve was in the far corner, his back to the door and did not turn to see who had entered, if he had even heard the door open at all.

“….so if we increase that revenue stream, it will more than offset the loss of the….,” Steve sensed the change in the air and turned to see Danny smiling up at him, already in what would have been his personal space bubble if he had any illusions of having one after being married to Danny for so long.

“Hey Babe,” Danny said quietly, one hand on Steve’s arm. “What do you say you come upstairs with me?”

Steve’s eyes were narrowed and steel blue. The look of a man who was going to stubbornly refuse purely as a matter of pride and determination. “I can’t. I have to…”

“You’ve been at it for 20 straight hours. You’re tired. They are exhausted. You’ve reached the point of diminishing returns,” Danny said, his expression warm and coaxing. Steve recognized his tone as one he generally reserved for the children when they were being especially resistant to doing the right thing.

Steve glanced over at the others in the room, most of whom where avoiding eye contact. Kono, of course, was telling him silently that Danny was right. And Steve was going to have to go against them both if he said no. “Just one more hour and we could be finished.”

“I think I heard that at midnight. And before that it was 9:00 o’clock. You have until the end of the month to finalize this. It doesn’t have to be done tonight. And you promised John you’d be at his football game. Since you’re actually in town this time.” Danny thought bringing John and by extension Emma into the argument was cheating but he wasn’t particularly concerned about using their children to get his way when it was what Steve needed.

Steve was focused back on Danny, seeing only love and understanding in those blue eyes. “Okay,”
Steve sighed. He straightened, tightly smiling at the others present. “What do you say we knock off for the night? We’ll reconvene at 10 in the morning.”

“Make it noon. And I’ll buy everyone pizza,” Danny said loudly enough for all to hear. He knew he’d pay for overriding Steve but he didn’t mind. It was a payment he would happily make. “That will still give you enough time to get to the game.”

“All right,” Steve agreed. “Noon. Thank you all for your hard work.”

The weariness as they left was obvious, low voices discussing the next day’s strategies.

“Don’t look at me like that,” Steve said to Kono when she was standing in front of him, her fists on her hips. She was staring straight up at him, displeasure in every line of her body.

“Why? Why won’t you listen?”

“When has he ever?” Danny asked with a far-too-pleased smile on his face.

“He listened to you. I told him. I told him we were too tired to finish. Would he listen to me? No he would not,” Kono scowled.

“You can’t bribe him with the prospects of having sex,” Danny said, his wiggling eyebrows making her laugh.

“That’s TMI, brah.”

“I told you to go to bed,” Steve reminded her, a light hand on her rounded belly. The baby was due in the next month but Kono had not been slowed down by her other babies. She wasn’t letting this baby slow her down either.

“We’re fine, Boss,” Kono assured him, pressing his hand harder to her side. “Talk to her again.”

“Hey, Baby. Are you almost ready to come out and meet your ohana?” Steve asked Kono’s stomach. He could feel the flutterer kicks of the baby in response to his voice.

“She loves you,” Kono said with a laugh. “She kicks every time you talk.”

“Maybe she wants to kick him, not get his attention,” Danny suggested.

“Could be,” Kono agreed, reaching up on her toes to kiss Steve. “Go to bed. When we come back, we’ll get it finished. And you’ll still get to John’s game on time.”

“Right,” Steve said, watching her leave the room, her movement graceful even now. When the door was closed, he frowned in Danny’s general direction, refusing to make eye contact.

“Oh. So it’s the silent treatment for me,” Danny said, leaning one hip on the wooden conference table.

“You undermine my authority when you do that,” Steve said to the stack of papers he was needlessly straightening.

“Right. Because you haven’t proved in the years you’ve been governor that you are in charge.”
“That’s not the point,” Steve refuted, turning his back to Danny.

“Then I don’t know what the point is,” Danny told the back of Steve’s somewhat wrinkled dress shirt. “They are exhausted. You are exhausted. Why is it so hard for you to admit you are human?”

“I’ve gone longer on less sleep,” Steve reminded him.

“The legislators aren’t SEALs, Babe. You can’t hold them to your high standards.”

Steve gave a one shoulder shrug in response, picking up the papers and tucking them under his arm.

“Oh no,” Danny said, pointing at the pile secured between Steve’s elbow and his body. “You are not bringing those upstairs with you.”

“I need to review them,” Steve said, looking down at them.

“It’s 5 o’clock in the morning. You haven’t slept in nearly 24 hours. You need to sleep. Not review more revenue projections.”

Steve ignored Danny’s protests, taking the papers and leaving the situation room. Danny counted to ten, slowly, before following him out and up the stairs.

“Where are you going?” Steve asked when Danny turned right instead of left at the top of the stairwell.

“John’s room. I’m going back to sleep. You do what you want,” Danny said, waving an impatient hand at Steve and his inability to set work aside to sleep.

“You can sleep with me,” Steve said, coming very close to putting on the infamous puppy-dog eyes of persuasion.

“Oh no. No no no. You are not pouting me into coming to bed with you. If you were planning to sleep, I would. You aren’t so I’m not,” Danny said, opening John’s door and slipping inside before Steve could try any other form of unfair persuasion on him.

“Hey Danno,” John’s sleepy voice said as he cracked open one eye to look at his father. “Is it time to get up?”

“Not yet, Bud. Go back to sleep,” Danny said, getting into the second twin bed in John’s room.

“You and Daddy have a fight?” John asked, his eyes closed, his voice unconcerned.

“Yeah. Not a big deal. He’s being stubborn and pig-headed.”

“Nothing new there,” John agreed. “If you get divorced, me and Emma want to live with you.”

Danny laughed, shaking his head. “We aren’t getting a divorce, Bud. You and Emma don’t need to worry about it.”

“Okay,” John said, yawning.
Danny pulled his phone out of the pocket of the sweatpants when it vibrated, not surprised to find a text message. *Come to bed. I’ll sleep, I promise.*

He waited just long enough to send a reply: *I’m good. Go to sleep. I’ll see you tomorrow.*

*Please come to bed. I can’t sleep without you.*

*You are such a child sometimes.*

*I know that. Please, Danno?*

*Fine. How did you make it as a SEAL without me?*

*I have no idea.*

Danny quietly left the bed for the door.

“You make up?” John asked without opening his eyes.

“Something like that. I’ll see you in the morning, Bud.”

“It is morning,” John told him before turning over and falling back to sleep.

Danny left John’s room to go down the hall to enter their bedroom, Steve in bed without any papers visible. “If you are hiding budget reports under the covers, you are going to be very sorry,” Danny warned as he crossed over to their bed.

“No budget reports,” Steve promised, moving aside the covers to prove that he was the only thing in their bed. And he was naked, a fact Danny could not fail to notice.

“You need to sleep. Not have sex,” Danny scolded quietly as he pushed down the sweatpants and his brief. He pulled off his tee-shirt before climbing into bed to be tackled by Steve.

“If we aren’t having sex, why are you naked?” Steve asked, rocking his hips so their forming erections ground together.

“You are going to be the death of me. I swear to God,” Danny said, wrapping strong arms around Steve’s back in an effort to pull him even closer.

“You say the sweetest things,” Steve whispered into his ear before he bit the lobe.

“John said he and Emma want to live with me when we get divorced,” Danny said with a laugh in his voice.

“Why were they discussing? They have to know you can’t live without me,” Steve said before cutting off Danny’s reply with a hard, all-consuming kiss.

“I think you have that backwards,” Danny responded with a smile. “You would wither and die without me.”

“I am not a vine, Danno,” Steve said as he moved down Danny’s body. When he reached his erection, he licked up the side, smirking at Danny’s groan. “Who needs who?”
“I need you. Put that mouth to good use.”

Steve laughed, soft puffs of air barely disturbing the light brown curls at the base of Danny’s need. “Like this?” Steve took Danny into his mouth, Danny unable to answer except to moan appreciatively. He reached down to bury his fingers in Steve’s hair, rubbing his scalp in the way that made Steve purr. Steve hummed around Danny’s cock, Danny arching into the sensation.

“Oh God Babe. More of that,” Danny pleaded. Steve hummed again, Danny twitching all over. “It won’t be long. Oh God you are a master at this.” Danny could feel Steve’s smile as he slurped off after Danny had erupted into Steve’s warm, welcoming mouth. “Come here you. Come up here.”

Steve crawled back up, moving like a cat languid and graceful. He lay half on Danny as he kissed his chest and his neck, his right hand wrapped around Danny’s softening cock.

“What do you want?” Danny whispered into Steve’s hair before kissing him.

“Hmm…..” Steve purred in response.

“That’s not really an answer,” Danny reminded him, shifting enough to look at Steve’s face. He wasn’t even a little surprised to find that Steve had fallen completely asleep, his mouth slightly parted, his fingers moving up to burrow into the curls covering Danny’s chest. “You are such a goof,” Danny whispered, kissing him and following him into sleep.

~00o~

“Good morning, Danno,” Emma said the next morning smiling at him as he appeared.

It was 7:30 and Emma and John were in the family dining room eating breakfast, already dressed and ready for school. Emma had on her cheerleading outfit about which Danny had mixed emotions. Did they really have to be so short? And what was wrong with nice tee shirts instead of those tiny strappy tops they always wore? He couldn’t deny that she looked absolutely adorable in her red and white outfit, a bright striped ribbon holding her blonde curls in a ponytail. But still. A little more material spaced out strategically couldn’t come to any harm, right?

One of the security detail would be taking them to school very soon. Danny still missed that part of what once was their daily ritual. One of the many changes that occurred when Steve was elected Governor.

“Morning, Baby Girl. Morning Bud,” Danny said, smiling sleepily at them before sitting at the head of the table. He nodded in thanks when one of the cook’s assistants provided him a mug of steaming coffee. “You ready to go? You have your football gear?”

“We are and I do,” John confirmed. “You and Steve aren’t filing for divorce while we’re at school are you?”

“I told you last night – this morning - whatever,” Danny said with a frown. “We aren’t getting divorced. Where did you get such a crazy idea?”

“Local news,” Emma said with a bright smile. Why was she smiling about the possibility that her fathers might actually split up? Not that it would ever happen.
“And why are you so happy about it?” Danny asked, studying her intently.

“I’m not. I know it won’t happen,” Emma said with a shrug. “You two are attached at the hip. Everybody knows that.”

“Always have been from what Kono and Chin say,” John added.

“You told me you wanted to live with me if we divorce,” Danny reminded John, pointing an accusatory spoon at his son.

“Yeah. Well, you know,” John said with a laugh. “I don’t think we’d survive with only Steve. He’d make us run to school.”

“And ride a stationary bike to generate electricity for our computers,” Emma said, making John laugh.

“We’d only eat twigs and bark.”

“We’d probably have to sew our own clothes,” Emma suggested.

“You two are completely out of control. First of all, we are not divorcing. And secondly, if you lived with just Steve full time, you really think he’d be the boss of you? I’m barely the boss of you.”

“You aren’t really, Danno,” John told him. “We just let you pretend you are.”

“As I am all too aware,” Danny agreed. “Grace never gave me attitude like you two do.”

“That’s not the story we heard,” John informed him far too happily.

“Lies. All of it,” Danny assured them.

“We’ll let you keep believing that,” Emma said, kissing Danny before going with John to the door where one of the detail waited.

“I’ll see you tonight at the game,” Danny called after them, watching them leave. When the door was closed behind them, he decided he wasn’t really hungry and went back to their bedroom to find Steve still sound asleep. He climbed into bed next to him and was soon asleep himself.

~o0o~

“If my husband finds out you’re here, he won’t be happy,” Danny’s voice was saying as Steve finally surfaced.

“Fffffttt…” Steve said, waving a sleepy hand. “I can take him.” He was smiling into his pillow, Danny’s warm hand caressing his curls as he licked one of Steve’s ridiculous tattoos.

“You might not be able to. He’s huge. A giant.”

“Well. If I’m going to die, how about you blow me first? My last wish,” Steve suggested, rocking his hips into the mattress to further harden his erection.

“I guess I could be agreeable to that. I have a very talented mouth.”
“You mean you use it for something other than talking? Hardly seems possible,” Steve said with a
smile.

“You keep it up, wise guy. See if that gets you free sex.”

“It’s been a really long time since I’ve had to pay for sex,” Steve told him, smugness all over him.

“I’ll just bet, Commander Smooth Dog. More likely they paid you for it.”

“Maybe,” Steve said, rolling onto his back to properly smile at Danny. “Did you bundle the children
off to school?”

“I did. Emma in her cheerleading outfit,” Danny said with a frown.

“Please tell me you didn’t complain about it. Again,” Steve requested.

“No. I just don’t understand why….”

“Stop. For the love of God, just stop right there,” Steve pleaded.

“So you don’t mind that our daughter parades around school dressed like a trollop.”

“A trollop?” Steve asked, laughing to Danny’s displeasure.

“Seriously. There’s more material in my boxer shorts than her whole outfit.”

“You don’t wear boxers, Danno. How would you know?”

“Trollop,” Danny repeated sternly as he crawled down Steve’s body to lick his erection. “You
should be upset too.”

“First, don’t talk about Emma when you’re about to blow me. Second, cheerleaders have dressed
like that since time began. You aren’t going to change it by complaining to me.”

“Hrmmph,” Danny responded before using his mouth for better things than talking, at least from
Steve’s point of view.

“Oh babe,” Steve moaned, wondering with a tiny part of his brain how he had gotten so lucky. The
rest of his brain was consumed with yes... oh God yes... wow.... more... uhnunn....

Danny slurped off, wiping the back of his hand across his mouth before smiling at Steve’s blissed out
expression. “Once your brain comes back on-line, we need to take a shower.”

Steve just smiled and held up his arms. Danny settled in them automatically.

“This isn’t really an answer,” Danny pointed out.

“Shhhh… you’re spoiling the after-glow.”

Danny laughed at him, kissing his jaw and allowing his eyes to drift closed. “Did you know that the
local news is saying we’re going to get divorced?”
“Ffffttt….”

“That’s all you have to say? Local reporters are saying we’re breaking up and you can’t be bothered to respond?”

“We aren’t. Tell Sebastian to tell them to knock it off,” Steve said.

“I’m thinking about having Chin arrest them. Much more effective.”

“I think you may be forgetting about a little thing called the First Amendment.”

“Oh sure. Now you care about proper procedure,” Danny said.

“Always have.”

“No you haven’t. Mostly you ignored it,” Danny reminded him.

“That’s why I had you. That and the sex,” Steve said with a smug grin.

“Yeah,” Danny had to agree, reaching over for his phone when it vibrated. “Chin wants a new speedboat. I’m supposed to get you to buy it for him.”

“What’s wrong with the one I bought them six months ago?” Steve asked, his eyes still closed and still looking pleased with himself and life in general.

“It’s at the bottom of the Pacific,” Danny reported, showing Steve the text. He actually opened his eyes enough to read it.

“That is a problem,” Steve agreed. “What happened?”

“He would rather not say,” Danny said. “Taught him everything you know, didn’t you?”

“Yep,” Steve confirmed. “Tell him once he submits the report complete with explanation, I’ll sign the requisition.”

“Check,” Danny said, sending Chin the message. “He says thanks.”

“They coming to the game tonight?” Steve asked.

“He is. Malia is tied up.”

“Okay,” Steve said, sitting up to stretch. “We better get in the shower.”

“I think I mentioned that earlier,” Danny reminded him, getting out of bed and going over to their bathroom.

“What are you doing until the game?” Steve asked as he followed Danny.

Danny told him a run-down of the rest of his day as they stepped into the shower. He didn’t have a lot planned, making Steve frown down at him.
“Stop. Stop with the pouting. I am not the governor. I do not have to meet with the legislators all afternoon.”

“You’re going to come for pizza though, right?” Steve asked as they dried off.

“Yes,” Danny sighed.

“Thank you. Make sure you order enough. All of them with pineapple.”

“Sure,” Danny agreed as they shaved. He laughed when Steve stared at him in the mirror.

“Who are you and what have you done with my Danno?”

“Shut up and get dressed so you aren’t late,” Danny said, shoving his shoulder.

They both dressed and got to the situation room with plenty of time to spare. The pizza arrived right after the legislators, who enjoyed the food, the sodas, and the chance to talk in a less formal setting.

Maybe it was the pizza. Maybe it was Danny being there because Steve decided he shouldn’t leave. Maybe it was because it was Friday. Whatever the reason, by 4:30, they had hammered out a compromise on the legislation that they all agreed was equitable, measured, and very likely to be approved by the entire legislature. A total win.

~o0o~

“Seriously, Steve. Cargoes?” Danny asked as they changed for the football game.

Steve shrugged before pulling on the blue polo. He would have liked to wear a Kukui High School jersey but it didn’t pay for the Governor to openly root for one school over another, even if it was his alma mater. “It’s a football game, Danno.”

“Wear jeans.”

“Why? There’s nothing wrong with cargoes at a football game.”

“Except when you’re Governor and will end up on TV. All our efforts to make you look like a grown-up will be right out the window,” Danny said as he pulled on his polo shirt.

“Jeans are more grown-up than cargoes?” Steve asked, stalking Danny.

“Yes. And stop that. We need to go or we’re going to be late.”

“Stop what?” Steve asked innocently as he loomed over Danny.

“You know perfectly well what. With your stalking and invading my personal space,” Danny said with a maximum of hand waving.

“You don’t have any personal space. That’s been true since the start,” Steve said, leaning down to kiss him. Danny groaned and surrendered, not moving away from him even as the knock sounded on the door followed by Chin’s laughter.

“Seriously? After all these years?” Chin asked.
Danny waved at him, his hand saying ‘just a sec,’ or ‘whatever,’ or ‘shut-up.’ Or all three.

“Hey Chin,” Steve said evenly when he turned to greet him, his mouth kiss-swollen, his tongue chasing after Danny’s taste on his lips.


Steve just shrugged, looking over his shoulder at Danny.

“Tell him he should wear jeans,” Danny requested, smoothing his hair as he stepped out from behind Steve.

“Those cargoes are fine,” Chin said, looking down at his own jeans and Kukui High School jersey. “You’re the only one who cares.”

Danny waved them off, tucking in his shirt and going to the closet for their shoes.

“Did you sign the form for my new boat yet?” Chin asked as they pulled on their shoes.

“Not yet. I will on Monday. And you’re sure you want to go with ‘rammed by a shark’ as the official reason it sunk?” Steve asked.

“It’s the truth. My hand to God,” Chin said, making Steve shake his head.

“Do you see?” he said to Danny. “You’ve corrupted him.”

Danny could only shrug at that. “It’s a perfectly good saying. But I got to say, I’m not buying the shark either, brah.”

Chin shrugged, looking innocent and sincere as only he could. And how could anyone ever doubt him?

“So if I were to scuba dive down to the wreckage, I wouldn’t find, I don’t know, shrapnel? Parts of a grenade?” Danny asked.

“Are you planning to dive the wreckage?” Chin hedged.

“Maybe. Grace and Emma want to go. Sounds like a good place to take them,” Danny threatened.

“We’re on a island. There are lots more interesting places to go diving,” Chin told him as he followed them out and down the stairs.

“Alicia is worried about the coral reefs,” Steve said with a wink at Danny.


“Uh huh,” Danny said. “Chin Ho Kelly. After all this time, why do you think we don’t see straight through you?”

Chin just shrugged, climbing into the black SUV that was waiting right outside the back door. Henry pretended he wasn’t laughing as he turned from the front passenger seat to make certain they were
ready. Assured they were buckled in, he told Jaime to drive on.

They arrived at Kukui High with 15 minutes to spare before kick-off. The seats directly in front of the press box were empty, always available to the Governor and his family when they had time to come. Jaime and Henry sat on the outside, alert and watchful but not threatening. Steve sat between Danny and Chin which sometimes lowered the number of people who tried to talk to him. The row in front on them was blocked off but if anyone really wanted to talk to Steve, he responded.

Danny was often amazed that it was his Super SEAL who so patiently answered inane questions and posed for pictures and signed autographs. Mostly these things happened when Kukui didn’t have the ball because everyone in attendance wanted to watch John Williams-McGarrett work his magic on the field. John had already broken all of Steve’s records and he was happy for it.

Because Kukui was playing their biggest rival, there was an especially large crowd in the stands. Steve told Danny he was glad so many people were there since that tended to hold down the number of people who wanted to talk to him.

“You’d think it’d be the other way, don’t you?” Danny remarked as he accepted the nachos that Henry had gone to get them.

Steve shrugged at that, drinking from his water. “Who knows? Maybe they don’t notice I’m here.”

“Right. Because you aren’t a gigantic Governor surrounded by your security personnel not to mention accompanied by the head of 5-0,” Danny said, taking Steve’s water to drink from it.

“Emma is right. I am divorcing you,” Steve said before smiling at a woman old enough to be his grandmother who was positively gushing over him.

“I taught here when you went here,” she told Steve, still not releasing his hand.

“Goodness,” Steve said. “Tell me your name.”

“Miss Wilkins, dear. If I’m not mistaken, I had you in my biology class.”

“Of course,” Steve said with a smile that melted Miss Wilkins heart just a little bit. “I was lab partners with Toby…. uhm… Toby somebody. Short. Red hair. Nearly passed out when we had to dissect the rabbit.”

“Toby Britton, dear,” Miss Wilkes confirmed. “And I knew you dissected both of the rabbits so he didn’t have to.”

“Sounds like Steve,” Danny agreed with a smile.

“He was a good boy,” Miss Wilkes said with a return smile. “I hear only good things about your son and your daughter.”

“Thank you, ma’am,” Steve said.

“Oh good. We got the ball back. I better go find my seat,” she said, turning unsteadily to look down the bleachers.

“Will you allow me the privilege of walking with you?” Danny asked. “I want to hear more about
Steve back when he was a ‘good boy.’”

“I’d be delighted, dear,” Miss Wilkes agreed, looping her hand through Danny’s elbow. It was nearly 20 minutes later when Danny returned, smiling devilishly at Steve.

“Don’t even start,” Steve said, steadfastly ignoring Danny to cheer on his son.

“Steal A student, huh?” Danny teased.

“Stop. I don’t want to hear this,” Steve said, waving down at Emma who was throwing them kisses.

“You were Super SEAL even before you were a SEAL,” Danny said, shaking his head and kissing Steve’s head. Emma covered her eyes but they could see she was laughing. Danny threw her kisses before she turned around to cheer for the team.

“I happen to know you also made straights A-s,” Steve countered.

Danny just shrugged, jumping up with the rest of the crowd when John ran for a touchdown. Unfortunately it was the only points they scored, losing with a final score of 17-7.

“Good game, though,” Danny said as they went to the car.

“Would have been better if we won,” Steve grumped. His expression lightened when Emma came sprinting toward them. “Hey Baby Girl.”

“Hey. Can I come home with you?” she asked, reaching up to kiss first Steve then Danny.

“You aren’t going out for burgers?” Danny asked, brushing the hair out of her face.

“Not tonight. We don’t really feel much like celebrating.”

“If you’re sure,” Steve said, unnecessarily helping her into the SUV.

“Did you text John so he won’t wait for you?” Danny asked as they settled in.

“Yeah. He said he’d be home in about an hour,” Emma said, smiling at Henry. “Did they drive you crazy?”

“No more than usual,” Henry assured her. “I think they may be getting a divorce.”

Emma shrugged at that. “No surprise,” she said, making kissing noises at Danny when he tried to scowl her. “You aren’t getting divorced before homecoming, right? Because you promised to come to the dance.”

“I’ll be there. Super SEAL may not make it,” Danny said.

“Oh well. He’ll still be the Grand Marshall of the parade,” Emma reminded him.

“I am?” Steve asked, his eyes wide.

“Oh Daddy. You promised,” Emma said, shaking her head.
“I did?”

“Yes,” Chin said with a nod.

“Why can’t you do it? You’re more famous than I am,” Steve said.

“I’m not governor, brah.”

“He’s not governor,” Danny repeated when Steve looked over at him.

“Daddy,” Emma said, giving the word three extra syllables.

“Okay, Baby Girl. I’ll do it. Does Danno know when it is?”

“Danno knows,” Danny assured him. “It’s three weeks from today. And Emma will need a new dress for the dance. Do you want to come shopping with us tomorrow?”

“Thank you, no,” Steve said.

“Support the local economy. Be seen doing regular stuff. Be good for you,” Chin said, laughing at Steve’s frown.

“And I thought you were on my side,” Steve complained.

Chin shrugged, winking at Emma.

“So you’ll come?” Emma asked hopefully, all bright and cheerful.

“Sure,” Steve said because when had he ever been able to deny his little girl anything. Never. That was when. “Hope you don’t mind shopping tomorrow,” he said to Henry.

“It will be my honor,” Henry assured him, making them laugh at his expression.

When they arrived at the residence, Chin roared off on his motorcycle while Steve, Danny, and Emma went into the sitting room where they waited for John to get home. He wasn’t happy they lost, certain he could have prevented it if he had played just that much better.

“No, Bud. You were out-manned,” Danny assured him.

“Are you coming shopping with us tomorrow?” Steve asked him. John was sitting next to Steve on the love seat, Steve’s arm thrown around his son’s shoulders like he never intended to let him go.

“Oh could I?” John asked, rolling his eyes.

“Sarcasm does not become you,” Danny said, trying to sound stern.

“Learned everything I know from you,” John said, Danny shaking his head.

“You aren’t living with me when we get divorced,” Danny said.

“That’s fine. Since you never will,” John said, shaking his head. He stood, stretching his long arms up to the ceiling, his finger tips practically brushing it. “I’m going to bed.”
“Good night, Bud,” Danny said, watching with a smile as John left the room. “What about you, Missy?”

“Oh. You want me to go to bed so you and Daddy can have sex,” she said.

“Emma. That’s… just wrong,” Danny said.

“You aren’t going to have sex?” Emma asked.

“Whether we are or aren’t isn’t a topic of conversation you need to be having.”

“A topic I don’t need?” Emma said with a frown.

“You know what I mean. Go to bed,” Danny said, pointing toward the door.

“Okay. I still love you even if you are getting rid of me,” she said, kissing them both before disappearing.

“I thought she’d never get the hint,” Steve said, pulling Danny down into the loveseat with him.

“Slow on the up-take. She gets that from you,” Danny said, turning to kiss Steve before he could try and answer.

“Sassy. That’s totally you.”

“Sure. Whatever. Let’s go upstairs and have sex,” Danny suggested, standing to pull Steve up.

“Good plan. Just don’t tell Emma.”

“You got it, Big Guy,” Danny agreed, going up the stairs with him and doing exactly has Emma suggested, not that they ever had any plans of telling her she was right. Some things your children just don’t need to know.
Chapter Summary

Because Bulletproof Baby Blankets is written out of order (or as my muses deem appropriate) the timeline and the characters have caused quite a bit of confusion. This is my attempt to help fix that. (I hope I don't make it worse.)

When I started this series, I didn't expect it to become quite so long or complicated. And because I write the chapters as they come to me, they are not in chronological order. This became a conscious decision after a few chapters, because I like being able to move back and forth in time. If my muses decide they want to write about Steve and Danny before they are married, I can do that.

This has resulted in some (understandable) confusion with some readers. And I apologize for that. (Even I have trouble keeping up sometimes.) In an effort to help us all, here is a list of the chapters in chronological order, as if I had started at the "beginning" and moved one direction in their timeline. (This is not the order in which I wrote them.) I can't swear that they will make sense if you read them in this order. I may have changed details here and there because I have trouble keeping track. Probably an outline or "answer key" would be handy but where would the fun be in that?

As I add chapters to this series, I will try to remember to come back and update this timeline.

I hope this helps and doesn't make things worse! Thanks!!

BpBB Chapters in the order the characters live them (sort of)

WWSMD
silence
Christmas in Jersey - or Not (Danny is kidnapped)
A Tealight on the Ocean (the proposal)
The List (wedding planning)
The Wedding pt 1
The Wedding Pt 2
This is my Ohana (John’s arrival)
Gigantic Steve-shaped Hole in My Heart (Steve’s deployment)
Emma Greets Her Ohana (Emma’s arrival)
No More Car Chases – the original Bulletproof Baby Blankets
Daddy’s Not a Dolphin (John in 1st grade)
Coloring, Tents, or Racing Yaks (Danny is kidnapped, again)
They Get That From You (photographic evidence)
Paperwork and Prom Dresses
Permission to Come Aboard (Halloween)
Steve Williams-McGarrett Plans to the Rule the World (Steve runs for governor pt 2)
Steve Williams-McGarrett Plans to the Rule the World (Steve runs for governor pt 1)
Letters to Our Children (Grace gets married)
Yeah But I’m Your Goof (Tsunami chapter)
A Day In the Life Of (Steve is governor)
(There isn’t really any order to the autocorrects and they don’t fit neatly in the timeline)

H50 Autocorrects
autocorrects 2
More Autocorrect silliness
even more autocorrects

**Family Tree and other notes:**

Danny and Steve get married

- On their first anniversary, Mary (Steve’s sister) offers to have Danny’s baby – John
- On John’s first birthday, Danny’s sister agrees to have Steve’s baby – Emma

Rachel and Stan are married

- Alicia is born (I wrote her before Rachel in The Show had Charlie)
- Zacchary is born (Zacchary probably has a form of Aspberger’s)

**Notes:**

- As far as Steve, Danny, Rachel, and Stan are concerned, they are all one huge family in most aspects (because it’s my story and I like utopias.)
- Grace lives with both sets of parents alternately until she gets married.
- Chin is married to Malia and so far have no children (this may change). When Steve is elected Governor, Chin becomes head of the 5-0 task force.
- Kono is married to Charlie and has 5 children (I think.) She is Steve’s Lieutenant Governor when he is elected.

Grace is the oldest child then Alicia, John, Zacchary, and Emma.
I'm Not Your Stepping Stone

Chapter Summary

Slice of life, PWP. We had a tiny family crisis today and I wrote this to cheer myself up. Everything's fine now. But if this story seems disjointed or, well, pointless, I apologize. Sometimes writing is a balm to the soul. This is one of those times.

“I aaaaammmm not your stepping stone….” Danny sang, his hips swaying to the music only he could hear. He smiled at Steve’s reflection in the window over the sink as he entered the kitchen. “Not your stepping stone…not your stepping stone….”

“I never thought you were,” Steve said, kissing the back of Danny’s neck and wrapping his arms around Danny’s waist to pull him back tight to his body. “Is that Bruce Springsteen?”

“Nope. The Monkees,” Danny said, unplugging his earphones so the kitchen was filled with the music.

“The Monkees,” Steve repeated like it was an unknown concept. “Not like Monkey-Grace.”

“Nope. ‘60s rock band. Short lived but… you know…funky,” Danny said leaving Steve’s embrace to dance around Steve as the music continued. “Not your stepping stone. Not your stepping stone….”

“This can’t be a trip down memory lane,” Steve said, picking up the dance and swaying his hips in time with Danny’s. There was no space between them, their clothes creating friction that traveled directly to their groins.

“Mom sent me their greatest hits when Davy Jones died,” Danny said, grinding against Steve’s body. “On iTunes.”

“Was he a friend of yours?” Steve asked, clearly distracted by all that was happening between the two of them although they were barely moving at this point.

“Oh right. You have no idea about pop culture. Davy Jones was lead singer of The Monkees. Mom used to listen to them all the time when we were growing up. She thought they were dreamy,” Danny said.

“Did you?”

“Did I what?” Danny asked with a goofy smile up at Steve.

“Think they were dreamy?” Steve asked, dropping a kiss on Danny’s nose and thrusting his hips forward.

“I never thought about it. Now I never think about anyone but you,” Danny said with a wicked gleam in his eye.
“You need to stop looking at me like that. The kids will be home soon,” Steve warned.

Danny grabbed Steve’s arm, checking his watch. “You have 23 minutes to blow me, sailor.”

“I see,” Steve said, undoing Danny’s denim shorts so they fell to the floor. Steve danced around him as he lowered his briefs, releasing Danny’s erection to demand attention. “Sure hope they don’t get here early.”

“God me too. Less talking. More sucking,” Danny directed, watching Steve sink to his knees before him. Steve did as instructed, not using all of his considerable talent to satisfy Danny’s obvious need. He always was something of a tease when he had Danny just where he wanted him.

“11 minutes,” Danny said, his voice strained. His fingers were buried in Steve’s hair, his nails lightly scraping his scalp in the way he knew Steve enjoyed.

Danny’s warning made Steve increase the amount of suction he was using, adding his tongue and just the right amount of teeth.

“Oh God, babe,” Danny groaned. “Goin’ come.”

Steve hummed around his erection, taking it all as Danny released down the back of his throat. Steve was the only thing still holding Danny up as the last of his orgasm rippled through him.

“What about you?” Danny whispered down to Steve. Steve had his face resting on Danny’s belly, caressing his thigh absently.

“I took care of it,” Steve said, slowly getting to his feet, his shorts sporting a wet spot in the front.

“Nice,” Danny laughed, watching as Steve fastened his shorts for him. “Run up to the shower or into the ocean. The kids can’t see you like this.”

Steve smiled at him, his best goofy ‘made you come’ grin on his face. “You smell like sex.”

“Not as much as you do. Go on. Shower or swim,” Danny requested, reaching up to kiss him.

“You need to change clothes,” Steve said, taking Danny’s hand to pull him to the stairs. “So you may as well shower with me.”

Danny gave a put-upon sigh in response but followed Steve into the bathroom and quickly shed his clothes. Steve did the same, stepping under the steaming water.

“Great. The kids just got here,” Danny said as Steve soaped his body.

“You know they won’t come in. Anyway I locked the door.”

“They’re going to know,” Danny said, returning the favor and washing Steve as quickly as possible. Steve shrugged at that. “They’re 15 and 13. I’m pretty sure they know we have sex,” Steve said.

“Them knowing and us providing inconvertible proof are two very different things.”
Danny just ignored him, turning off the shower and drying himself as quickly as he could. Steve did the same so that they were dressed and ready at the same time. Their casual ‘nothing here to see’ expressions did not fool the children for one minute when their fathers entered the kitchen. John raised an eyebrow as he took a bite from his peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

“Eeeewwww,” Emma said, frowning at them.

“Eeeewww what, young lady? We just took a shower,” Danny scolded mildly.

“In the middle of the afternoon? There’s only one reason you ever do that. And it’s not because you got sweaty vacuuming,” Emma said, her hands on her hips as she studied her fathers.

“Maybe we did,” Steve tried, kissing Emma’s head before going to the refrigerator for bottled water, handing them around.

“Right,” Emma said with a doubtful expression. “You two have been married for 17 years. Take a break.”

“A break?” Steve said, pulling Emma into his lap to hug her. She squealed at his embrace, trying but not very hard to get away. “A break from the two of you, maybe.”

“Right,” John scoffed. “Because any time you don’t see us for longer than 6 hours, you are calling us.”

“Or coming over to Rachel’s,” Emma added.

“It’s a wonder you don’t insist on home-schooling us,” John said, laughing at his fathers when they frowned at him.

“Danno thought about it,” Steve said, smiling up at Danny when he frowned at him. “You know you did.”

Danny shrugged, sitting at the table with the rest of his family. “How was school?”

“The usual,” John said, winking at Emma. Steve and Danny had their eyes locked on each other and had entered their own world. “I got expelled.”

“That’s nice,” Danny replied absently.

“I made the football team,” Emma claimed, grinning over at John.

“Good for you,” Steve said, kissing the top of her head.

“I’m going to France for a year. Be an exchange student,” John said before finishing his sandwich.

“Have fun,” Danny said. “Make sure you write.”

That made John and Emma laugh, shaking their heads. “Come swimming with us,” Emma said, sliding off Steve’s lap and tugging at his hand.
“You need to change,” Steve told her, smiling up at her.

“We’ll be right back,” John said. “Try to keep you hands off each other.”

“No promises,” Danny said, watching them run out and upstairs to put on their suits.

“Are you swimming?”

“Sure,” Danny agreed, leaning closer to kiss Steve. “You’ll grill the chicken when we’re all out?”

“You got it,” Steve said, standing up and pulling Danny with him. “I’ll be your stepping stone.”

“You always have been,” Danny teased, racing out the back door and discarding his tee shirt before disappearing into the water. It didn’t take very long for Steve to catch him, not that he tried particularly hard to avoid him. “Will you also be my water wings?”

“Sure,” Steve agreed, holding Danny so his head was out of the water, Danny’s legs wrapped around Steve’s waist.

“We told you to keep at least 5 five between you at all times,” Emma said before diving into the water to swim to where they stood. “Five feet.”

“Next time, Baby Girl, I promise,” Steve said, letting go of Danny in order to pick up Emma.

“Don’t throw me, Daddy. Don’t,” she squealed, Steve ignoring her and tossing her in the air. She had time to close her mouth and eyes before she hit the water. “It’s on now,” she said when she surfaced, swimming directly toward Steve. He laughed and dove under the water, resurfacing 10 feet away.

“You better go, Em, or you’ll never catch him,” John laughed as he floated next to Danny.

“Thanks for the help, Bro,” she said before taking off after her father.

“Any time,” John laughed, raising his head only enough to see Emma swimming with sure strokes after Steve. “You really have 4 kids, don’t you?”

“Don’t remind me,” Danny laughed. “Sometimes I wonder if I married him or took him on to raise.”

“Kind of the same thing,” John said.

“True that,” Danny had to agree, laughing with John and lifting his head at Emma’s squeals. “You break her. You bought her,” he warned Steve.

“She’s tougher than she looks,” Steve called back, absorbing Emma’s flying tackle and barely budging.

“John,” Emma yelled in pleading.

“Nope. Not my fight,” John responded, returning to float on his back, his ears intentionally below the surface.
Danny had to finally call a stop to all the nonsense so Steve could grill the chicken, the kids running up to take quick showers. Steve and Danny rinsed off under the outdoor shower, deciding another real shower was redundant.

“How was school, really?” Danny asked the kids when they were all sitting at the picnic table waiting for the chicken.

John and Emma told him and Steve about their real days, nothing all that interesting happening. They were glad it was Friday so they could spend the weekend with their fathers who thought they would both be home unless the worst happened. They agreed to go to the movies Saturday night, providing Steve remembered the ‘absolutely no talking or complaining about the utter lack of realism’ rule. He promised to try but that was the best he could do. The kids laughed at him and Danny kissed him to make up for it. The kids pretended to hide their eyes but their fathers knew the truth – they loved being witness to the affection between their fathers and wouldn’t have it any other way.
Choice of the People?

Chapter Summary

More slice-of-life. Except an important question is asked of Steve. And he doesn't know what to do. Their ohana weighs in.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Go upstairs and take a nap,” Steve said not for the first time. Danny was laying on the couch in Steve’s office while Steve worked steadily through the reports on his desk.

“What good will that do? We have to leave for the thing in less than an hour,” Danny moaned. Maybe he was whining but he’d never admit to it.

“Thing? What thing?” Steve asked, checking his calendar. There was no ‘thing’ anywhere on it for that evening.

“You know,” Danny said, lifting one hand high enough to wave it around. “The thing.”

“Repeating that over and over makes it no clearer, Danno,” Steve said, looking over at him. His left foot was on the floor, his right arm thrown over his eyes. “Why didn’t you tell Emma she was calling way too late?”

“Our baby girl had her heart broken, Steven. Shattered by that no good devil spawn. And you think I should have hung up on her?” Danny asked, his voice rising in indignation at the mere thoughts of hanging up on their daughter.

“It was 2 a.m. here, Danny. Clearly she inherited your inability to actually tell time.”

“Not her fault, SEAL. It was the first time she had a chance to call. I told her we’d have him killed if she wanted.”

“What’d she say?” Steve asked, reading his email at the same time. Because he’d heard all this before. But apparently Danny had the need to rehash it once more. Like he always did. So Steve mostly tuned him out, like he always did.

“She appreciates the offer. By the time we hung up, she had stopped crying,” Danny said, sighing. “Why can’t they build a Naval Academy at Pearl? Then she wouldn’t be 600 hours away.”

“Only one academy per service branch. It’s the law,” Steve reminded him.

“Law sucks,” Danny said, removing his arm to look over at the door at the knock. He didn’t bother to move as Leon came in at Steve’s invitation.

“Tomorrow’s briefing?” Steve asked, looking up at his top aide.
“Yes sir. If now is a good time.”

“Perfect. Danny’s being grouchy and complaining about ‘the thing’ we have to go to tonight,” Steve said.

“You have nothing on your calendar for tonight,” Leon said, consulting his iPad to double check.


“Oh right. Kono was supposed to attend that charity event. But with her kids so sick, she can’t go and leave Charlie to fend for himself. So we’re going,” Danny told him.

“What event would that be?” Leon asked, glancing over at Danny who had hoisted himself up on one elbow.


“And your security detail is aware of it?” Leon asked.

“Yeah. Kono told them. You aren’t on the podium. We just need to show up,” Danny said.

“What time?” Leon asked, glancing at Steve who looked like he had excused himself from the conversation.

“She said 6:00. It’s at tent city. Barbeque, music, the usual,” Danny said. “Which means Steve can wear blue jeans and flip flops.”

“Slippahs,” Steve corrected automatically.

“Yeah. Whatever. And don’t forget your wallet. It’s a charity auction.”

“The Governor is not being auctioned, is he?” Leon asked with as straight a face as possible.

“I’ll pay someone to take him,” Danny said, laying back down and putting his arm back over his eyes.

“I’d bring more than you,” Steve informed him.

“Only if the price was by the pound,” Danny said, otherwise ignoring him.

“How long will this take?” Steve asked Danny. Danny just waved a hand and didn’t answer.

“According to the lieutenant governor’s schedule, you only need to stay for an hour, sir,” Leon said.

“All right,” Steve agreed. “And tomorrow?”

“You have a meeting with the representatives of Senator Sofia Dupree’s campaign at 9:00,” Leon said.

“About her campaign appearance here this weekend?” Steve asked.

“That’s the information we have, sir. I’ll have all of the security briefings from 5-0 on your desk first
thing in the morning."

“Good,” Steve agreed. “After that?”

“Wait. Does that mean we have to go listen to her speech?” Danny asked.

“She’s probably going to be the next president, Danny. Don’t you want to hear what she has to say?” Steve asked, one eyebrow raised that was lost on Danny.

“Of course she’s going to win. Her opponent is the dumbest kind of dumb-ass,” Danny said. “And we know what she stands for. Does Steve have to be there?” Danny asked Leon directly.

“They have not specifically requested his presence. It is, however, what is done,” Leon reminded them.

“But if he goes to her appearance, he’ll have to appear with that dumb-ass.”

“There is that,” Leon agreed with a resigned smile.

“It’s fine, Leon. I’ll appear with them both if that’s what it comes down to,” Steve assured him. “And I’ll lock Danny in the closet if I have to. So no one will have to listen to him complain.”

“He always comports himself appropriately in public, sir,” Leon reminded him with a smile.

“Thank you,” Danny said with only a thin edge of sarcasm in his voice.

“What else is on the schedule tomorrow?” Steve asked, deciding that was enough of the conversation between Danny and Leon, not that there wasn’t anything but true respect between the two. They just liked to argue which seemed to be Danny’s default with most people.

Leon gave Steve the entire list for the next day, Steve sighing when he was done.

“That all?” Danny asked, sitting up to look over at Steve, laughing openly at him.

“That is all,” Leon said with a nod.

“Thank goodness,” Steve said.

“Do we need to arrange for John to fly to New York for next weekend?” Leon asked, looking from Steve to Danny and back.

“He said he doesn’t need to be at the draft. And he has his astrophysics final that next Monday,” Danny said, glancing at Steve.

“I thought he’d decided to go,” Steve said.

“I asked him last night after you went up to bed. He said he would prefer not to make the trip. But then ESPN will send a camera crew here,” Danny sighed.

“That’s fine. If that’s what he prefers, they can come here rather than his apartment,” Steve said with a nod.
“Are there any new rumors about his selection, sir?” Leon asked.

“ESPN is still saying he’ll be selected first or second, as quarterbacks tend to be,” Steve responded.

“We hope he goes second so the 49ers will take him. Closer to us,” Danny said.

“You just don’t want the Giants to get him with the first selection,” Steve said, making Danny frown at him. “You know it’s true. You’ll have to root for the Jets arch enemies.”

“No. I don’t want him on the east coast. Too far from us,” Danny corrected.

“Uh huh. You keep telling yourself that, Danno,” Steve said with a laugh.

“Are the Redskins no longer a possibility?” Leon asked.

“I heard they are working hard to trade up. But who knows if they’ll get it done,” Danny said, standing up. “Come on, Governor SEAL. We need to change for the thing.”

“You done with me?” Steve asked Leon as they stood.

“Yes sir. Unless you need me to stay, I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Tomorrow,” Steve acknowledged, going out with Danny to go upstairs to the residence. “Only an hour? You’re sure?”

“Yeah,” Steve sighed, stepping into his slippahs. “Well, I’ll only be governor 7 more months. Then I can go night surfing all I want.”

“You’re going back to 5-0. I can’t have you home all day,” Danny warned, frowning at him, his hands on his hips.

“You want me home and you know it,” Steve said, stalking Danny who evaded him around the bed.

“Not. Go back in the Army. Anything,” Danny said, backing toward to door so that he could escape before Steve delayed them. Steve laughed, following him down and out, the car waiting for them at their entrance.

“Hi,” Steve said with a smile when they discovered Chin in the car already.

“What brings you here?” Danny asked, pressing closer to Steve than strictly necessary in the spacious backseat, Chin facing them.

“Night surfing or the lack thereof,” Chin informed Steve sternly.

“I have no intentions of it,” Steve said, elbowing Danny when he opened his mouth to interject.

“All it will take is Kawika asking you to go in the water. Or one of his kids. Not happening, Governor,” Chin warned.
“I already told Danny I have no intentions of it,” Steve assured him. “I’m going to nod and smile and leave.”

“That is what you always tell us,” Danny reminded him.

“You were with me when I changed clothes. Did I put on my trunks under my jeans?” Steve asked him.

“Like you’ve never surfed in your jeans,” Danny said.

“I’m not going to night surf. You two can stop any time,” Steve groused, Chin staring at him like he could read Steve’s thoughts. “Stop.”

Chin glanced over at Danny who shrugged. “When he leaves office, you’ll take him back, right?” Danny requested.

“Not a chance, brah. You’re stuck with him,” Chin said, shaking his head.

“Then take me back,” Danny said.

“Sure. Any time.”

“Wait. You’ll take Danny but not me?” Steve asked, trying to sound angry or wounded or… like he thought there was any chance at all that Danny would return to 5-0. Neither of them had any plans to do much of anything once Steve left office. Danny had finally persuaded him he had more than served his time to the people of Hawaii and the nation and he could stand down.

“He doesn’t blow things up at an alarming rate,” Chin reminded him.

Steve snorted at that, turning to look out his window at the passing scenery. It didn’t take long to arrive at tent city where they were greeted by Kawika and a swarm of excited children, all clamoring to talk to Governor Steve. Steve’s huge smile was genuine and contagious just like it was any time he was surrounded by children, all of whom wanted to tell him exactly how long they had stood on their surfboards and how much longer they would stand up next time.

“Welcome, haole,” Kawika said to Danny, the nickname affectionate rather than angry like it had been when they met so many years earlier. “Chin.”

“Kapu,” Danny replied with a smile, watching with Kawika as the kids drug Steve over to the pit to get something to eat. “This is the biggest one yet.”

“Having the support of the Governor’s office helps,” Kawika said with a nod, looking at all of the tables filled with items available at the silent auction.

“He didn’t do anything, really,” Danny said, going with Kawika and Chin to the first table. There were native arts on display, some rare and some beautifully ordinary. Every table seemed to be filled to overflowing with donations generously provided to Kawika in support of his charity.

“Kono told you she couldn’t come, right brah?” Chin asked Kawika as they stood next to the podium supported by two palm trees. There was a light shining on it but it was not so bright that it disrupted the view of the stars above them.
“Yeah. She called. The kids okay?” Kawika asked.

“Flu. One gets it and it becomes a family affair,” Chin said with a shrug.

“That’s for sure,” Kawika agreed before excusing himself to go answer an inquiry from one of the volunteers.

“Are you coming to the briefing about Senator Dupree’s visit?” Danny asked Chin as they browsed the rest of the tables.

“Not planning on it. I talked to her people. They said we had it all under control. I don’t need to come,” Chin said, pausing by one of the tables to write his name on a bid sheet.

“What are you going to do with a week long cruise around the islands, Chin Ho?” Danny asked him.

“Go on vacation with my wife,” Chin said with the smile of a happily married man.

“When was the last time you had off more than 36 hours?” Danny asked, shaking his head.

“Uhmm… what year is this?” Chin laughed, making Danny smile in return.

“I hear you.” Danny stopped by the next table, looking at the framed autographed picture of Steve with Kawika. “Who would buy this?”

“You’d be surprised,” Chin said, picking up the bid sheet to show Danny. The bidding was up to $125 after starting at $5.

“I’d pay someone $125 to take him off my hands,” Danny claimed as Chin returned the sheet to its place.

“You talk tough. But you are marshmallow inside. We all know it,” Chin reminded him with a smile only Chin could accomplish – happy, devilish, all-knowing.

Danny shrugged, looking at the next table.

“Is Emma okay?” Chin asked Danny as they browsed all of the tables and checked out the bid sheets.

“She is now. I think. I haven’t talked to her since this morning. This morning at 2 a.m. You know how hard it is to reach her,” Danny said with a shrug. “I think John’s going to call her tonight.”

“If John goes to New York for the draft, are you going with him?”

“No. He’s probably staying here anyway. I said if he wanted to go, his professors would understand. And we could swing down to Maryland to see Emma. But he’s worried about his finals. Got to give him credit for that,” Danny said.

“I hear ya,” Chin said with a nod. “Good for him for applying himself when his future’s really made in the NFL.”

“He wants to have a plan in case the worst happens.”
“He always does, much like Steve,” Chin agreed.

“Steve never had a first plan, never mind a second one. He just charged in, guns blazing.”

“‘Cause he knew you’d get him out in one piece,” Chin said, clapping Danny on the shoulder and making Danny laugh.

“Yeah, I’m the back-up. Lord help me,” Danny said, grinning up at Steve as he came over to them. “Hey.”

“Kawika says I can go,” Steve said, smiling at Danny and Chin.

“You sure you’re ready?” Danny asked, looking at all the kids who were temporarily distracted.

“Yeah,” Steve said with a shrug. “Hard to compete with free shaved ice. We’ve been here for more than an hour.”

“Have we?” Danny said, looking at Chin with a frown.

“Sure have. Time flies and all that,” Chin said.

“You bid on anything? For show at least?” Danny asked Steve who was still smiling down at him like they had been apart for days instead of a little more than an hour.

“Yeah. Couple of things. We don’t have to be here to win. They’ll contact us for our payment info,” Steve said, going with Chin and Danny back to where the car was waiting.

“Because you are so hard to find,” Chin laughed, opening the door so Steve and Danny could get in. He followed, the driver starting the car and carefully leaving the park.

“You know it,” Steve agreed, pulling out his cell phone and speed dialing. “Hey ya,” he said when John answered.

“Howzit. What’s up?” John asked, his ever present laugh in his voice.

“Not a whole lot. We just left Kawika’s charity auction. I bid on UH football tickets. Hopefully I won’t win them,” Steve laughed.

“I hope not,” John agreed. “What’d you bid on, Danno?”

“An autographed picture of the governor. You want it if I win?” Danny asked with a laugh.

“God no,” John laughed.

“Thanks,” Steve said in supposed complaint. “Listen, people want to know if you are going to New York or staying here.”

“Come on, Dad. We talked about this,” John said with dread evident in his voice.

“It doesn’t matter to me. But Chin needs to know. And Emma’s wondering if we’re coming or not,” Steve explained.
“You aren’t planning on going,” Danny reminded Steve.

“I might,” Steve said with a shrug.

“Great. Like the draft won’t be a big enough circus, Dad. I really want to stay here. I mean, you don’t mind if the cameras come to the residence, do you?” John asked.

“It’s fine, Bud. Chin can call ESPN tomorrow and talk to them,” Steve assured him.

“Thanks Chin Ho. That’s one more I owe you,” John said.

“You will never repay all your debts to me,” Chin confirmed with a laugh.

“Don’t I know it. Danno, you aren’t going to lose it if I go to the Giants, are you?” John asked.


“Good,” John said.

“Any new rumors?” Chin asked him.

“I try not to look at the rumor sites,” John said. “Coach said Buffalo called for some of the tapes. God I don’t think I could play somewhere that cold.”

“They have to know that, Bud,” Steve said.

“Giants Stadium can get awfully cold,” Danny reminded him. “San Francisco would be a much better choice.”

“Danno,” John said in warning.

“All right. If the Governor of the Great State of Hawaii would just get an NFL football team, you could stay here,” Danny said.

“Right. Because all the other teams want to have to fly to Hawaii,” John laughed.

“Okay. So there’s a flaw in my plan,” Danny conceded.

“And Emma can’t be stationed at Pearl. You remember that, right?” John said.

“Yes, I remember. And Alicia has to be in New York to dance with the Ballet Company,” Danny sighed.

“At least Grace and Zacchary are still here,” John reminded him. “And I’ll be here in the off-season.”

“Yeah, I know,” Danny said. “The birds are supposed to fly out of the nest.”

“Easier said than done, brah,” Chin said in sympathy.

“Yep,” Danny agreed. “We’re home, Bud. Are you coming over for dinner tomorrow?”
“I was thinking of spending the weekend with you. It’s easier to study there than here,” John said.

“That’s fine,” Steve agreed. “We don’t have much on our schedules for the weekend. You’ll be here around 3 tomorrow?”

“Closer to 2. My last class tomorrow was cancelled so we can work on our research projects. Good thing my assignment is to interview the Governor, huh?” John laughed.

“That’s quite a coincidence,” Chin suggested, getting out of the car as Steve and Danny said goodbye to John.

“See you tomorrow?” Steve asked as they prepared to enter the residence.

“Naturally,” Chin agreed.


“Love to. Thanks,” Chin said with a nod before getting in his car and driving off.

~o0o~

“Governor,” Leon said when he was in Steve’s office at precisely 9 a.m. the next morning.

“Senator Dupree’s representatives have arrived?” Steve asked, standing behind his desk. He walked to the front at Leon’s nod. It wasn’t long before the Senator’s staff members were in the office with Steve.

“Governor, thank you for seeing us,” the woman said. She was in her mid-40’s, short and plump. Her graying hair was stylishly cut, her coral colored suit well-tailored and a good complement to her fair complexion. “I’m Helen Branson. This is Gabriel Austin.”

Steve shook Gabriel’s hand as well, looking down at him. He was a slight man, one Steve thought was a little shorter than Danny. His dark eyes looked serious, his short cropped hair fully black. Steve thought he was probably still in his 20’s, his suit well-cut and impeccably tailored. He had dispensed with what Steve felt sure was his customary tie in deference to the Hawaiian weather.

“Mr. Austin,” Steve said in acknowledgement.

“Please, Governor, call me Gabriel,” he replied, his smile making him look even younger.

Steve nodded, motioning to the chairs in front of his desk in invitation. “Have a seat.”

They complied automatically, waiting as Steve went back behind his desk. “I take you are here to discuss security for Senator Dupree’s visit.”

“That’s not entirely true,” Helen said in a low voice as though trying to avoid being overheard. “We are actually here to discuss a matter of more importance. And we are wondering if Detective Williams-McGarrett would be available to join us.” She held Steve’s gaze with a steady one of her own, seeing the surprise in his expression.
“Danny’s upstairs,” Steve said, unable to think of anything else to say.

“Is he available to meet with us?” Helen asked patiently.

Rather than try to answer for him, Steve took out his cell phone and called Danny. “Hey. Can you come down to my office?”

“Sure. Everything okay?” Danny asked. Steve could hear him already moving, heading down the hallway for the staircase.

“I think. Senator Dupree’s representatives would like to talk to us both,” Steve explained, his own puzzlement in his voice.


“Okay,” Steve echoed, hanging up. “He’ll be here very shortly.” Helen and Gabriel nodded, Helen looking faintly pleased with the news. “Should we move to the sitting area?” Steve suggested. There was enough room to accommodate them all with the two wingback chairs and the loveseat. And it would be more comfortable. “Can I offer you a cup of coffee? Tea?” he asked as they moved over to the sitting area.

“I would love another cup of coffee,” Helen agreed warmly.


“Nothing for me, thank you, Governor.”

Steve nodded, going to the door to his office to ask Leon to bring three cups of coffee. As he was returning, the nearly invisible door next to Steve’s desk opened to admit Danny who was wearing jeans and a tee shirt that had been forced on him by Kamekona. At least this one wasn’t big enough to be used as a tent.

“Hi,” Danny said as he entered, squinting at Helen and Gabriel in a way that meant he was considering their presence.

“Danny,” Steve said, nodding at Gabriel then Helen. “Gabriel Austin and Helen Branson from Senator Dupree’s staff.”

“Mr. Austin. Ms. Branson,” Danny said, shaking their hands in turn.

“Gabriel,” he corrected with a smile.

“And I’m Helen,” she told him warmly.

“That coffee for me?” Danny asked Steve with a smile up at him when Leon came in carrying a tray with three cups and a small ceramic pot. There was also a gleaming sugar bowl and creamer ready for the coffee.

“One of the cups is. One is for Helen,” Steve told him in a tone that made Helen laugh.

“Good to know,” Danny said, waiting as Leon poured the coffee, accepting the second cup before sitting on the loveseat with Steve who had his own cup.
“Thank you, Leon,” Steve said, Leon nodding and leaving, carefully closing the door behind him.

“Governor, Detective,” Helen said in a calming tone. “We are here at Senator Dupree’s behest. But we aren’t here to discuss the security arrangements for her visit. We are here to determine your interest in being her running mate.”

There was a shocked silence from Steve as Danny continued to calmly drink his coffee. Steve stared first at Helen and then at Danny, his eyes narrowed. He’d get the truth from Danny later.

“Well,” Steve said, stalling. “I have to say this is a surprise.”

“Yes,” Helen acknowledged. “We aren’t ready to make our short list public. In fact, we’d like to ask that you not discuss this conversation with anyone.”

“It’s not a decision I can make on my own,” Steve told her. “Our ohana would need to vote.”

“Your ohana?” Gabriel repeated, looking from Steve to Danny and back. “Your children?”

“Certainly Emma and John would have a vote. As would Grace, Alicia, and Zacchary. It would change their lives as much as ours,” Steve said.


“True,” Steve said.

“That’s a lot of people to weigh in,” Helen said lightly.

“It impacts them,” Steve said firmly.

“Indeed,” Helen said. “Of course you would need to discuss it with your family.”

“When would you need a decision?” Danny asked as though they were discussing a new paint color for the living room, not whether or not Steve should run for Vice-President of the United States.

“Senator Dupree is going to be in New York next weekend. She was hoping to speak to you while you are there,” Gabriel said.

“New York,” Steve said, shaking his head. “John has decided not to go to New York for the draft.”

“I see,” Helen said. “We understood differently.”

“We are arranging ESPN to come here,” Danny added.

“I see,” Helen repeated. “Certainly Senator Dupree wants to meet with you both in person before any final decision is made.”

“So if Steve says yes, she might still say no?” Danny asked.

“It’s much like a marriage, isn’t it, Detective?” Helen asked good-naturedly. “Even if two people look compatible on paper, they may still not be suited for the long term.”
“There is that,” Danny agreed. “If we don’t go to New York, what then?”

“Her final campaign stop in Hawaii is Monday. At Hickam Air Force Base. Would you come to meet with her there?” Gabriel asked, consulting his iPad.

“What time?” Danny asked.

“She speaks at noon. Her flight is scheduled to leave at 1:30. We can delay it for an hour,” Helen said, checking silently with Gabriel who nodded in agreement.

“Hold on,” Danny said, going to Steve’s desk for his iPad and checking the calendar. “We can do 1:30.”

Steve leaned into Danny’s solid shoulder to look at the appointments on Monday, seeing only a meeting with Chin Ho in the middle of the afternoon. “All right.”

“Very good,” Helen agreed. “You must have many questions.”

“I’m sure I do. I don’t know what they are,” Steve admitted, looking at Danny in hopes he’d know what to ask.

“You have to know there are people who won’t vote for her because Steve and I are…. married,” Danny said, seeing no point in dancing around the topic. The elephant in the room had to be acknowledged. It wasn’t leaving.

“Yes,” Helen agreed. “However, from the polling we’ve done, there are more voters in favor of same-sex marriages then against them. Those who are opposed have enough other reasons not to support Senator Dupree that your inclusion on the ticket will not lose a significant number of voters.”

“Your record as Governor along with your military service will gain voters,” Gabriel said.

“I see,” Steve said. “In all honesty, I’m not entirely sure I know what the Vice President does.”

“No one knows,” Helen said with a laugh. “If you accept, we’ll arrange a meeting between you and Vice-President Kenstone. We’ll ask that her husband be there so that you can speak with him, Detective.”

Danny nodded, sipping his coffee nonchalantly which Steve frankly resented. How dare he be so completely calm about this? He needed to be verging on a freak-out, not the Steve would ever freak out. SEALs, even retired ones, most certainly did not ever freak out.

There was some additional discussion of logistics for the meeting at the Air Force base, much of which Steve did not hear. He had far too many thoughts whirling aimlessly around for him to make sense of them. Not until he could talk them over with Danny who always corralled them.

Steve stood when he heard that the conversation had come to a conclusion, automatically walking the visitors to the door with Danny’s assurances that they would see them on Monday. Once the door was closed, he looked down at Danny who was openly laughing at him.

“Come back here, Super SEAL,” Danny said, one palm against Steve’s cheek, grounding him and helping him find his center.
“I’m here,” Steve said, holding Danny’s hand in place. “You knew?” he asked, a mildly accusatory tone in his voice.

“I had no idea until you asked me to come down. She’s the presumptive candidate and has not announced a running mate. They didn’t need me to discuss security plans,” Danny said, pulling Stave with him to the loveseat and sitting down with him. “What do you think?”

“I don’t know,” Steve said honestly. “I was looking forward to being out of office.”

“Yeah,” Danny had to agree.

“I respect her openness in choosing me. But are the people ready for a gay Vice President?”

Danny shrugged at that. “It’s been a long time since anyone has used that against us.”

“They still bring it up. When I do something the religious right doesn’t like.”

“Good thing Hawaii is filled with open-minded folks, huh?” Danny said.

“Call a family meeting?” Steve said. He wondered why it sounded so much like a question. Of course they’d need an ohana council. This was not a decision they could make on their own.

“Not if you don’t want to run, Babe. It’s a moot point. You have to decide. Then we get to vote,” Danny said.

Steve shook his head, staring out the window that overlooked the swaying palm trees. Just beyond the parking lot was the ocean not that he could actually see it from his office. But he knew it was there. That would no longer be true if they moved to Washington.

“It’s not forever,” Danny said, once more reading his thoughts in that scary way of his. “Eight years tops. Then we come back.”

“You promised me that when I was forced to run for Governor,” Steve reminded him.

“Oh well. Tell her no if that’s what you want. And we never speak of it again.”

“Because I won’t be mentioned on any of the news shows. The children will never find out I could have been Vice President.”

“Well, there is that,” Danny agreed with a smile. “But you still have to decide.”

“Call an ohana council for tonight.”

“What if they vote yes? Are you going to do it?” Danny asked.

“I don’t know,” Steve admitted. “Do you think they’ll say yes?”

“Zacchary won’t,” Danny said.

“Yeah. What will we do?”

“He’ll move to Washington with us. He practically lives here. I’m pretty sure I heard him in his room
before I came down. Well, his office. The one with the bed in it,” Danny laughed.

“His bed and 16 computers.”

“Not quite that many. Have you seen him?” Danny asked.

“No. I assumed he was here. I thought he’d be at breakfast,” Steve said with a shrug.

“Me too,” Danny said, standing up to look down at Steve.

“Where are you going?” Steve asked.

“Back upstairs. You have to meet with the speaker of the house at 10:00. I have no interest in
anything he has to say.”

“Me neither,” Steve agreed, standing up next to Danny. “You’ll call the council?”

“Yes. For 5:00. Hopefully Emma and Alicia will be able to phone in. I think Alicia’s performance
ends at 10:00.”

“I’ll call Emma’s commandant. Ask that she be allowed to call,” Steve said to Danny’s nods.

“Good. John and Zach will be here. Grace is home. Amou isn’t but she can tell him.”

“Right,” Steve agreed. “Will you call Kono or should I?”

“I’ll call her. You have enough going on. I’ll tell her she has to phone in. We don’t need her flu
germs.”

“True,” Steve said. “And Chin’s coming for dinner with Malia. Ask them to come at 5 instead of 6.”

“Roger that,” Danny said, sneaking out the family door when Leon opened the main door to
announce the arrival of the Speaker.

Danny went back upstairs, considering the conversation they had just had. He could see pluses and
minuses to Steve being on the Presidential ticket, and if hard pressed to commit, he thought he might
vote “no.” But if Steve decided he wanted to run and their ohana said yes, he would go along with
that decision. Steve, and by extension, Danny had been in the public eye for so long that Steve
running for Vice President would almost be ‘another day at the office.’

As Danny passed the room that Zacchary had taken over for his combination office/bedroom,
Danny knocked and entered.

“Hey Zach,” he said.

“Danno,” Zach responded. He was sitting at his desk, staring at the three computer screens glowing
in front of him. Danny had no idea what he was doing and figured that even if Zach tried explaining
it, Danny still wouldn’t know.

“You busy?” Danny asked, looking at the screens as they danced with tiny flashes of light.

“No,” Zach said, still studying the screens.
“Is this for school?”

“No,” Zach said, typing furiously on his keyboard and making one of the screens change patterns.

“Can I talk to you for a second then?”

“Okay,” Zach said, not looking over at Danny.

“Steve was just asked if he would be interested in running for vice president,” Danny told Zach, Zach’s fingers still flying over the keyboard.

“Vice president of what?”

“The United States. Senator Dupree of Iowa wants Steve to run with her,” Danny explained.

“Run for vice president of the United States,” Zacchary said slowly, finally looking up at Danny.

“Yes. Steve hasn’t decided if he’ll say yes or no. We’re having an ohana council tonight at 5,” Danny told him.

“Move to Washington?”

“If Senator Dupree wins,” Danny confirmed. “What do you think of the idea of Steve running?”

Zach returned his focus the computers, his fingers over his keyboard unmoving. “Does he want to?”

“He doesn’t know. That’s one of the reasons for the council,” Danny said.

Zach looked up at Danny, his eyes wide but steady, his breathing even. “I could come?”

“Of course. You know you can live with us wherever we are,” Danny assured him.

“I’m not technically yours.”

“When has that ever mattered, Zach? You’re over 18. You can live wherever you choose. You don’t think Rachel and Stan would try to prevent you from coming, do you?” Danny asked in a soothing voice.

“No. Steve said I can come?”

“Of course. That’s a given,” Danny told him. “But if you want to vote no tonight, that’s your decision.”

“Washington would be an advantageous location,” Zach finally said.

“All right. The council is at 5:00,” Danny said, going toward the door to Zach’s bedroom. “Did you sleep last night?”

Zach turned slowly to focus on Danny before shaking his head.

“Could you try sleeping for a little while now? I’m going to have lunch with Steve at 1:00. I’ll wake
“No,” Zach decided, returning to his computer screens. “I’ll sleep tonight.”

“All right. Do you want me to get you something to eat? You missed breakfast.”

“I’ll eat lunch with you,” Zach said absently. Danny knew he had lost Zach’s attention and left him to his work.

When Danny got to his small office down the hall from their bedroom, he opened his email, reading the ones he had from friends and family. There were two dozen from organizations and businesses asking for his endorsement or appearance or… he wasn’t sure but his staff would deal with those emails.

The email he composed was addressed to the Ohana, and he marked it important:

*Red alert: Top priority ohana council tonight. 5:00 p.m. HST. This is not a drill. Repeat. This is not a drill.*

*Regrets only. But you better have a really good reason.*

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Steve and Danny lay in their bed after the council had concluded, the discussion lasting until 10:30 when Danny finally decided that was enough talk. The tally of the votes had been in favor of Steve joining the Senator on the ballot, three members voting no, one abstaining.

“Were you the abstention?” Steve asked Danny as they continued to stare up at the ceiling. Their bodies were pressed close to each other, as always. Any distance between them felt like too much.

“First, all votes are secret, Steven. And second, no, I did not abstain.”

“Who was it?”

“Why?” Danny asked, turning his head to look at the beautiful profile of his goofball husband.

“Curious. Nosy. Thought it was you.”

“It wasn’t. I think it was Grace but I’m not entirely sure. Doesn’t matter,” Danny said, rolling on his side to place his hand in the center of Steve’s impressively firm stomach. Even after all these years, Steve managed to retain his impressive physique which sometimes totally pissed off Danny. Not that Danny had let himself go. But compared to Steve…well, almost no one could live up to Steve’s standards. “Are you going to do it?”

Steve sighed and closed his eyes, his eyelashes fanned out over his tanned cheeks. “Will you be mad if I say no?”

“Of course not. I understand. Either way, I’m on your side, Babe.”

“Yeah,” Steve agreed.

“They have to know about Matt, right?” Danny said softly, reluctant even to bring it up. But outside
of Steve and Danny being married, Danny’s brother being one of the FBI’s most wanted, even after all these years, could possibly derail Senator Dupree’s candidacy, providing Steve agreed.

“They must,” Steve said. “No way did they talk to us without doing the entire background check.”

“Yeah,” Danny sighed. “Could they access your classified files?”

“I doubt it,” Steve said. “I’m thinking I don’t want to run. It’s way too complicated.”

“It isn’t that complicated after all the years you’ve been governor,” Danny pointed out.

“I…. we will be on the national stage, Danno. Mud will be slung. Names will be called. Pejoratives will be hurled.”

“Yeah,” Danny had to agree. “Then tell them no. When you’re out of office, you can stay home with me and… hmmm….”

Steve laughed, turning enough to face Danny, rubbing their noses. “Maybe I’ll take up needlepoint.”


“Oh. How about… cake decorating?” Steve suggested with a smile.

“All butter cream frosting?”

“Sure,” Steve agreed. “I’ll call them tomorrow and tell them ‘no thank you.’”

“You sure, Babe? You don’t want to talk to Senator Dupree first?”

“No. I’ve spent enough time in public. Being home with you, baking and vacuuming, sounds perfect.”

“All right,” Danny agreed, kissing him. “You can still change your mind.”

Chapter End Notes

Yeah, it did end kind of abruptly. But this chapter has been languishing on my computer for a couple of months. And I needed to get it off. Out. Whatever. I'll probably write a second part when my muses get done with the other stories I'm working on. (Not any of them are BPBB as of right now. But you know I'll be back to this universe.)

Thanks, as always, for reading!!!
“Hey Bud, Zach,” Steve said as he entered the residence sitting room. He had finally been able to leave his office, dinner long past for the family. He kept thinking being Governor would get easier but the years had proved him wrong so far. Once he had the cufflinks out of his shirt, he rolled the right sleeve up, shaking his head once. How he longed for the days of polos and cargo pants.

He smiled to see John on the couch, his feet on the coffee table, a bowl of popcorn in his lap. Zach was on his computer, glancing up when Steve spoke before returning his entire focus to his laptop. “What are you watching?” Steve asked as he sat next to John and reached over for a handful of popcorn.

“The Daily Show,” John said, nodding his head toward the TV.

“It’s not that late, is it?” Steve asked, pulling up his unrolled shirt sleeve to check his watch. It said the time was 8:45, not anywhere near time for Jon Stewart.

“It’s from last night,” John said, reaching over for his Pepsi. He surrendered it to Steve when he held out his hand.

“Oh,” Steve said, grabbing more popcorn. “Where’s Danno?”

“I don’t know,” John admitted. “Zach?”

“I believe that he stated he was discussing strategy with Kono. But I am not certain,” Zach said.

“Oh,” John responded. “Isn’t it Friday?”

“As far as I know. But that’s never stopped them from plotting against me,” Steve said, looking at
the TV where an overweight man was coming to greet Jon, his hand stretched out, his broad smile patently fake. “Who’s this dude?”

“You don’t know him?” John asked.

“No. Am I supposed to?” Steve asked, looking over at John in curiosity.

“His name’s Kirby Greenly. He was a SEAL,” John explained.

“I don’t know all the SEALs, Bud,” Steve reminded him.

“I guess you wouldn’t. He wrote a book,” John said, pointing to the TV where Jon Stewart was holding it up so the camera could focus on it. “About his time as a SEAL.”

“He isn’t allowed to do that,” Steve said, shaking his head. He frowned at the title of the book – *The Only Easy Day*.

“There is not a statute of limitations?” Zach asked.

“No,” Steve said, focusing on the TV with an intense glare. “What’s he saying?”

“He was one of the SEALs that killed Bin Laden,” John said, waving at the TV. “He’s been all over the internet.”

Steve didn’t respond to that except for standing up and looking from John to Zach and back. “I… need to go make a call.”

“Oh. Okay,” John said, frowning at his father’s abrupt departure. “What do you think that was about?”

“He was disconcerted that a brother in arms violated the sacred military code of silence,” Zach said.

“Yeah but it seemed like more than that,” John said thoughtfully. “You don’t think Steve was one of the SEALs in Pakistan, do you?”

Zach looked over at John before concentrating fully on his laptop, his fingers flying.

“Are you going to be able to find out?” John asked, moving to the end of the couch closer to Zach.

“I’ll know in a very few minutes,” Zach said.

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“Danny,” Steve called as soon as he was in the hallway. “Danny!”

“Yes, Super SEAL. What can I do for you?” Danny asked as he emerged from his tiny office.

“Co’mere,” Steve said, dragging him bodily into their bedroom and turning on their TV to find the tape of *The Daily Show*.

“You know I’m not that big a fan of Jon Stewart,” Danny said, his hands on his hips. “He’s not nearly as funny as he thinks.”
“I don’t care,” Steve said, fast forwarding to the segment he’d seen with Zach and John. “This guy. This piece of shit. Is claiming to be a SEAL. And he has the audacity to say he was part of the raid that took out Bin Laden.”

“But he wasn’t,” Danny said, watching the tape.

“No he was not,” Steve said between clinched teeth.

“And you’re sure about that?” Danny asked, glancing over at Steve.

“Of course I’m sure,” Steve said.

“Let me guess,” Danny said softly. “You were there.”

“I can’t tell you that. I can tell you that this man was not.”

“Okay,” Danny said soothingly. “Okay. He’s been making the rounds. Surely someone in authority has heard his claims.”

“Apparently not. If they had, they’d have stopped him,” Steve said.

“What do you want to do? Can you call the Pentagon and report him?”

“It’s too late to call tonight,” Steve said.

“Surely the United States Armed Services are like 7-11. Open around the clock.”

“I can’t call the Secretary of the Navy tonight,” Steve clarified. “I can’t call her until tomorrow morning.”

“All right,” Danny said with a nod, one hand on Steve’s chest. “Is there anyone you can call? A former CO? Not Joe White, obviously.”

“No. I’ll call the Secretary tomorrow,” Steve said.

“Is there a time-limit to keeping secrets?” Danny asked.

“You know there’s not.”

“So if he had been in Pakistan, he could be, what, court-martialed for talking about it?”

“Yeah,” Steve agreed. “I could be if I talked about it. Put away for the rest of my life in Leavenworth.”

“Even now,” Danny said. “After all these years that you have been retired.”

“Even now,” Steve said. “John and Zach asked me the same thing.”

“They saw him?” Danny asked.

“Yeah. I didn’t say I knew he hadn’t been there. But that I had to make a phone call.”
“Okay,” Danny said, going to their bedroom door to pull it open.

“Where are you going?”

“To talk to Zach. You think they aren’t trying to figure out why the guy on TV pissed you off?”

“Oh crap. I’m sure you’re right. Okay. Tell them to stop,” Steve said.

“I will,” Danny agreed, slipping out of the bedroom to go to the sitting room. “Hi guys,” he said all casual when he arrived. John looked up at him, guilt as clear on his face as the salt from the popcorn.

“Hey Danno,” John finally said.

“Zach. What are you doing?” Danny asked, approaching the loveseat.


“It better not be SEAL research,” Danny warned. “Or SEAL games.”

“He told you?” John asked.

“Yes. And if you two are trying to find out who was in Pakistan, your father could end up in Leavenworth. I don’t know about you two, but I have no interest in moving to Kansas.”

“Kansas,” Zach said.

“Military prison, Zach. That’s where Steve could end up if anyone tries to access his classified service records. Stop what you’re doing and back out. Don’t try to cover your tracks. That will only send up more red flags,” Danny said.

Zach nodded once, looking down at his computer. “I didn’t find it yet.”

“Good. Stop looking,” Danny instructed.

Zach nodded again.

“If the military contacts you about unauthorized access, let me know right away,” Danny said.

“Is Steve going to be in trouble?” Zach asked, looking up at Danny.

“I don’t think so. Did you do anything that was illegal?”

“Not yet,” Zach said.

“All right. Don’t and it will be fine. If you hear from the military, don’t respond. Tell us,” Danny emphasized.

“I will tell you,” Zach agreed.

“Thanks.”
“I need to tell Steve I am sorry,” Zach said.

“I’ll tell him. Not to worry,” Danny said, kissing Zach and then John on the head. “Please stay out of trouble at least until tomorrow morning.”

“We’ll do our best,” John said as Danny left the sitting room.

“Is Steve going to yell at me?” Zach asked John.

“No. If he was, Danno would have. You’re in the clear,” John assured him.

“Okay,” Zach said. “I found enough to know the man on TV was not a SEAL.”

“But not if Steve was in Pakistan.”

Zach shook his head, closing the top of his computer. “I was close.”

“Doesn’t matter now,” John said, switching off the TV.

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“Well?” Steve said, stopping in his pacing when Danny returned.

“Zach didn’t do anything illegal,” Danny assured him, a calming hand on Steve’s chest. “I told him that if the military contacted him, tell us.”

“Good. Good,” Steve said, bouncing on his toes.

“So you were really there?” Danny whispered, pulling Steve to sit on the bed with him.

“I can neither confirm nor deny,” Steve replied, looking at Danny like he didn’t know what he’d do without him. It was a feeling Danny could readily identify with.

“If you had been there, hypothetically, would you have been scared?”

“I supposed hypothetically there would have been a certain amount of anxiety felt by those who carried out the raid,” Steve said with a casual wave of his hand. As though he hadn’t been involved in one of the most famous military actions in modern history.

“The secrecy is to protect the ones who did it, right?” Danny asked, scooting just a little closer to Steve’s warm body.

“Yeah. Chances are pretty good that those who did it are no longer on any international hit lists. No jihad. But when you choose to become a SEAL, you don’t do it for glory or fame.”

“I do know that,” Danny assured him, kissing the side of his head and leaning harder into him.

“Do you know where your daughter is?” Steve asked, shifting to wrap both arms around Danny. Danny melted into the hug, relaxing against the hard muscles holding him up.

“No idea. Do you?” Danny asked into the front of Steve’s dress shirt.
“Really?” Steve asked, his muscles bunching in anticipation of springing up. “You don’t know where Emma is?”

“Relax, Babe. She’s at a sleepover with Dancy. They’re going horseback riding tomorrow. I told you that this morning,” Danny said, rubbing the top of his head on the underside of Steve’s chin.

“That’s right,” Steve said instantly relaxing. “You did tell me. Henry took her?”

“It’s his day off. Kuoena drove her over. She asked me if she should spend the night but I told her it was fine. Dancy’s parents aren’t going to let anything happen to any of them.”

“That’s true,” Steve said, taking a deep breath. He ignored it when his stomach decided to rumble under Danny.

“You haven’t eaten, have you?” Danny asked, untangling himself to sit up enough to look Steve in the eye.

“No,” Steve admitted.

“All right. Let’s go see if the boys are still in the sitting room. Then we’ll break into Lolhol’s kitchen and I’ll make you all omelets.”

“Good idea,” Steve said, unbuttoning his shirt while Danny watched, licking his lips. “Don’t look at me like that.”

“I’ve looked at you like that since your railroaded me into 5-0. Why would I stop now?”

“Because I’m hungry. And you promised me an omelet,” Steve said, pulling on a faded tee shirt and trading his dress pants for jeans.

“Oh. ‘Don’t get distracted’ is what you really meant,” Danny said, stalking across the room toward him.

“Stop,” Steve said, backing away until he found the knob for their bedroom door. “Omelets. Then you can stalk me.”

“Done,” Danny agreed, leaving their bedroom to collect the boys and make omelets for his three men who were always hungry.

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“This is Governor Steve McGarrett for Secretary Allen,” Steve said the next morning. He was in his office, Danny in one of the chairs facing Steve’s desk drinking from his coffee.

Steve looked more relaxed than Danny had expected but it wasn’t the first time since he’d been Governor that he’d called the Secretary of the Navy. The military had to be in close cooperation with the Governor’s office because of the numerous installations around the islands. Danny secretly thought the entire military complex had breathed a collective sigh of relief when Steve was elected. Who better to coordinate with than one of their own.

“Yes, I’ll hold,” Steve agreed, frowning in exaggerated displeasure to make Danny laugh. Steve
sipped his coffee as he waited, licking his lips just to watch Danny’s eyes widen that much more. “Secretary Allen.”

“Good afternoon, Governor,” the Secretary said. Her tone was even and light which Steve took as a good sign. Had she been agitated, Steve would have been able to read it in her voice. “Although I guess it’s still morning there.”

“It is,” Steve agreed.

“I believe I can guess why you are calling, Steve,” the Secretary said. “It’s about Kirby Greenly.”

“Yes ma’am,” Steve confirmed. “You know what he’s doing then.”

“We’ve tried to put a stop to his lies. But his lawyer keeps repeating that the First Amendment gives him freedom to write what he wants,” Secretary Allen said, her exasperation coming through.

“I see,” Steve said, considering her words. “Surely the framers of the constitution never intended to protect those who claim the honor of others for themselves.”

“It’s a thin line,” the Secretary admitted. “I’ve consulted with the White House. And with former President Obama. We concur that we need to get the truth out. A counter-offensive, if you will.”

“That makes sense,” Steve said in relief. It was being worked on. That was the important thing.

“I’m glad you think so, Steve,” Secretary Allen said. “We want you to be the face of the offensive.”

“Excuse me, ma’am?” Steve said, frowning at the phone.

“We want you to follow in his tracks and tell everyone he was *not* a SEAL. It’s well known that you are a member of the brotherhood. When it comes down to his word against yours, who do you think more people will believe?”

“The strategy is sound,” Steve agreed. “But I don’t have the time to devote to it.”

“It won’t take a tremendous amount of your time,” she assured him. “You’ll fly to New York and film your appearances in three days. There are six shows filmed there.”

“Madame Secretary,” Steve said, trying *not* to sound like Emma had when she didn’t want to study for her geography final right before school was out a week and a half ago.

“Mr. Governor,” Secretary Allen countered. “You want him stopped. And you can do it.”

“There must be others who can take him on. What about Senator Ligibel? Everyone knows he was a SEAL.”

“He’s not nearly as well known as you are. You are the most logical one to do this,” the Secretary said. “We’ve arranged for you to fly to New York on Wednesday. My aide will send you all the flight information. You’re booked in the Waldorf Astoria. Bring Danny and the kids.”

“Yes ma’am,” Steve agreed reluctantly. “Should I bring my dress blues?”

“That won’t be necessary. You’re a civilian now. You should dress like one.”
“Apparently I’m not actually one. Since you can still order me around,” Steve said. He was glad that she laughed at his words.

“Once a SEAL always a SEAL, Steve. We’ll brief you when you get to New York.”

“Yes ma’am,” Steve agreed, making sure he had all the information before hanging up. He frowned at Danny who was openly laughing at him. “Stop. Just stop.”

Danny shook his head at that, smiling broadly. “Time in New York. We can go to a Yankees game. The kids will be thrilled.”

“Then they can go on TV. I never would have called if I’d known this was going to be the result,” Steve said.

“If you hadn’t called her, she would have called you,” Danny pointed out. “Let’s go tell the kids we’re going to New York.”

“You could be less excited about it,” Steve said with a frown.

“I’ll do my best to cheer down,” Danny laughed.

“What if Zach wants to go?”

“Then they’ll buy him a ticket too,” Danny assured him, leading Steve out of his office and up to the residence to announce the unexpected trip to the mainland with a bonus outing to a professional baseball game.
When the plane finally landed at JFK Airport, Danny made sure all the kids were present and accounted for. They had flown on the Governor’s jet, the Navy agreeing to reimburse the state of Hawaii for the expense of flying the family to New York. Flying commercially would have cost almost as much and Danny couldn’t imagine trying to deal with the airlines with the four kids plus Henry.

Emma had asked and gotten permission to invite Dancy. Her fathers understood that she needed another “girl” to hang out with. Since Alicia had mandatory rehearsals, she couldn’t come with them. Dancy was excited about visiting New York City for the first time, hoping she and Emma would be allowed to visit some of the stores about which they had heard so much. Danny had tried to discourage that talk but he and Steve secretly agreed it was inevitable that they would be going to Macy’s if not Saks.

Steve had told Zach that he should come and when John had encouraged him to agree, he had. John knew it would fall to him to watch out for Zach. He didn’t mind. As long as Zach’s concerns were addressed and he felt like he had a voice, he would manage being away from home. Rachel had expressed some reservations on John’s behalf, but John wanted Zach to come so that settled it.

The family was accompanied by Henry Emery who was practically a member of their extended family. They didn’t think they really needed security but Chin Ho had been insistent. He wanted to go with them but was too involved in an on-going investigation to make the trip.

Danny would have liked to bring Grace and Amou but they had politely declined, busy as they were moving into their new house. Danny and Steve both respected their choice.

“Come on, baby girls,” Danny said when Emma and Dancy lagged behind going through the terminal.

“We aren’t going to get lost, Daddy,” Emma said.
“I hope not. Governor SEAL is on a mission and won’t slow down for stragglers,” Danny warned.

“What happened to no man left behind?” Emma asked, speeding up enough to catch Steve’s hand. He smiled down at her, wrapping his long fingers around her smaller ones.

“You aren’t a man,” he teased, looking over his shoulder at Zach who was focused on making sure Dancy didn’t get lost. That was a surprise to Steve but he wasn’t going to comment on it and make him self-conscious. John was telling Danny something Steve couldn’t hear which made Steve suspicious. Henry brought up the rear, directing the porter who was handling the overflowing luggage cart.

“The car rental place is right over there,” Danny said, pointing to the row of counters. The one they needed had a line 10 people deep waiting.

“All right,” Steve sighed. “I’ll flip you for it.”

“I’ll go, sirs,” Henry said.

“Thanks, Henry. But you can’t pay for it. I’ll go,” Danny said, herding everyone over to some uncomfortable plastic chairs. “It will help me get back in a New York state of mind.”

“Don’t yell at anybody,” John warned, standing in front of Steve who was sitting between Emma and Zach, Dancy on Emma’s other side. “Can I have some money, please?”

“For what?” Steve asked as he reached into his pocket.

“Sodas,” John said, looking around. “Oh. Or not.”

“They’re on the next floor up, Bud,” Steve said.

“Never mind,” John agreed in disappointment.

“I’ll go up with,” Henry said, standing up with him. “You’ll need help bringing them all down.”

“That’s true,” John agreed. “Zach, do you want water or Coke?” John waited but when Zach didn’t raise his head from his computer, he tried again. “Zach?”

“Yeah?” Zach said, looking up at John.

“Water or Coke?” John asked patiently.

“Water,” Zach said before returning to his computer.

“Okay. Hopefully we won’t be long,” John said, detouring by the line where Danny was waiting. “Daddy, do you want Coke or coffee?”

“Coffee please,” Danny said before looking behind him at the woman who was smiling openly at the two of them.

“He’s your son?” she asked brightly.

“Yes ma’am, he is,” Danny said, returning her smile and looking up at John. “All five feet ten
“Such a handsome young man,” the woman said.

“We think so,” Danny agreed, smiling at John’s blush. “That’s our daughter. The one with blonde hair,” he said, pointing to Emma who was busy talking to Dancy, their heads close together. They made quite a contrast, with Dancy’s ebony hair and darker complexion. “And her best friend. That is our sometimes son, Zach.”

“Quite a family,” the woman said. “And the attractive man with them?” Steve was listening to Emma and Dancy tell him where they wanted to go and what they just had to see. Zach was researching each place as they named it, bookmarking it for their later perusal.

“He’s my father,” John said proudly.

“Yes, I can see that now. Why does he look familiar?” she asked, a look of concentration on her face. “We’ve never met you, have we?”

“I don’t believe we’ve had the pleasure,” Danny said, extending his hand. “I’m Danny Williams-McGarrett. This is my son John. That’s my husband Steve Williams-McGarrett with Emma, Dancy, and Zach.”


“I’m afraid so,” Danny laughed, telling John to go ahead up for drinks. “I’m surprised you recognize him.”

“He’s hard to miss,” Betty Ann said. “My goodness. You shouldn’t be standing in line.”

Danny shrugged, turning to glance toward the counter. “We need an SUV big enough for all of us. We have one reserved.”

“Don’t you have special privileges or something?” she asked, almost affronted that the governor of Hawaii had to wait like anyone else.

“No ma’am,” Danny laughed. “We aren’t here on official state business. More like a semi-vacation.”

“I see,” Betty Ann said. “What all do you have planned, if it’s not too forward of me to ask?”

“Not at all,” Danny said. “The girls are begging to go to Fifth Avenue so I’m sure we’ll end up there. We were going to go to a Yankees game. But since they aren’t home, we may go to the Mets game instead.”

“Hard to root for the enemy,” she said with a knowing laugh.

“Yeah but the kids need to see a professional baseball game,” he said. “We’re going to try to go the Metropolitan Museum of Art if we have time.”

“A must,” she agreed.

“What brings you to New York? Before I became First Gentleman of Hawaii I was a detective and I
have the feeling you aren’t from around here.”

“Oh gracious no,” Betty Ann agreed with a warm laugh. “I’m from Georgia. My daughter’s gettin’ married in October. I’m here to help her start makin’ all the plans.”

“Congratulations,” Danny said. “Hawaii is a lovely honeymoon location,” he laughed.

“They already have reservations,” she assured him with a sunny smile. “The brochures are all so picture perfect.”

“Much like the state,” Danny said. “Have you ever visited?”

“I haven’t. I asked her if I could come but she didn’t seem too keen on the idea,” she laughed.

“Kids these days,” Danny said, shaking his head and laughing.

“Your son and daughter are beautiful,” she said warmly, glancing over at Emma again.

“We’re very lucky,” he agreed. They were three people away from the counter, the line moving much more swiftly than he had expected. Lively conversation would do that. He smiled at John when he got back, he and Henry equally loaded down with drinks and snacks. “How much did Steve give you?”

“Not enough. Henry paid the rest,” John said, giving Danny his large coffee and a real New York bagel.

“I’m sorry,” Danny said to Henry who shook his head.

“You know it’s not a problem,” Henry said affably before going with John to distribute the rest of the refreshments.

“Is he a family member?” Betty Ann asked with a laugh.

“He’s our security detail. And aide de camp, if you will. Steve’s assistant wanted to come but none of us are too fond of him, frankly. And Henry doesn’t have any problems being security and personal assistant.”

“Your husband doesn’t like his own assistant?” Betty Ann asked.

“It’s complicated,” Danny admitted. “We inherited him. Makes it harder to get rid of him. And he is good at his job. He just thinks he should be governor instead of Steve.”

“That’s unfortunate,” Betty Ann said.

“Yeah. But he has gotten better about not looking down at Steve like he has no real business being Governor,” Danny said.

“He must think very highly of himself.”

“That’s Sebastian,” Danny agreed. “The kids threatened to boycott if we brought him. Given the choice, the kids will always win.”
“As it should be.”

“We think so,” Danny said, approaching the counter when the man in front of him concluded his business.

“Can I help you?” the man behind the counter asked, not bothering to look up from his intent focus on his computer. He was barely older than a teen-ager, his manners as lacking as his ability to grow the facial hair that Danny thought ought to be banned.

“I have an SUV reserved,” Danny said, trying to withhold his impatience. Steve was right. He had gone native. But that didn’t mean the obvious rudeness of the rental employee didn’t make him want to reach over and punch him.

“Name?” the guy asked, still not looking up.

“Williams-McGarrett,” Danny said, reaching into his Zen Place that Chin had finally helped him achieve. It always came in handy dealing with the demands required of him being married to the Governor.

“No reservation for McGarrett. You sure you have the right counter?” he asked, uninterested in the answer.


“Spell that?”

“Williams? You don’t know how to spell Williams?” Danny asked, repeating calming words in his head. The rudeness of this guy was beyond belief.

“All right,” he conceded, typing into the overly fascinating computer. “Here. Williams-McGarrett. Number 36. Paperwork’s all complete. Car’s outside and to the right. You could have gone directly there.”

“How would I have known that?” Danny asked, his tone hard enough to finally attract the man’s attention.

“You should have…uhm…email?”

“I see,” Danny said, staring at him.

“I apologize for the inconvenience,” he said, having enough sense to understand Danny’s frustration.


“I will. You do as well,” she said with a return smile.

Danny went over to his family, all of them hopping up at his approach.

“How are we going?” “Is it all taken care of?” “Where is it?” “Are we going?” “You need help, Henry?” “We’re finally going to see the city?”

Danny answered as well as he could, leading the group out the indicated doors and to slot #36. It
was a dark blue Escalade, Danny whistling at the luxury. “Our tax dollars at work, huh?”

“It had to be big enough for all of us,” Steve said, helping Henry put the luggage in the back. “We aren’t moving here permanently. Why do we have so many bags?”

“Don’t go there, babe,” Danny said, situating the kids. “Everybody buckled up?” They agreed they were, ready for their adventure in the big city to begin.

“All set back here,” Henry announced, climbing into the seat behind Steve. Danny was not letting Steve drive through the city, afraid for the pedestrians who might not survive the encounter.

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They managed to get up to the 12th floor with little drama, the helpful bellboy pushing the cart of luggage. Steve opened the door to the suite that had been reserved for them, the sitting area flanked by two bedrooms. The girls would be in one, Steve and Danny in the other. John and Zach had the room directly across the hall, Henry in the adjoining room. Danny would have preferred them all be within easy access but that wasn’t possible. Henry having the connecting room with the boys helped to ease his mind.

“All right,” Steve said when the luggage was sorted, the girls had stopped squealing, and the guys had stoically announced their room ‘fine’ which translated to ‘oh my goodness I had no idea,’ he got them all in one place. “I have to go meet with Commander Swenson. I’ll be done in a couple of hours and we’ll have dinner.”

“I’m hungry,” Emma announced. She was sitting on one of the loveseats, Zach next to her, nodding.

“I’m not surprised,” Steve said, checking his watch. It wasn’t quite lunchtime in Hawaii but all of their internal clocks were off. They wouldn’t be in New York long enough to completely adjust to the 6 hour difference. The best they could do was to eat when they were hungry and try to sleep in New York time as much as possible. “Danny can take you for some authentic New York pizza. If you hate it, you will never say so.” The kids laughed at that, Danny frowning at him.

“Then what?” John asked. He was standing by the window looking down at all the hustle and bustle of the city.

“We’re less than a mile and a half from Macy’s at Herald Square,” Danny said, making the girls squeal again. “I take that as a yes.”

“Please, can we, Daddy, please?” Emma said, bouncing in the loveseat. Her face was alight with excitement, Dancy nearly has animated at the idea.

“If you really want to,” Danny said in teasing. “John? Zach?”

“I don’t mind,” John said with a smile. There wasn’t much, in truth, he wouldn’t do for his baby sister and by extension her friend.

“Zach,” Danny asked. He didn’t endow the word with any discernable emotion, letting the decision be entirely Zacchary’s.

“Would it be acceptable if I were to remain here?” Zach asked, looking at Danny then Steve.
“If Henry doesn’t mind,” Danny said.

“I’ll be glad to stay,” Henry agreed pleasantly. “I have some paperwork I need to finish. This will give me the perfect opportunity to do it.”

“All right,” Steve said with a nod. He reached in the pocket of his slacks and gave the children some money, Danny frowning briefly. “No point in going to one of the world’s most famous stores if you don’t have any money.”

“Thank you, Steve. But Mom gave me some,” Dancy said politely, trying to return it to him.

“Keep it, love. You might find something you just have to have,” Steve said with a wink, making Dancy’s face the most adorable shade of pink.

“Thank you,” she said, sitting by Emma and whispering furiously with her about where they’d go first.

“Thank God for cell phones. Otherwise I’d have no hope of keeping track of you all,” Danny said, walking Steve to the door. “We’ll see you back here in two hours.”

“Roger that,” Steve agreed, leaning down to kiss him, the children making kissing noises behind them. “Stop that.”

They just laughed, their happy sounds following him down the hallway and into the elevator. He would have given anything to have stayed with them but that wasn’t the main purpose of their trip to New York. He sighed to himself, wondering if his life was ever going to be simple. Or at least simpler. Simple was not a description that could have ever been used to adequately define his life. Well. No point perseverating over it. He needed to put aside his druthers and focus on the meeting he was going to, the one where the Navy stiffs were going to try and tell him how to comport himself in public. On TV. Whatever. Like he hadn’t spent the last two decades of his life doing just that. Really? He could talk around any subject. True, there had been a time he was more a ‘damn the torpedoes and full steam ahead’ kind of guy. That was before he’d had to learn to deal the bureaucracy that kept Five-0 funding flowing. And then he’d become the one who funded it. He’d learned the fine art of bullshit. Partly from necessity. Partly from Danny.

He left the elevator when it arrived on the second floor, going down the plush hallway to room 221 where the meeting was to take place. The door stood open to the small conference room furnished with an oblong table and 6 comfortable chairs. Two of those chairs were already occupied by Commander Swenson and an older woman Steve did not yet know.

“Ah, Commander,” Commander Swenson said, standing up as Steve entered. “Or I suppose Governor is more appropriate,” Swenson said, holding out his hand, a smile of greeting on his face. “Either one. Or Steve,” he responded with a smile, shaking the Commander’s hand. He was several years older than Steve, military bearing in full force. His short cropped hair was completely grey, his uniform impeccable. He had a kind face, much less stern than Steve would have expected. He always thought if he’d stayed in the Navy, he’d have looked the part of the hard-ass Danny still accused of him being. Although mostly those accusation flew when they were fighting.

“Very good. This is my assistant Lieutenant Mildred Brown,” Swenson said. Steve shook Lt Brown’s hand wondering if she always sized up those with whom they met. Or if he was an exception to the rule. She was not quite as old as Swenson, her brown hair in a tight French braid at
the back of her head. She didn’t smile at Steve, her gaze even and piercing. He didn’t think her usual job was to be anyone’s assistant. He was fairly certain she was in some form of intelligence gathering and wondered briefly if she knew Catherine. Not that it was in any way relevant to their discussion.

“Nice to meet you, Governor,” Lt Brown said, her voice pleasant and with no trace of an accent discernable. Definitely intelligence then.

“You as well,” Steve replied.

“Would you like something to drink? Or to eat?” Commander Swenson offered, waving at the refreshments on the side table.

“Some coffee,” Steve agreed, pouring himself a cup before accepting the invitation to sit at the table. They already had cups at their places so he didn’t feel any obligation to fill their cups for them.

The far end of the conference room was all windows that overlooked Park Avenue and the leafy green of Central Park beyond. The near end was made up of a screen, the mechanisms for projecting onto it secured to the ceiling. The other two walls were graced with mass produced art of generic flowers in overly ornate frames. Not the worst conference room Steve had ever met in nor was it the nicest.

Lt. Brown closed the door before sitting by Commander Swenson on the opposite side of the table from Steve. She had an iPad at her place which she turned on to study.

“First off, thank you for agreeing to make the rounds of publicity to debunk Mr. Greenly’s false claims,” Swenson said pleasantly. If there was a certain amount of barely hidden anger in his smooth tone, Steve could certainly understand it.

“I read most of his book,” Steve said. “How anyone could think it was true is beyond me.”

“Those less versed in the tactics of the military might find it plausible,” Swenson said. “It is, of course, a pile of manure.”

“That’s an understatement,” Steve said. “It’s not even particularly well written manure.”

“True,” Swenson said with a chuckle. “But we all love heroes. And the release of his book has given him that moniker – one he does not deserve.”

“Did he really think he’d get away with it? Lying so blatantly?” Steve had to ask.

“We hypothesize that he didn’t expect us to call him on it. Because SEAL activities are classified, he thought that would serve his purpose,” Swenson said.

Steve shook his head at that. “Have you met him? Is he really so stupid?”

“No. And apparently he is,” Swenson said. “We have been surprised by the number of phone calls and emails the Navy has received, questioning his authenticity.”

“That’s reassuring,” Steve said. “I guess the American people aren’t so easily fooled.”

“Not from the amount of contact we’ve received. Because it’s summer and in a traditionally slow news cycle, his book is getting more traction than it normally would. They also timed the release to
coincide with the anniversary of the raid.”

“But he was booked on all those shows,” Steve said. “How did that happen when it was only just published? Did they read it before they asked him to appear?”

“He has a canny publicity machine working practically around the clock. The only way for us to slow it down is to man a counteroffensive.”

“Which is where I come in,” Steve said.

“Yes. Former President Obama has made some noise about Greenly being less than truthful. That has helped a little. You following in Greenly’s footsteps will make a much broader impact.”

“All right,” Steve said. “How many appearances will I be making?”

“Tomorrow you will tape Jon Stewart’s Daily Show, The Rebecca Fields Show, and appear on the CBS evening news. That one will be pre-taped as well, at their studios. Friday you’ll be live on the Good Morning America Show and tape an appearance on the Chatter With Cathy Show. And Sunday, we’re trying to arrange for you to be on Sunday Morning Round-up with Kirby Greenly there as well.”

“Will his publicist agree to that?” Steve asked. Steve was certain he could chew the man up and spit him out without batting an eyelash. Surely this Greenly knew that too.

“If you drop well placed hints that you are anxious to discuss his service in the SEALs, compare notes as it were, we think he’ll agree to try and bolster his fabricated history.”

“He can’t win,” Steve said.

“No. But you can’t admit you were in on the raid. He’ll use his supposed experience to prove he was there. There is a chance former President Obama may be available to appear with you on the Good Morning America Show. But as his daughter is due to have her baby any minute, his first priority is to remain with his family.”

“I can understand that,” Steve agreed. What they were suggesting he do made strategic sense. But he still wasn’t sure how he felt about this entire thing. Couldn’t Barack Obama just deal with it? The former President knew as well as Steve that Kirby Greenly wasn’t there. He hadn’t been at the top secret lunch the President had hosted for Steve and the other SEALs who had succeeded in taking out Bin Laden.

“We have tapes of all of his appearances,” Lt Brown said. “It might be beneficial if you were to watch them.”

“How many shows has he appeared on?” Steve asked.

“Only three so far,” Lt Brown said. “We think he was scheduled for two more but when doubts began to surface, those appearances may have been terminated.”

“If doubts are already setting in, is my participation really necessary?” Steve asked. Maybe he could still get out of appearing on national TV. That’d be a huge win. But then they’d have to reimburse Hawaii personally for the cost of the travel. That would not be a win.
“….completely,” Commander Swenson was saying.

“I apologize, sir. I missed what you just said,” Steve admitted, covering his momentary embarrassment by sipping from his coffee. He didn’t usually let his mind wander when he was in a meeting. Oh well. No harm no foul he supposed.

“Your appearances will help debunk his claims completely,” the Commander repeated with an understanding smile.

“I see,” Steve said, trying very hard not to sigh. “Perhaps I should watch his appearances. Knowledge is power, after all.”

“Certainly,” Brown said, using the remote at her place to lower the lights and turn on the overhead projector. With the click of a few more buttons, the screen was illuminated with the logo of The Daily Show, the clip playing the same one that had started Steve down this road.

The Daily Show was followed by two equally ridiculous appearances, Greenly’s story already starting to fray by the time he reached the end of the third interview. This one was on Kevin Overman’s show. Anyone who had ever heard of Kevin Overman or seen a few minutes of his program knew his interviews never included softball questions. He thrived on controversy, creating it if he couldn’t dig it up. His questions to Greenly had been pointed, tough, and thorough. In the eight minutes Greenly spent with Overman, he contradicted himself and his book at least three times Steve was sure of. It was unbelievable to Steve that Greenly’s publicists had been stupid enough to book him on that program. Steve said as much to Swenson and Brown.

“He thought once he convinced Overman, the rest would be a cake walk,” Swenson said. “We didn’t even bother calling Overman to tell him our version. He got Greenly to damage his own reputation.”

“Please tell me I don’t have to visit with Kevin Overman,” Steve requested. “He’s not a fan of mine. Although why he’s decided to focus on Hawaiian politics is beyond me.”

“He was sure Obama wasn’t born in Hawaii. When your predecessor released the long-form birth certificate, it put a stop to his campaign,” Swenson told him.

“Oh. Right. Sam Denning did tell me how much Overman despises him. And now me,” Steve said with a laugh.

“Not all gifts are to be cherished,” Lt Brown said, surprising Steve and making him laugh again.

“You are right about that,” Steve agreed.

“Have you ever met Overman?” Commander Swenson asked Steve.

“No I haven’t. All of his attacks are from a distance. He probably thinks he’s banned from coming to Hawaii,” Steve said.

“Is he?” Brown asked with a light laugh.

“No. But if he ever comes, he’d better be on his best behavior. Or he’ll be arrested for sure,” Steve said with a smile. It was a smile of someone who held all the cards and didn’t care who knew it.
“Without a doubt,” Swenson agreed. “Are you confident in what you are going to say during your appearances?”

“Yes sir. I’ve learned not to answer questions that I’m not asked. And when I do answer a question, answer only that question.”

“Excellent advice,” Swenson said. “And if you are asked how you are so certain he was not in Pakistan?”

“The Navy has informed me that he wasn’t there.”

“Do you have first hand information to verify their story?” Swenson asked, taking the role of an interviewer to see how Steve would handle himself.

“There is no Kirby Greenly who ever served in the Navy. This is public record which anyone can access. And no Kirby Greenly was ever a SEAL. While those records are not public, I’ve seen them and he is not on the rolls,” Steve said with an unmistakable authority and air of conviction.

“You’ve seen them in your position as Governor?” Swenson asked.

“Yes. And as a former SEAL. My security clearance remains high enough that I can say without a doubt that Kirby Greenly was never a SEAL.”

Swenson nodded, certain they had chosen the correct spokesman to counter the impostor’s claims.

“Very good.”

“Thank you, sir. I don’t like to think of myself as a politician but, well, the truth is that now I am,” Steve said.

“And a very good one,” Lt. Brown said, making Steve give her a crooked smile.

“Thank you, ma’am. I think.”

“I meant it in the best way possible,” she assured him with a genuine, warm smile.

“I know your husband is a huge Yankees fan,” the Commander said, accepting an envelope from Brown. “But since they were inconsiderate enough to be out of town, we thought the Mets would make an acceptable substitute.” He handed the envelope to Steve who looked inside to find 7 tickets to Saturday’s game.

“This isn’t necessary, sir,” Steve said, trying to return them.

“Please,” Swenson said, refusing to take them back. “We called their front office. They were thrilled that you wanted to come. Those tickets are directly behind home plate. Since your children haven’t been to a professional game, the Mets wanted them to have the best view possible.”

“Thank you,” Steve said, looking at the tickets. “This is…very generous of you.”

“Not at all. They were happy to provide them. At no charge. And Jon Stewart will be thrilled that you are going to see the Mets. I wouldn’t mention that Danny is really a Yankees fan,” Swenson said with a laugh.
“I wouldn’t dream of it, sir,” Steve agreed. He had to laugh when Brown reached under the table for a box which contained seven replica Mets jerseys. “These are great.”

“Even if Danny won’t wear one, maybe the rest of your family will,” Brown said with a smile.

“He probably will. Since the kids and I will be wearing them. He didn’t bring a Yankees jersey. And unless he’s buying one at Macy’s, I think we’re safe,” Steve said.

“Your children wanted to go to Macy’s?” Brown asked conversationally. Steve wasn’t sure it was a casual question but what possibly motivation would she have for asking if not out of simple curiosity?

“My daughter and her best friend did,” Steve agreed. “My elder son went with them. Our younger son didn’t.”

“I understood you only had one son,” Swenson said.

“Biologically, John is our only son. Zach is what Danny calls our sometimes-son. It’s complicated,” Steve admitted.


“Is there anything else you need from us, Governor?” Commander Swenson asked pleasantly.

“I don’t believe so. I feel like I have all of the information that I need,” Steve said.

“Very good. Lt Brown has volunteered to be your driver. I know you are capable of navigating Manhattan but having someone else drive can be beneficial.”

“I appreciate it,” Steve told them both.

“I’ll pick you up tomorrow morning at 0900. You will tape the appearance on The Rebecca Fields show at 1000. From there, we will go to the CBS studios for you to tape the Good Morning America segment at noon. The taping of The Daily Show is at 1400,” Lt Brown told him, handing him a sheet with the times printed out. “I’ll also email these to you.”

“Send them to Danny and my assistant Henry Emery as well, please,” Steve requested.

“Certainly,” Lt Brown agreed. “You’ll need to bring two changes of clothes. It would look better if you weren’t wearing the same shirt and jacket for each appearance.”

“All right,” Steve said, seeing that note at the bottom of the itinerary.

“What does your family have planned for tomorrow while we have you tied up with our dog and pony show?” Swenson asked with warm-hearted sympathy.

“I’m not entirely sure, sir,” Steve admitted. “I think they may go to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Or we at least want them to.”

“One of the must-sees,” Swenson agreed. “If you need reservations or tickets to any shows, you only
need let Mildred know. She’s first-rate at scoring the hardest to find tickets.”

“That’s good to know, sir,” Steve said with a nod. “I believe when we leave here, we may fly down to DC. The kids have never been and we’re so close, it only makes sense for us to go.”

“Absolutely,” Swenson said. “An excellent plan.”

“If the state of Hawaii cooperates,” Steve said, standing when Swenson and Brown did. “I’ll see you tomorrow at 0900.”

“I’ll meet you in the lobby,” Brown confirmed.

“Thank you,” Steve said, shaking hands and leaving the conference room. Once he was in the hallway and Lt Brown had closed the door behind him, he shifted the box and took out his phone. He had six missed calls; two from Chin Ho, one from Kono, one from Sebastian, one from Grace, and one from Danny. There were three new voice mails; one from Chin, Kono, and Sebastian.

Emma had texted him: I am never leaving macy’s. you’ll explain to zach, right? ;-) He laughed at her message, calling Danny on his way up in the elevator. “Are you having fun?”

“More than I can possibly express,” Danny said, sounding put-upon to the worst extent possible.

“How much money have you had to spend?” Steve asked.

“Surprisingly not much. I bought John a shirt and Dancy a pair of shoes,” Danny said.

“Nothing for Emma?” Steve asked, surprised by that.

“Not yet. She and Dancy are trying to decide which backpacks are the most rad.”

“Rad, huh?” Steve laughed.

“Yeah. John is…somewhere. I’m not really sure. Swim trunks maybe.”

“I see,” Steve said.

“You’re done with your meeting?” Danny asked.

“I am. I have three appearances tomorrow, two on Friday and possibly one on Sunday.”

“None on Saturday?” Danny asked to make sure.

“Nope. But I do have seven tickets to the Mets game, if you know anyone who might like to go,” Steve said. He could hear Danny laughing on the other end of the phone.

“I can’t think of anyone off hand. Should I ask your son or your daughter?”

“Sure. Will you go and not razz the Mets?”

“I’ll consider it,” Danny said, laughing.

“Hey Daddy,” Emma’s excited voice said from Danny’s phone which Danny was apparently no
“Hey baby girl. Are you having a good time?” Steve asked.

“The best. This store is the best. Oh. My. God. Can you just come get us tomorrow? We’re going to spend the night,” she said, all bright excitement.

Steve had to laugh at her. “I don’t think that’s a good idea, baby. How am I going to explain to Chin Ho Kelly that you were arrested in New York city?”

“Oh,” she said. “Okay. I don’t want to disappoint Uncle Chin. Wait up, Dancy.” And with that, Danny had his phone back.

“She’s never going to sleep tonight,” Steve predicted.

“She’ll wind down eventually,” Danny said.

“I’ll come meet you there,” Steve decided, staying in the corridor until he finished their conversation.

“All right. They have a restaurant where we can eat. Emma will be thrilled,” Danny laughed.

“I’ll see if Zach wants to come. If not, he and Henry can order room service.”

“All right,” Danny repeated. “Call me when you get here so we can find you.”

“Roger that,” Steve agreed, opening the door to enter the suite. Zach wasn’t in the sitting room but Henry was at the desk, writing with one of his fountain pens. ‘Computers have their place,’ he always said. ‘But I like my fountain pens.’

“Hi Henry,” Steve said as he entered, putting the box down on the dresser.

“Governor,” Henry said with a smile. “Is the Navy bribing you?”

“The Mets are,” Steve laughed. He reached into the box for a large jersey, handing it to Henry. “There’s one for each of us.”

“Oh my,” Henry said. “Will Danny wear his?”

“I doubt it,” Steve said with a shrug, smiling over at Zach as he emerged from the bathroom. “Hi.”

“Steve,” Zach said with what sounded like a sigh.

“Everything okay?” Steve asked evenly. He studied Zach and decided he was mostly tired.

“Yeah,” Zach said, shrugging. “When are the kids coming home?”

“They – well, mostly Emma – want to stay a little longer. I’m going to meet them at Macy’s to eat dinner. Do you want to come?”

“To Macy’s?” Zach asked.

“For dinner,” Steve said.
“They sell food?” Zach asked, a familiar line between his eyebrows.

“They have a restaurant,” Steve replied.

“Oh. That would be interesting,” Zach decided.

“If you want to stay here, I will as well,” Henry said after listening to what was and what was not said.

“It would be interesting to go to Macy’s,” Zach said.

“All right,” Henry said. “Then I’ll come to Macy’s as well.”

“Excellent,” Steve said. “Are we ready to go? Are those shoes okay to walk a mile and a half?”

“They are good for walking,” Zach said, looking down at his tennis shoes.

“Henry?”

“I’m good,” Henry agreed, rolling down his sleeves to button his cuffs.

“What are these shirts?” Zach asked, looking into the box.

“Mets jerseys. Courtesy of the Mets. They gave us tickets for Saturday’s game,” Steve explained.

“Oh,” Zach said with a nod. “Will Danny go?”

“Yes,” Steve laughed. “He said he’d try not to disparage the Mets.”

“He may have a hard time remaining silent,” Zach said, making Steve and Henry laugh.

“You are right about that,” Steve agreed. “I need to return several phone calls. Do you want to go ahead and start toward Macy’s? I’ll catch up in a few minutes.”

“Okay,” Zach agreed, looking at Henry who nodded. “We will see you there.”

“Absolutely. Henry, you have the directions?”

“I do, sir,” Henry agreed, taking out his phone. “Danny left them with me.”

“I shouldn’t be long,” Steve said as Henry and Zach left. Once the door was closed, he called Danny back. “Hey.”

“What’s wrong?” Danny asked.

“I… nothing, I think. Henry and Zach have already started toward you. I have to make a few calls. Zach seems tired so please watch him.”

“I will. We’ll get a taxi home if we have to,” Danny assured him.

“It may take two,” Steve laughed. “I shouldn’t be long. If the kids are hungry, take them to the
restaurant and I’ll meet you there.”

“That’s fine,” Danny said. “Chin Ho called me. They arrested a suspect in the Tomlinson case.”

“That is good news,” Steve said. “He was on the top of my list to call.”

“Make your calls so you can come,” Danny said, a smile in his voice.

“I won’t be long,” Steve promised.

“Right,” Danny said, hanging up.

Twenty five minutes later Steve had finished all of the phone calls and changed into a pair of jeans and a blue polo shirt. With that, he left for Macy’s. It was a nice day, not too hot with a blue sky. Not Hawaii blue but still pretty, in a huge-city kind of way.

“I’m in the front lobby, I guess,” Steve said when he had called Danny. “I didn’t know department stories had lobbies.”

“Most don’t,” Danny laughed. “We’re on the fourth floor. Toward the back. Emma and Dancy are trying to decide which bathing suits they want.”

“Zach okay?” Steve asked quietly as he made his way to the elevator in the corner of the store.

“Fine,” Danny said.

“All right. I’ll be there in a minute,” Steve said, hanging up. He emerged on the fourth floor directly into prom dresses. All the brightly colored fabrics and sparkles momentarily discombobulated him until he blinked and cleared his vision.

“May I help you?” a woman asked, appearing from between the racks of brightly colored dresses. The expression on her face implied she wasn’t strictly talking about assisting him with shopping. She had more personal ideas on how she could help him.

“Thank you, no,” Steve said. “I’m meeting my husband and children here.” He was equally pleased and annoyed by the disappointment that announcement was met with.

“I see,” she said. “Well, if there is anything I can do, don’t hesitate to ask.”

“Of course,” Steve agreed with a curt nod, making his way through the dresses. He could feel her eyes on him until he rounded the corner into the swimwear. He heard Danny before he saw him, telling Emma that under no circumstances whatsoever would he purchase her that bathing suit when his handkerchief had three times the amount of fabric.

“You don’t even need a new bathing suit,” Danny was saying as Steve walked up to them.

“I only have four,” Emma replied, still holding the blue and white scraps of cloth strung from a hanger.

“No,” Steve said, shaking his head. Emma frowned at him but put it back on the rack.

“One word? It takes one word from you and she believes you? We’ve been arguing for the better
part of half a day and you just sashay up and tell her no? What is that?”

Steve could see Emma smiling at her father’s rant, so very typical of him. She started whispering to Dancy and they both were giggling as they walked away. “She does it to you on purpose,” Steve told him when Danny paused to take a breath.

Danny glared up at Steve, fists on his hips. “I blame you.”

“I’m not surprised,” Steve said with a shrug. “Where are the guys?”

“Henry took them to…” Danny waved vaguely to his right as though that explained everything.

“To?” Steve prompted.

“This one?” Emma asked, holding a one piece that was stripped like a zebra, if zebras came in red and silver.

“Do you want to try it on?” Danny asked her.

“No. It’s my size,” Emma said, studying it.

“Where are your brothers?” Steve asked her, accepting the bathing suit when she handed it to him. Because he was apparently now her porter.

“Henry went with them to electronics. There’s a new game…thing Zach wanted to look at,” Emma said, more of her focus on the bathing suits than her fathers.

“One of the salesladies tried to pick me up,” Steve said to Danny as Emma went over to look at the rack of swimsuits Dancy was examining.

“Did you tell her yes?” Danny asked, watching the girls.

“I have a date later tonight,” Steve said.

“Good. It’s about time you made some new friends,” Danny said.

“Uh huh. Because I don’t have enough friends already.”

“You have no friends except me. Everyone else just puts up with you,” Danny told him.

“I see,” Steve said, watching Emma take out another tiny bikini. “No.” She put it back without glancing over at him. “Henry likes me.”

“You pay him to be your friend,” Danny said.

“You think the state pays him to be my friend,” Steve corrected.

“Good thing for you,” Danny said, turning to smile up at him. “You need some new polos.”

“No I don’t. I have plenty,” Steve said, looking down at the one he was wearing.

“The Governor should not wear shirts that have holes in them,” Danny said, poking Steve’s flat belly
where there was a tiny hole in his shirt.

Steve shrugged, accepting another swimsuit from Emma. “This is just like the first one.”

“That one is Dancy’s,” Emma explained as though it was the most obvious thing in the world and seriously why couldn’t her fathers just understand that? “And you do need new polo shirts. We’re tired of seeing the same ones every single day.”

“Fine,” Steve said with a sigh. “We’ll go get some.”

“Good,” Emma said, turning her back to Steve and leaning up against him.

“Comfy?” Steve asked with a laugh.

“Uh huh.”

Dancy came up to them shortly afterwards, smiling secretly at Emma.

“Do you want any more?” Danny asked, looking at the two suits Steve was holding.

“No thank you,” Dancy said politely.

“You’ll just complain,” Emma said to Danny with a laugh. “Let’s go find the boys and eat.”

“Good idea,” Danny agreed, taking out his phone. “Hey Bud. Where are you?”

“Uhm…sixth floor. Toward the elevator,” John said.

“Okay. The girls are hungry. You ready to eat?” Danny asked him. He could hear John talking to Zach and Henry before talking again to Danny.

“We’re ready. We’ll meet you on the top floor,” John said.

“All right,” Danny agreed. He relayed the information to the others, telling them to go ahead while he paid for the suits.

“Hurry up,” Steve said, kissing him on the mouth.

“Roger that,” Danny said, turning to go to one of the registers as Steve and the girls went toward the elevator.
Is Yesterday Part 2

Chapter Summary

Continued adventures in New York City!

Chapter Notes

Okay, let me explain! This is part 2 of the second part of "The Only Easy Day..." I didn't actually intend to write a sequel to "The Only Easy Day...." but, well, obviously, I have. I thought "Is Yesterday" would be a quick chapter about the family's adventure in New York City. "HA!" said my muses. They decided that the NYC adventure needs to be the approximate length of Moby Dick. I mean, really???

Be that as it may, "Is Yesterday" is still not finished. This is part 2 which I fervently hope will be 2 of 3. Ordinarily I would wait until I had finished this chapter before posting it. But I am participating in the H50Land Comm on Dreamwidth and that Big Bang is due in one week. I don't feel right using this story as part of it because I technically started it outside that challenge. So I need to stop writing this chapter in order to work on those big bang entries. Once I'm done with those stories, I'll focus on finishing this chapter.

Well. Does that make sense? And I'm sorry. Really.

“I know it’s only 4 in the afternoon at home,” Danny said to Emma not for the first time. “But in New York, it’s 10 o’clock. And the only way for us to hope to adjust to New York time is to sleep like we’re here.”

“We are here,” Steve said, glancing up from the newspaper he was reading. John had laughed when he bought a paper copy of the New York Times but he said it was for reasons of nostalgia, not that he would expect John to understand.

“Thank you so much, Governor SEAL. And you are not staying up until 4 a.m. New York time,” Danny warned him.

Steve mostly ignored him, turning the page of his paper. “The Mets are in first place.”

“It’s still early. They’ll crash and burn like always,” Danny said. “Stop distracting me. Tell your daughter to go to bed.”

“Go to bed,” Steve said from behind the sports section.

“But Daddy,” Emma said, lowering the paper to look at him. He looked over the edge of his reading glasses, his eyes wide as he waited. “I’m not sleepy. The boys aren’t going to bed yet.”
“You need to sleep according to New York time, baby,” Steve said. “In this rare instance, Danny is right.”

“Thanks,” Danny said with a huff.

“Get in bed. Put on one of your movies. If you don’t fall asleep, at least you’ll rest,” Steve said.

“That is an excellent compromise,” Danny said. “Because if you stay up all night, you won’t be able to go to the museum tomorrow. You’ll be too tired.”

“He’s right,” Steve agreed.

“All right,” Emma finally conceded, all long faced and unhappy. “I’m not going to sleep.”

“That’s fine,” Danny said, herding her into her room where Dancy was already in bed with the covers pulled up under her chin. “Get in bed and I’ll put in your movie.”

“Okay,” Emma sighed, getting into the empty bed. “What do you want to watch?”

“Princess Bride,” Dancy chirped.

“That’s a huge surprise,” Danny said, putting it on. “We’re right on the other side of the door if you need us,” he said before kissing them on the head and leaving their room, the door remaining open a crack. “Where are the boys?”

“Across the hall,” Steve said, looking up at Danny where he was standing in front of Steve. “Do you need to check on them?”

“No,” Danny said, looking over at the door that led to the hallway.

Steve laughed and stood. “Come on.” Danny followed him immediately, knocking on the door of the room that was assigned to the boys. It was opened part way by Henry who was wearing a faded tee shirt and soft sleep pants.

“Bed check?” Henry said, unchaining the door to let them in.

“Something like that,” Steve agreed, watching Danny cross over to the couch where John and Zach were sitting, the TV playing the Yankees game.

“You need to get in bed in the next hour,” Danny reminded them, looking over to make sure Henry heard as well. Henry nodded in confirmation.

“We know, Danno,” John assured him. “Sleep on New York time. We got it.”

“Your sister was less adaptable to our suggestions,” Danny said.

“She complains about going to bed at home. Why did you think it would be different here?” John asked.

“That is true,” Steve agreed. “She’s afraid she’ll miss something.”

“I predict she’ll miss the end of Princess Bride,” Danny said, leaning down to kiss John and Zach on
“We’ll see you in the morning.”

“Will we see you before you leave?” Zach asked Steve.

“I’m being picked up at 9,” Steve told him. “I’ll come say good-bye if you aren’t in our suite already.”

Zach nodded at that, returning his focus to the baseball game.

“If you need us for anything, let us know,” Danny reminded them.

“We’re just across the hall, Danno. Not across the world,” John said with a laugh.

“I’d prefer it if we were all under the same roof.”

“We are under the same roof,” Steve told him, taking him by the arm. “We’ll see you in the morning.”

“Good night,” John said with a smile as Steve dragged Danny out.

“Stop manhandling me, you Neanderthal,” Danny protested while making no attempt to escape.

“Stop being a mother hen. The kids are fine,” Steve said, closing and locking the door.

“I know,” Danny sighed, leaning back against the door and looking up at him. “They are growing up so fast.”

“I know,” Steve said gently. “It’s their job. And it’s our job to let them.”

“Yeah,” Danny had to agree, sitting with Steve on the couch. He turned on the Yankees game as Steve returned to the newspaper, Danny’s feet in his lap. Steve’s right hand automatically rubbed Danny’s feet, massaging his insteps the way he did that made Danny melt into the couch.

~o0o~

“When will we see you?” Danny asked Steve as they all ate breakfast in their suite. The boys had been over for about 15 minutes, the girls getting up a few minutes after they arrived. They were all eating waffles from room service, Henry in charge of serving them for reasons that had not yet been determined. It was his turn? No one was quite sure.

“The last interview starts at 1400. Which is 2:00 o’clock for the civilians in the room,” Steve said.

“We’re all civilians,” Dancy said with a laugh.

“Hard to argue with that,” Steve said. “The message I got from Commander Swenson said it usually takes about an hour. So if all goes well, I should be done by 3:00.”

“Which is 1500,” Dancy said, giggling with Emma like they were sharing a private joke.

“Yes it is,” Steve agreed.

“All right,” Danny said, checking the time on his phone. “We’re going to the Metropolitan Museum.
Call us when you’re done so you can either meet us there or back here.”

“Roger that,” Steve said. “Zach, are you going to the Museum?”

“There is an exhibit of Dutch masters I am curious to see,” Zach said.

“All right,” Steve said. “If you’re not asleep by the time I get done, we can go out to dinner.”

“Can we go the original Hard Rock Café?” John asked.

“We’re going to see if we can get Broadway tickets for tomorrow. We’ll go then,” Steve said.

“What are we going to go see?” Emma asked, bouncing on her chair.

“What do you want to go see?” Steve asked. “I’ll see if they can get us tickets for the show you want to see.”

“Can we go see Chicago?” John asked.

“No,” Danny said. “It’s not age appropriate.”

“We see worse on TV every day,” John said.

“I don’t care. Not Chicago.”

“What about that one with that guy?” Emma said, waving her hand in a way Danny recognized. “You know the one, John.”

“The one with the guy,” John repeated, shaking his head.

“She is referring to Stone Soup starring Chris Drake,” Zach said.

“Exactly,” Emma said. “He’s the dreamiest.”

“Chris Drake?” Steve said. “Is he the guy on that TV show you watch every week?”

“No Daddy,” Emma said with a world of disappointment that her father was so lame. “He was in The Superheroes Save Earth. He was Sealman.”

“Oh. That guy,” Danny said. “You should have known that. He’s your favorite superhero,” he said to Steve.

“I never saw that movie,” Steve said, shaking his head.

“Emma watches it once a week, at least,” John said.

“Not that much,” Emma said.

“Oh you so do,” John said.

“It doesn’t matter,” Steve decided. “I do have some idea who you are talking about. All right. If we can get tickets to Stone Soup, does that work for everyone?” The kids all agreed it would be cool to
go see it. Zach said he had read some reviews and thought it sounded like an interesting experience. “Henry?”

“I don’t get a vote,” Henry laughed.

“Of course you do,” Danny said. “If you don’t want to go, you’ll not go. If you do want to go, Steve will get you a ticket.”

“I’d like to go,” Henry said, giving Dancy more bacon because she had eaten all of hers.

“Good,” Steve said. “I’ll ask if we can get tickets. And I’ll call you when I’m done today. We’ll decide if we’re going out to eat then. Behave yourselves and listen to Danny and Henry.” The kids assured him they would and wished him good luck with his interviews. With that, he left the suite carrying his change of clothes, trying not to regret that his day was not going to be spent with the kids.

Lt Brown was waiting for him when he got to the lobby, walking with him to the car she had left in the lot. “What does the family have planned today?” she asked as they pulled into the street. Steve was in the front with her, not wanting to feel like he was being chauffeured even though he admitted that was what she was doing.

“They are going to the Metropolitan Museum of Art,” Steve said, watching the passing scenery. “We’d like to go see Stone Soup tomorrow if you could get us tickets. My daughter has a crush on Chris Drake, apparently.”

“I will certainly try, sir,” she said. “Is there another show they would like to see if those tickets are not available?”

“We didn’t really discuss an alternative,” he said. “As long as it is age appropriate, we’d appreciate any tickets you can get for us.”

“Of course,” she agreed.

He didn’t bother telling her the ages of the kids. He was certain she already had them just like she already knew their shoe sizes, their latest grades from school, and an entire list of possible career choices they might one day decide to pursue.

Lt Brown briefed him on what to expect during his interview on the Rebecca Fields show as they drove to the studio. Rebecca Fields hadn’t reached the prominence of Oprah but was getting closer. “She is respectful and courteous,” Lt Brown said. “But don’t let her charm fool you. She’s as sharp as a tack. Although she does not engage in ambush journalism, she will call you on any inconsistencies she may perceive from you.”

“I understand,” Steve said. “Telling the truth will prevent any inconsistencies.”

“It’s the part of the truth that you can’t tell that can trip you up,” Lt Brown said knowingly.

“I take it you’ve read my file,” Steve said, glancing over at her.

“I have,” she agreed. “It is one of the most impressive I’ve ever seen.”

He shrugged at that as though it was nothing special. “That was a long time ago.”
“Not so long, sir,” she said.

“I suppose,” Steve said. “The mornings I have trouble getting out of bed make it seem like yesterday. Most other times it feels like a lifetime ago. Or a life lived by someone else.”

“Understandable,” she said.

“Your usual job isn’t chauffeuring people around New York City,” he said with no question implied.

“No sir,” she said, not glancing over at him.

“Do you know Catherine Rollins?” he asked her.

“We’ve met,” Lt Brown said.

“Although I guess she’s Catherine Rollins McGuire now,” Steve said.

“She is,” Lt Brown agreed.

Steve had nothing else to say about Catherine and let the conversation lapse. He had talked to Catherine several months earlier when she had called to tell him she was getting married. He’d wished her the very best and meant every word. He thought she had forgiven him for breaking her heart but he didn’t ask and she didn’t volunteer to absolve him. Not that he in anyway regretted his decision to marry Danny. He should have handled telling Catherine better. Even though Kono had said she wasn’t surprised, he had felt a chill every time he had talked to her afterwards.

“We heard from former President Obama’s people,” Lt Brown said. “His daughter went into labor this morning. So he won’t be coming to New York for the Today show tomorrow.”

“I understand,” Steve said. “I’m glad for him and Mrs. Obama. And their daughter of course.”

“Of course,” Lt Brown said with a smile. She pulled into a parking garage that had the symbol of the network attached to it, easily navigating it to the third level. After she had parked, Steve followed her across the deck and into a corridor which was brightly lit if somewhat shabby. That led to a hallway that was lined with posters for shows on the network, then out to a front lobby where a young woman was waiting with an iPad in her hand. “We aren’t late, are we?” Lt Brown asked.

“Not at all,” the woman said glancing at her iPad before looking back up at Steve. “I am Courtney Austin, Governor. It’s a pleasure to meet you.”

“You as well. Thank you for having me on your show,” Steve said, shaking her hand.

“I’m leaving you in Courtney’s capable hands,” Lt Brown told Steve. “I’ll be back to get you at 10:30.”

“Thank you,” Steve said, turning his focus to Courtney as Lt Brown walked back toward the parking garage. He vaguely wondered where Lt Brown was going but it certainly wasn’t any of his concern.

“If you’ll come right this way, we’ll get you in make-up. There’s still 45 minutes before the taping
starts,” Courtney said, gesturing to their right.

Steve nodded, following Courtney down yet another corridor and into a room with several chairs set before huge mirrors.

“Governor,” she said, indicating one of the chairs. Steve sat as directed, looking in the mirrors at what was going on behind him. Courtney seemed to be consulting with a young man with black hair that was defying gravity. Steve wondered if what he used on his hair would finally tame Danny’s under any circumstance.

“Governor,” the young man said when he stood next to Steve. “I’m Jose. Courtney has asked me to prep you for your appearance.”

“Certainly,” Steve said tilting his body slightly away from Jose.

“Since you are a pro at being on TV, I know I won’t need to explain the preparations,” Jose said in a voice that was far too loud. Did he think because Steve’s hair was more silver than black that he was hard of hearing?

“I have been on TV more than I really like,” Steve agreed, talking more quietly than usual. Sometimes that would get others to lower their voices as well.

“Very good,” Jose said, still talking too loud. Steve sighed very softly and waited while Jose did his job. Fortunately, Jose decided Steve’s naturally tanned skin didn’t need a lot of coverage, just enough powder to prevent a shine from blinding the cameras. Steve’s short cropped hair never needed any fussing, unlike Danny’s which never wanted to behave.

“All done?” Courtney asked when Jose stepped back.

“We are,” Jose shouted at her. “He’s all yours.”

Courtney nodded, escorting Steve to a dressing room with a couch and several comfortable chairs. “Would you like some water, Governor?”

“Yes, please,” Steve agreed, accepting a small bottle she retrieved from a tiny refrigerator and twisting off the lid. “Does Jose shout at everyone? Or does he think I’m too old to hear him?”

Courtney laughed at his question, her green eyes lighting up. “He shouts at everyone, sir. He worked for Purple Denim for too many years. All those rock concerts… well, you can imagine.”

“I can,” Steve said with an understanding smile. “That makes perfect sense.”

“I hope you weren’t offended,” Courtney said.

“I have children,” Steve laughed. “It takes a lot more than a raised voice to offend me. Mostly I was just curious.”

“I get that question a lot,” she said. “I’ve asked him not to shout at the guests. But he doesn’t know he’s doing it.”

“That does make sense,” Steve agreed.
“Won’t you have a seat, sir? It’s still about 20 minutes before taping begins. Rebecca will be here in a few minutes.”

Steve sat in one of the chairs as requested, sipping his water as Courtney briefed him on the protocol for the show. Not that it was especially different from any of the other appearances in which he had been involved.

“But I know you know all this,” Courtney finally said with a smile.

“Every show is different,” he said kindly, hoping to relieve a little of her visible discomfort.

“I suppose they are,” she said, going to open the door at the light knock. “We just finished the briefing.”

The woman who entered was undoubtedly Rebecca Fields, with her long red hair and her complexion that was more freckles than not. She had a reputation as a tough but fair interviewer, one who charmed her guests with her fiery wit and her infectious laughter. She was only five feet tall but her presence took up much more space than that.

She approached Steve with her hand out, a smile on her lips and in her eyes. “Governor Williams-McGarrett. It’s a pleasure to meet you.”

“Thank you for having me,” he said smiling down at her.

“Courtney told you what to expect? How our interview would proceed?”

“She did. She did an excellent job of covering all the bases,” Steve said.

“Very good. We try to do the interviews in ‘real time.’ Unless one of us says something that the censors would fine the network for, we don’t generally go back and redo or edit. Is that going to be a concern for you?” she asked brightly.

“That’s fine,” he agreed. “I don’t generally use language that would cause the censors any problems.”

“But I’ll wager you can swear like a sailor,” she laughed, making him smile.

“Not since the kids were born,” he said.

“Kids will do that,” she agreed cheerfully. “Are they here in New York?”

“Most of them are. They are going to the Museum today.”

“I had thought they might come to watch the taping,” she said, tilting her head to one side to look up at him.

“They are used to me being on TV,” he said with a small shrug. “They stopped being impressed years ago.”

“I see,” Rebecca laughed. “Jaded at an early age.”

“I suppose so,” he said.
“It happens,” she said. “My kids will barely watch my show. Unless one of their favorite celebs is on, of which I am not one. Then they might tune in.”

“Do they get to come and meet their favorite celebrities?” Steve asked.

“Sometimes,” she said. “They aren’t easily impressed.”

“Probably just as well,” Steve said.

“Probably so,” she said with a laugh. “I need to scoot. Courtney will come and get you when it’s nearly time.”

“Thank you for stopping in,” Steve said as Rebecca made her way to the door.

“See you shortly,” she said, leaving with Courtney at her heels.

Steve took out his phone, finding a text from John: *at museum. Phones vibrate only.* Steve texted his acknowledgement, checking for missed calls. But since it was the middle of the night in Hawaii, he wasn’t surprised he didn’t have any. A rare but delightful occurrence.

With nothing else to do, he picked up a random magazine in the stack on one of the end tables. He wasn’t particularly interested in *Six Steps to the Perfect Beach Body* advertised on the cover of the *Woman’s Day* but he did flip through in case there were any good summer recipes he could try when they stole away with the kids to the beach house.

He was in the middle of an article on whether or not Chris Drake would appear in the sequel to *The Superheroes Save Earth* (tentatively titled as of press time *The Superheroes Save the Universe*) when Courtney knocked and entered.

“Interesting reading?” she asked with a bright smile.

“My daughter apparently has a major crush on Chris Drake,” Steve said, turning the magazine so Courtney could see the pictures of him. Steve thought there was a tad too much exposed skin, even for Hawaii, but it wasn’t like *Woman’s Day* was known for racy content. “Did you know he hasn’t signed to do the sequel?”

She laughed at his question, accepting the magazine when he offered it to her. “*Everyone* I know has a crush on him. He’s very very nice in person which is a fabulous change of pace.”

“So he’ll do the sequel?” Steve asked, laughing.

“I’m pretty sure he will. Why would he refuse? Wouldn’t it be career suicide if he didn’t do it?” she said, placing the magazine back on the end table.

“I’m afraid I’m not as well versed in all things Chris Drake as I ought to be,” he confessed.

“That is a surprise,” she teased with a laugh, leading him out of the green room. “I’m guessing if they filmed the movies in Hawaii, you’d know all about him.”

“Parts of the first one were filmed there,” Steve said. “I only know because my daughter told me. Fortunately she didn’t find out until after the movie was released or she’d have demanded I fly her to
the location.”

“Would you have?” Courtney asked with a wink.

“Probably,” Steve admitted. “It would have been really hard to say no since the Governor’s office has its own helicopter.”

She really laughed at that, stopping in the third hallway, gesturing toward a door that was half glass window. Next to the door was a TV monitor that showed Rebecca on the stage of her show, talking to her audience. Steve could just make out what she was saying as she greeted her enthusiastic fans.

“It’s 3 minutes until you will be welcomed on stage,” Courtney told him. He nodded to acknowledge her words, taking his phone out of his pocket.

“May I leave this with you?”

“Certainly,” she agreed, slipping it in the pocket of her jacket. “You could turn it off.”

He shook his head at that. “I’m not actually allowed to,” he said with a shrug.

“Must be difficult,” she said with some sympathy.

“You get used to it,” he responded.

“I suppose there are many things you must learn to accommodate when you are in public office.”

“There are,” he agreed. “Living in a fish bowl is the most difficult. We try to protect the kids as much as possible. Fortunately they are better behaved than we really have reason to expect.”

“The press would surely respect their privacy.”

“Most do. Some still hold a grudge against me and Danny from our time with Five-0. The on-line reporters can be the most aggressive.”

“Less of the old fashioned manners,” she agreed. “We find the same thing to be true.”

“It gets tiresome. We manage to mostly ignore them. The schools won’t let reporters on the grounds. That helps.”

“They try to get to your children at school?” Courtney asked, her displeasure on behalf of his family in her voice and on her face.

“They try,” he agreed. “We don’t send security with them. One of the few places they are without it.”

“I see,” she said with a nod. “Thirty seconds,” she said, pointing to a timer at the bottom right hand corner of the screen. When it was down to 10 seconds, she opened the door, walking with him to the area behind the bright red curtains. From there, he could hear Rebecca telling the audience he was with them. There was some polite applause which grew louder as he stepped out from behind the curtain. By the time he reached Rebecca to shake her hand, there were some wolf whistles joining the excited clapping.
“Welcome,” she said as the enthusiasm finally wound down. “Sit, please.”

He took the plush chair next to the one where she sat, smiling over at her. That drew some additional applause which in turn made him smile even more.

“You are the first sitting governor I’ve had on my program,” she told him happily. “So glad you could join us.”

“Thank you for having me,” he responded, still smiling at her.

“For those who don’t know, you are not only Governor of Hawaii but a former Navy SEAL.”

“Yes I am,” Steve agreed.

“And between those two, you were in charge of the task force known as Five-0. I believe we have some photos of your former professions,” Rebecca said, turning in her chair to see the monitor at the back of the stage. When the first photo appeared, of Steve in his Dress Blue Uniform, the applause along with the whistles of appreciation was even louder. Steve laughed at the reaction, shaking his head. “When was this?”

“It looks like 2009 but I could be wrong,” he said, studying the photo. It was fairly generic and could have been almost any time in his career. The next picture was a wedding photo, Danny looking resplendent in his uniform. “That’s our wedding picture.”

“Two such handsome men,” Rebecca said in appreciation. “Is your husband in New York with you?”

“He is. He and our children are visiting the Metropolitan Museum of Art. We are hoping to go see a show tomorrow night,” he said as the slide show continued. There were several pictures of him from their Five-0 days, none of which – miraculously – showed him bloody or with any broken bones. There were some from his time as Governor including one with the President of the United States. None of the pictures included the children although several had Danny in them which he thought was only right.

“You certainly have lived a full life,” Rebecca remarked with a laugh when the light came back up.

“I have been very lucky,” Steve agreed.

“You’ve earned the luck you’ve had,” Rebecca suggested with a knowing smile. “You have never been one to rest on your successes.”

“I try not to,” Steve said. “Although I never actually intended to be Governor. I was drafted by forces I couldn’t control.”

That confession drew an appreciative laugh from the audience, Steve smiling at them.

“I’ve heard that,” Rebecca said. “Whoever made you run knew what they were doing.”

“Thank you,” Steve said. “It’s been interesting, I can assure you of that.”

“Tell us what you can about being a SEAL,” she invited.
“There are a lot of things I’m not allowed to discuss,” he said to her nods. “However, I can tell you that Kirby Greenly was never a SEAL.”

“I’ve heard rumors to that effect,” she said. “Why would someone lie about it?”

“I can’t speak for him. I can only speculate that he thought the classified nature of all SEAL activities would prevent anyone from calling him on his lies. It’s not a secret that I was a SEAL. Those things I did in service of this country are classified. I can say with completely certainty that he was not in Pakistan for the raid that took out Bin Laden,” Steve said in a tone that left no doubt about his authority on the subject.

“Do you know any of the SEALs who were there?” she asked.

“If I do, I’m not at liberty to admit it,” he said. “My security clearance is sufficient to know he was not a SEAL and he certainly was not in Pakistan.”

“Have you talked with him?”

“I haven’t. I haven’t tried. I can hardly imagine what I’d say.”

“Stop lying for a start,” she suggested, making the audience laugh.

“I suppose,” Steve said with a smile. “But it would become a shouting match. And it would resolve nothing.”

“So you’re mounting a counter offensive,” she said knowingly.

“Yes. I was requested to front the campaign by the Secretary of the Navy. Apparently I still report to her,” he joked.

“I would imagine the Governor of Hawaii reports to multiple constituencies.”

“That’s true. Not the least of which is my children,” he said with a laugh.

“As it should be. Do they know why you are here?”

“They do. They know as much about my time as a SEAL as anyone can. Keeping secrets is inbred in the military even when it comes to our families. It’s for their protection even more than mine.”

“I can imagine it must be difficult,” she suggested.

“Sometimes it is. There’s a whole chunk of my life they can never know about. That time was before they were born. Afterwards, my life is pretty much an open book.”

“For those who don’t know, tell us about your children,” she invited.

“I have two with Danny – our son and daughter. He has a daughter from his previous marriage. His ex-wife and her husband have a son and daughter as well. We are a truly blended family. All five children are either blessed or cursed with two sets of parents.”

“Sounds like a blessing to me,” she said with a smile. “How many are here?”
“Three are plus my daughter’s best friend. They just had to go to Macy’s yesterday,” he said with a laugh.

“One of the first stops for a lot of visitors,” she agreed. “What else do you have planned?”

“We’re going to see the Mets on Saturday,” he said, drawing a smattering of applause. “Danny’s a huge Yankees fan but they are on the road. He’s promised to pretend to not hate the Mets. The kids have never seen a professional baseball game and we thought this would be an excellent opportunity.”

“Indeed,” Rebecca agreed. “You generally go to Pro Bowl.”

“We do,” Steve agreed. “The NFL has been very generous to our family. They invite us every year. The kids have a great time.”

“I can imagine,” Rebecca said before asking him several other questions while the audience listened in complete attention. Before Steve knew it, she was thanking him again for appearing and asking if he would return when he had the time. He naturally agreed that he would and that was that.

“Well done,” Courtney said when he was once again backstage.

“Thank you. The time flew by,” Steve said, accepting his phone back. He had one missed call from an unknown number and two text messages from Danny. Neither of them were urgent but he smiled to see them anyway.

“That’s a good sign,” Courtney said. “Lt Brown is waiting for you in the lobby.”

“Thank you,” Steve said, following her back the way they had come. As promised, Lt Brown was in the lobby patiently awaiting his arrival.

“It went well?” Lt Brown asked politely.

“I suppose so,” Steve said. “I don’t have any way of knowing.”

“He was an exemplary guest,” Courtney told her. She winked at Steve before holding out her hand. “Thank you again.”

“Thank you,” he responded, leaving with Lt Brown to return to the car. He texted Danny getting an immediate response. He said the kids were having a great time just as he and Henry were.

“I was able to get you tickets for tomorrow night,” Lt Brown told him as they were leaving the parking garage.

“That’s excellent. Thank you.”

“The seats aren’t the best but the box office assured me that there are no obstructed views. And unless there are unforeseen circumstances, Chris Drake should be in his starring role.”

“Emma and Dancy will be thrilled,” Steve said with a smile over to her.

“The others don’t mind, do they?” she asked kindly.
“No. There isn’t much that John and Zach wouldn’t do for their little sister,” Steve said, looking out the window at the huge buildings they were passing. How did Danny stand living in a concrete jungle? Steve had no idea but he was eternally grateful that Hawaii had become home to them both equally.

“That’s wonderful, isn’t it?” she said.

“We think so. Emma may have us all wrapped around her finger,” Steve admitted. “But I think that’s the baby child’s job.”

“I’ve always thought so,” Lt Brown said.

“Do you have children?” he asked, glancing over at her.

“I don’t,” she said. If there was some regret in her tone, Steve decided he didn’t need to acknowledge it. “We heard from the people at Sunday Morning Round-up. It seems that Kirby Greenly is willing to appear with you.”

“That’s a little surprising,” Steve said.

“To us as well. We think he may be trying to salvage his book sales. They’ve already started to plummet.”

Steve shook his head at that. “He can’t win.”

“No he can’t. I can’t imagine what he believes he will accomplish by sitting at the table with you. Especially as you will have been on five nationally broadcast shows by then. And I received a call from the editor of the *New York Times Book Review*. They would like an interview.”

“I had a call from a number I didn’t recognize with a Manhattan area code. I guess it was them.”

“Probably,” Lt Brown said. “I told them I would ask you. They will do the interview at your convenience.”

“Tomorrow after the first taping will work if that is good for them,” Steve said.

“Certainly, sir. I will contact them and let them know. They are willing to do the interview over the phone which will make it a little less inconvenient.”

“It’s no trouble if I need to go to their offices. Since I’m here already.”

“I’ll let them know,” she said.

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The other two interviews went much the same way although they were shorter. Jon Stewart was polite and engaging and the perfect host, even admitting that they should not have had Kirby Greenly on. Steve assured him that he was not alone in being taken in by the man’s lies, Jon thanking him for his understanding. He also thanked Steve for his service to the country which Steve appreciated as a nice tribute to all men and women in the armed forces.

Steve couldn’t say he was disappointed when Lt Brown appeared to drive him back to the hotel. It
had been a long day and he was looking forward to having some time with the family, not having to smile and act like he enjoyed being on TV.

“Hey,” Steve said when he had dialed Danny. “I’m on my way back.”

“Good,” Danny said, sounding slightly frazzled.

“What’s happened?” Steve asked, hearing it in his voice.

“Everybody’s fine,” Danny rushed to assure him.

“I’m glad. What happened?” Steve repeated.

“Zach had a come-apart at the museum.”

“Why?” Steve asked. “Did he get separated?”

“No, no,” Danny said. “He wanted to see the Donatello exhibit. The quickest way was to go through the modern art exhibit. Henry went with him but he had told Zach to wait while he visited the men’s room. Zach wandered away and went into the special Picasso exhibit. He didn’t get any further than Les demoiselles d’Avignon. When Henry found him, he was staring at the painting, hyperventilating. Henry talked to him until he was able to respond but ended up collapsing in a heap. Henry texted me as soon as he realized what was happening.”

“Did Zach respond to you?” Steve asked, unaware that he was holding his breath.

“He did,” Danny said. “I got him calmed down. I was afraid he was having cognitive dissonance. It turns out he found the painting so beautifully fascinating he was thrown for a loop.”

“By Picasso,” Steve said.

“I know,” Danny said. “Not my cup of tea but Zach fell instantly and totally in love with it. More so than with anything I’ve ever seen outside of his computer programs.”

“That is incredible,” Steve said.

“I thought so too. Zach was shaken up by the experience so after spending another 45 minutes staring at the painting, he said he needed to leave.”

“They got to the hotel okay?” Steve asked.

“Just fine. I told Henry to take the rental. I didn’t think Zach needed the overstimulation of the subway.”

“Good point,” Steve agreed.

“About an hour and a half later, the kids decided they’d spent enough time getting culture, as they put it. So we went to get on the subway. Except Emma got separated from us.”

“She what?” Steve asked sharply. He took comfort from the fact that Danny had said everything was okay and took another deep breath. Lt Brown glanced over at him, concern on her face at his tone. “What happened?”
“The platform was really crowded. She got distracted and the doors closed before she got on the train,” Danny explained in a calm, soothing tone.

“Oh Lord,” Steve said.

“But because she is our daughter and listens to us, mostly, she went directly to the closest token booth and told the woman what had happened. She tried calling me but our phones didn’t work in the tunnels. We saw her on the platform as the train pulled away so we got off at the next stop and retraced our steps.”

“And she was okay?”

“Of course she was,” Danny said, finally smiling. “By the time we got back to her, she was best friends with the token seller and the transit cop she had called. She did what we always told her and was completely calm.”

“She is a good kid,” Steve said with a note of pride in his voice.

“Of course she is,” Danny said. “We all got back on the subway and made it to the hotel with no further incidents. Although we may have several extra people at Thanksgiving this year.”

Steve laughed at that. It was inevitable that Emma made friends wherever she went. “The more the merrier,” Steve said. “Is she right there?”

“They are all asleep,” Danny said.

“Probably just as well.”

“We went swimming when we got back. Even Zach.”

“Even Zach,” Steve repeated.

“Yeah. I downloaded him a program that lets you re-create Picasso on your computer. I said he could play with it after we went swimming.”

“And he agreed?”

“He did,” Danny said. “He liked swimming in the hotel pool.”

“How are John and Dancy? Any drama from them?”

“Not yet,” Danny laughed. “We’re still here for three more days.”

“True that,” Steve said. “And you’re okay?”

“I’m fine. I knew Emma would go for help which she did. Being the daughter of cops has taught her how to take care of herself.”

“Yes it has,” Steve agreed. “Is Henry asleep too?”

“I told him to go have some time to himself,” Danny said. “He went for a run in Central Park. The
concierge said it was completely safe.”

“Good idea,” Steve said in approval. “I’m probably 10 minutes from the hotel.”

“Good. The tapings went well?”

“I guess,” Steve said.

“You won’t admit it when they do. Did you tell Jon Stewart he’s not as funny as he thinks?” Danny asked with a laugh.

“Hardly seemed appropriate,” Steve laughed. “He’s glad the Yankees are out of town.”

“Yeah. Well. Thems is the breaks.”

“I guess so,” Steve agreed.

“Did you eat?”

“I ate,” Steve said, glancing over at Lt Brown who was not able to stop smiling at him.

“All right. We’ll order dinner from room service. We don’t need any more excitement.”

“That’s fine,” Steve agreed. “I’ll see you soon.”

“Right,” Danny said, disconnecting.

“Everything okay?” Lt Brown asked. There was no way she could not have heard his conversation so she felt only a little guilty about eavesdropping.

Steve told her what Danny had told him, Lt Brown laughing in sympathy.

“At least they are all fine,” she said.

“They are,” Steve agreed with a relieved smile. He looked up at the hotel as she pulled in front of it before looking back over at her. “Thank you for your help today.”

“You are more than welcome, sir. I’ll pick you up tomorrow at 0700.”

“Right,” Steve agreed, leaving the car. “See you then.”

She nodded and pulled back into traffic as Steve made his way inside with his loaded shopping bags.

“Hey,” he said as he entered their suite, Danny on the couch watching the door.

“Hey yourself,” Danny said with a smile. “What’s all this?”

“Gifts for the kids,” Steve said, putting the shopping bags on the coffee table. “Courtesy of… well, everybody.”

“The entire population of Manhattan?” Danny said, peering into the bags.
“Sure.” He looked over at the door at a knock before glancing back at Danny.

“Food. For you,” Danny explained. “I know you didn’t really eat.”

Steve shrugged, going to the door to allow the room service guy to push in his cart. Steve signed the ticket, lifting the lid to find a gigantic fruit salad and some warm, crusty bread. “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome,” Danny said as Steve sat next to him. “Tell me about your day.”

“Not much to tell,” Steve said, feeding a piece of cantaloupe to Danny. “The usual.”

Danny laughed at that. “You are a wonder, Steven.”

“Am I?”

“I don’t many other people who would shrug off being on three national TV shows.”

“You don’t many people who would be on them,” Steve pointed out.

“Well. That’s just a technicality,” Danny told him.

“I suppose. Lt Brown got us tickets for *Stone Soup* tomorrow.”

“Emma will be thrilled,” Danny said.

“And she’s okay after being separated from you?” Steve asked.

“She’s fine, Super SEAL. Stop with the worrying.”

“I know,” Steve said. “I can’t seem to help it.”

“I understand.”

“I’m going to talk to the editor of the *New York Times Book Review* tomorrow.”

“Good for you. What time is that?”

“At 8:30. In between Good Morning America and taping the Chatter With Cathy Show. Hopefully I’ll be back here by lunch.”

“Good. Then I can make sure you eat it,” Danny said, spearing some watermelon and several grapes to offer them to Steve.

“Lt Brown said Kirby Greenly has agreed to be on Sunday Morning Round-up with me. Can you believe that?”

“He’s clearly a bigger idiot than anyone thought.”

“Apparently,” Steve agreed, taking out his phone when it rang.

“Chin Ho?” Danny asked, leaning closer.
“Chin,” Steve said in greeting.

“Governor,” Chin said with a smile. “Howzit?”


“Right,” Chin laughed. “So there are pigs flying outside your window.”

“Something like that. Are you keeping my state in line?”

“Trying,” Chin said. “We need your permission to raid the Hu’nkoiim Warehouse. We think there’s a gun shipment coming in this afternoon.”

“You have probable cause?” Steve asked.

“We do. I’ve emailed the surveillance to you.”

“All right,” Steve said. “I’ll look it over right now.”

“Mahalo. How’s Danny and the kids?”

“Danny’s right here,” Steve said, handing the phone to him as he went to get his laptop. He reviewed the information Chin had sent as Danny chatted with him. He held out his hand, taking his phone back from Danny. “Go ahead. It’s about time you are able to put a stop to it.”

“Exactly,” Chin agreed. “Did you email me?”

“I did,” Steve agreed. “Report back as soon as it’s done.”

“You know I will,” Chin said. “Should I put a for sale sign in your yard?”

“Not yet,” Steve laughed. “I’ll let you know.”

“All right. I’ll call you when I have something to report.”

“Good. Be careful,” Steve said getting Chin’s assurance that they would. Steve was disconnecting the call when the suite door opened to allow John to come in.

“Hey,” John said with a yawn.

“Bud,” Steve replied with a smile. “You doing okay?”

“I’m fine. It’s Zach and Em you need to worry about.”

“I heard that,” Steve said, putting his arm over John’s shoulders when he sat next to him.

“That fruit for anybody?” John asked.

“I had hoped your father would eat it. Don’t think that’s going to happen,” Danny said, handing it to John.
“Thanks,” John said, stuffing two chunks of pineapple in his mouth. “Oh gross.”

“Canned?” Steve asked as John spit them out on a napkin.

“I guess?” John said. “Danno probably loves it.”

“I didn’t eat it,” Danny said, going to the frig for a couple bottles of water. “Here.”

“Thanks,” John said, looking in the bags on the coffee table. “What’s all this?”

“Presents for you kids,” Steve said. “You can look through it if you want.”

“I’ll wait,” John said. “How was taping?”

“You know,” Steve said with a wave of dismissal. “Did you enjoy the museum?”

“Yeah,” John said. “It was cool. Huge.”

“That’s what I’ve heard,” Steve said.


“No. Henry came back a few minutes ago. We woke up when he came in even though he tried to be quiet.”

“What’s Zach doing?” Steve asked.

“Getting dressed. He said he’d be over soon,” John said with a shrug. “The girls still asleep?”

“As far as I know,” Danny said. “Or planning the overthrow of New York.”

“Yeah. There’s a 50-50 chance of either one,” John agreed.

“They’ll probably try to rope you into the takeover,” Danny warned, looking over at the door as it opened to admit Zach. “Hey Zach.”

“Hey,” Zach said, looking only at Steve. “Hey.”

“Hey,” Steve said, standing up to give Zach a quick hug, feeling Zach relax into the embrace. “I hear you are now a lover of Picasso.”

“I had no idea,” Zach said. “The real thing. It’s. I don’t know. Breathtaking.”

“That’s exciting,” Steve said with a smile.

“Can I go back tomorrow?” Zach asked, glancing over at Danny before looking back up at Steve.

“We were planning to go to Natural History Museum and the Hayden Planetarium,” Danny reminded him.

“Can I go to the Museum instead?” Zach asked.
“Are you sure?” Steve asked. “You don’t mind missing the Natural History Museum and the Planetarium?”

“I’d like to go back to the Museum,” Zach said.

Steve looked at Danny to decide. He couldn’t do anything to help unless he took Zach after the last taping.

“We’ll ask Henry,” Danny finally said. “If he doesn’t mind going with you, you can go back to the Met.”

Zach nodded at that, leaving the suite.

“Was Henry out of the shower?” Danny asked John with a laugh.

“I sure hope so,” John said, looking over at the door. “Do you want me to go check?”

“No, it’s fine. Henry can take care of himself. Zach won’t walk into the bathroom,” Danny reminded them.

“Yeah,” John said. “Can I order something else from room service?”

“What do you want?” Steve asked him.

John shrugged, his answer delayed by the return of Zach with Henry right behind him in jeans and a tee shirt, his hair still wet.

“Henry said he’ll take me,” Zach said, looking down at Steve and Danny.

“You don’t mind?” Danny asked Henry.

“Not at all. I enjoy the Met,” Henry said.

“All right,” Steve said. “I should be done by noon. Maybe I’ll meet you if you’re still there.”

“I can show you the Picasso,” Zach said with a light in his eyes.

“I’d like that,” Steve agreed. “John’s hungry. Do you want something?”

They all discussed their options, Danny deciding to wake up the girls so they’d sleep at night. Once they were mostly awake, they made their requests for room service, Danny calling down.

The kids emptied out the bags Steve had been given, the girls squealing over the treasures. The boys said it was nice that the shows had thought of them, both of them trying to act cool but not entirely succeeding. Even Henry enjoyed the bounty, receiving a tee shirt, a water bottle, and two coffee cups.

Steve told the kids that they were getting tickets for Stone Soup, Emma and Dancy all giddy with excitement over the news. Emma allowed as how she needed a new outfit to wear which Danny thought was so much nonsense and what were the chances they’d get to meet Chris Drake anyway?

“You can get us backstage, can’t you, Daddy?” Emma asked Steve over her second slice of pizza.
“Pleasssssseeeeee.”

“How would I do that? I’m not governor of New York City,” Steve said.

“The City has a mayor,” Danny told him unnecessarily.

“I’m not him either,” Steve pointed out.

“But you know people,” Emma said. “People who know people who know important people.”

“Steve is an important person,” Henry chimed in.

“Not on Broadway,” Emma said. “Pleasssssee, Daddy. Will you at least try? Please?”

“Seriously, Em?” Steve said with a raised eyebrow.

“You can do it. You’re Governor Super SEAL. You can do anything,” Emma told him.

“Anything,” Danny said with a smirk.

Steve sighed, trying to sound put-upon. Who did he know that could get them backstage so Emma could meet her celebrity crush in person? Could the Navy help? Stage a raid maybe? That seemed a little extreme. “I’ll see what I can do,” he finally said.

“Thank you,” Emma said, giggling with Dancy. “Can we go back to Macy’s? Please? So I can get a new outfit?”

“You don’t need any more clothes,” Danny told her.

“Not at home but I didn’t bring anything to wear to Broadway,” Emma explained as though this was a situation Danny could not possible understand.

“You can wear jeans and a tee shirt,” Steve told her.

“Not to meet Chris Drake,” Emma said, scandalized by the very idea of it.

“You don’t know that you are meeting him,” John told her.

“But Daddy will find a way,” Emma said with complete confidence in her father. “So me and Dancy need something to wear.”

“Dancy and I. And no you don’t,” Danny said, looking over at Steve for reinforcements.

“You don’t,” Steve concurred. He was pretty sure Emma hadn’t heard him, she was so busy talking to Dancy about meeting Chris Drake whose last name was apparently OMG.

“You may as well give up,” John advised them. “You’re going to buy her a new outfit.”

“A lot of help you are,” Danny scolded him.

“I’m a realist,” John shrugged. “When was the last time either of you told her no?”
“Are you implying she might be spoiled?” Danny asked with narrowed eyes and a fierce expression which did nothing to impress John.

“Not implying, Danno. Coming right out and saying it,” John laughed.

“Hard to argue with that,” Henry said softly.

“And you are the one who left me all alone on the subway platform, Danno. I could have been stolen and sold to the circus. And you’d never see me again,” Emma said, going for stern.

“That’s not the way I heard it,” Steve suggested.

“The circus?” John asked.

“Shhh…” Emma said to John.

“The circus,” Danny said, trying hard not to laugh.

“I hate the circus,” Zach said.

“We all do,” John agreed.

“I don’t,” Henry said. “I thought about joining one in my youth.”

“You did not,” Steve laughed.

“I considered it,” Henry said. “I grew up not far from Barnum and Bailey’s Clown College. My father threatened to kill me if I enrolled there.”

“Clown College,” Steve said slowly.

“Clown College,” Danny said, staring at Henry.

“It’s not that strange,” Henry said with a shrug. “At least not where I grew up.”

“Yet you entered public service,” Steve said.

“Yeah. Pay is a lot better. And there are considerably fewer elephants,” Henry said.

“I guess so,” Steve said with a laugh. “Barnum and Bailey’s loss is our gain.”

“Thank you, sir. Some of the legislators should consider going to Clown College,” Henry joked.

“You are right about that,” Danny agreed.

“But what about me?” Emma asked. “Are you taking me to Macy’s?”

Danny sighed, looking over at Steve. “Well?”

“Fine,” Steve finally conceded, knowing it was inevitable. “John? Zach?”

“Thank you, no,” John said.
“I’d prefer not,” Zach said.

“All right,” Steve said. “Danny? Do you want to go?”

“You need to come, Danno,” Emma said. “Okay?”

“Fine,” Danny said. “You mind staying with the guys?”

“You know I don’t,” Henry assured him.

“All right,” Danny said. “Go put your shoes on.”

Emma and Dancy squealed and dashed into their bedroom. Danny held one finger up to John. “Not a single word.”

“Not even spoiled?” John asked with wide-eyed innocence.

“And you aren’t?” Steve said to him.

“Have I ever denied it?” John laughed.

“He has a point,” Danny said, watching Emma and Dancy run out of their bedroom. “You are spoiled, you know. Both of you.”

“We know,” Emma agreed with many giggles. “We don’t care.”

“Clearly,” Danny said. “Hopefully we won’t be too long.”

“Look both ways before you cross the street,” Henry said, his attention already focused on the TV listings as John and Zach tried to decide what to watch.

“Right,” Danny said, leaving with Steve. Emma and Dancy were already at the elevator, repeatedly pressing the button and nearly knocking it out of the wall. “How are you going to get them backstage?”

“I honestly have no idea,” Steve admitted. “I think I’ll call Lt Brown. She seems able to work magic.”

“Hope it extends to backstage passes to Broadway shows.”

“Me too, Danno,” Steve said as they went down in the elevator.
The girls were practically quivering with excitement as they left the hotel to walk back to Macy’s.

“So his favorite color is green,” Emma said to Dancy. “We’ll get green dresses to wear.”

“And we need pictures so we can get his autograph,” Dancy said.

“He can sign the...uhm... you know. The program,” Emma said, waving her hand in a definite *Danno* kind of way.

“The playbill?” Danny asked with a quiet laugh.

“Sure,” Emma said. “We’ll take pens so we don’t look totally lame.”

“Sharpies,” Dancy said knowingly, making Steve and Danny quietly discuss how many other celebrity encounters she’d had. They didn’t think she ever had outside of the Governor’s office but there was no point in calling her out on it.

They took the escalator up to the fifth floor of Macy’s which the directory said held the Juniors’ section. It didn’t take long for the men to lose sight of the girls although they could track them from their giggling.

“Is there something I can do to assist you?” a saleswoman asked as she approached Steve and Danny. Her expression was stern, as though she suspected they were up to no good. She seemed to be 30 seconds away from calling store security to escort these two lurkers out.

“Our daughter and her friend are looking for a new outfit,” Danny said, waving in the general
direction of the sound of their voices.

“I see,” the woman said, assessing them again to determine if they were telling the truth. “Is there a special occasion?”

“We’re going to see Stone Soup,” Steve said. “They are hoping to meet Chris Drake.”

The woman eyed Steve and Danny critically. “There is a ‘no autograph’ policy at the theater,” she informed them.

“All right,” Danny said, looking over the racks to find Emma and Dancy. They were giggling by the dresses, taking out a couple before putting them back.

“We’ll let them know,” Steve said in what he hoped was a tone of dismissal. Was she spying on them? Watching to make sure they didn’t steal the merchandise and/or any of the shoppers? Did she not believe Emma was theirs?

“This one, Daddy? Daddy - do you like this one?” Emma asked as she rushed up to them, a jade green dress dangling from its hanger. It was fairly plain, sleeveless with lace cut-outs around the hem and a wide green grosgrain ribbon tie at the waist.

“It’s beautiful,” Danny said.

“Perfect,” Steve agreed. “Did Dancy find one?”

“Is this one all right?” Dancy asked as she walked up. Her dress was pale green, a faux-wrap dress with a darker green leaf imprint on it.

“It’s wonderful,” Steve agreed with a smile down at her. “Go try them on. Danno and I will be right here.”

Steve glanced over at the saleswoman who was now looking at them with a different light in her eyes.

“They are both yours?” she asked, a warm tone defrosting her stare.

“Emma is,” Danny said. “The blonde one. Dancy may as well be.”

“I can see that,” the woman said. Finally deciding that they posed no threat to any of the shoppers or the merchandise, she moved away to talk to another set of shoppers.

“You could have told her,” Danny said as they found the arm chairs situated in front of the dressing room entrance.

“Told her what?” Steve asked innocently, looking over at Danno with his you aren’t making sense expression firmly in place.

“That not only do you not represent a threat, you could neutralize any threat that appeared, kill them, and dispose of the bodies without anyone else knowing what happened.”

“Not any longer,” Steve said, picking up a copy of New Yorker. He flipped through, watching Danny from the corner of his eye.
“Then how about ‘by the way, I’m governor of Hawaii and if my daughter wants to meet Chris Drake, my daughter will meet Chris Drake,’ Danny said with a great deal of hand gestures included.

“You honestly think she would believe me? She was 10 seconds away from calling security to have us removed if not arrested,” Steve said.

“She’s welcome to try,” Danny said. “And how are you going to get us backstage? Figured that out yet, Super SEAL?”

“One of my Navy buddies works for the mayor,” Steve said. “I figure it’s worth a phone call.”

“And you are just now mentioning this?” Danny demanded.

“Well, I didn’t know until just now,” Steve said, turning the magazine to show Danny the picture of the attractive man standing next to the mayor. He had a serious expression Danny instantly recognized as often appearing on Steve’s face. More so back when they were Five-0 but it still showed up when Steve was confronted with stubborn legislators or recalcitrant department heads.

“How much of a friend is he if you didn’t know he’s employed by the mayor?” Danny asked.

“I don’t keep track of every move every one of them makes. Last I heard he was working for the New York State Police. Motorcycle division.”

“From the looks of that picture, he still is,” Danny said, leaning closer to get a better look.

“Article says he’s working to curb gang violence,” Steve said. “And you met him last year. He came to talk to Chin about how Five-0 works. We had dinner with him.”

“Oh. That’s Jackson?” Danny asked, taking the magazine to look more closely at the photo. “Yeah. I see that now.”

“Did I tell you his wife had their fourth baby? A girl,” Steve said, accepting the magazine back.

“Did we send a gift?” Danny asked, watching the door that led to the mysteries of the dressing room.

“We sent fresh pineapples,” Steve said, turning the page.

“We most certainly did not. Kona coffee and macadamias maybe.”

“And an infant size hula skirt,” Steve claimed.

“You, my friend, are full of crap.”

“Maybe,” Steve shrugged.

“You have his phone number?” Danny asked.

“Yeah. I’ll call after Emma and Dancy squeal about their dresses. Are they going to want new shoes?”

“Naturally,” Danny agreed. “You even have to ask?”
“True. Why do girls need so many pairs of shoes?”

“That is one of life’s great mysteries. One you will never figure out.”

“Probably not,” Steve admitted, looking up at the returning giggles. The girls had on the dresses but had switched them. Dancy was wearing the dark green, Emma the lighter one.

“You didn’t go in with those,” Danny said.

“Of course we did, Danno,” Emma said with a giggle.

“You were carrying the dark green dress,” Steve said, pointing at the one Dancy wore.

“Oh well,” Emma said with a shrug. “Do you like them?” she asked as she and Dancy twirled in front on them.

“They are perfect,” Danny said. “Just perfect.”

“We’ll go for shoes next?” Emma asked, leaning against Danny’s knees to smile down at him. That look never came to good.

“You don’t need more shoes,” Danny tried. But it was at best a token protest.

“I don’t have any to match this dress,” she said, smiling innocently at him.

“Fine,” Danny sighed. “Go take them off and we’ll go get shoes.”

“Okay,” Emma cheered, going back into the dress room, giggling with Dancy the entire time.

“What was the point of pretending?” Steve asked, smiling over at Danny.

“She doesn’t need to think she can have whatever she wants,” Danny told him.

“You are too late, Babe. Way too late to institute that particular policy.”

“You could have told her no.”

“For all the good it would have done,” Steve said, shaking his head. “We are far too gone to stand up to her now.”

“Yeah,” Danny had to agree.

“Come on,” Steve said, standing to wander away from the dressing rooms.

“Where are we going?” Danny asked as he automatically followed Steve through the maze of racks.

“Here,” Steve said, stopping by a display of pretty cotton cardigans. “With the dresses being sleeveless, they’ll need sweaters.”

“Right you are,” Danny agreed, choosing two white ones. “These?”
“They are a tad on the plain side,” Steve decided, picking up two that were also white but had tiny crystals sewn around the neck line and the cuffs of the sleeves. “These.”

“Pretty,” Danny said. “Wonder if they have them in your size.”

“This one looks to be about your size,” Steve said, holding up one of the extra-small sweaters to Danny until Danny swatted his hands away.

“You are never having sex again,” Danny whispered while trying to frown up at him.

“You talk tough. But that’s all it is.”

Danny snorted at him, turning toward the girls when they came up to them, still giggling. “You’ll need a sweater,” he said, showing them the ones they had picked out.

“Ooooh… that’s pretty,” Dancy said, accepting it from Steve to try it on. It was a perfect fit as was the one Emma pulled on.

“Good?” Danny asked when Emma had hers on.

“Good,” she agreed, taking it off to hand it to Steve. Dancy handed her sweater to Danny before giggling to Emma.

“Go on down to shoes,” Steve said. “We’ll be there as soon as we pay for these.”

“You pay. I’ll go to shoes,” Danny said.

“Fine.”

It didn’t take long for Steve to arrive in the shoe department to find Danny already paying for two pair of shoes. “That was quick,” Steve remarked as Danny signed for the charge.

“They found the ones they wanted right away. Tried them on and that was that,” Danny said with a shrug.

“Here you are, sir,” the clerk said, handing Danny the bag containing the two shoe boxes.

“Thank you,” Danny said, turning to follow Steve away from the counter.

“Where are they now?” Steve asked.

“I have no idea. Necklaces and bracelets maybe?” Danny said, listening for them. “This way.”

Steve nodded and followed him to the counter that had bright displays of necklaces and bracelets appropriate for the teen and pre-teen set. Emma was looking at a dark green and clear crystal set, Dancy giggling with her.

“Do you like this one, Daddy?” Emma asked, holding up the necklace.

“Very pretty,” Danny said. It was a foregone conclusion that they would be buying costume jewelry to match the dresses. Arguing only delayed the inevitable.
“Which one do you want?” Steve asked Dancy.

“I don’t need one. Thank you,” she said.

“Of course you do,” Danny said with a smile. He reached past Emma to select a clear crystal necklace with a matching bracelet. “This one will be perfect with your dress.”

“But you already paid for my dress and shoes,” Dancy protested quietly.

“You know you don’t need to worry about that, love. If you like the necklace and bracelet, we’ll happily buy them for you,” Steve assured her.

“They don’t mind, Danc. It’s fine,” Emma said, all bright smiles.

“If you’re sure,” Dancy said.

“Of course we are,” Steve said. “Is this the set you want?”

“I really like these,” she said, lightly touching a set of white and green beads.

“Then we’ll get those instead,” Steve agreed, taking the ones she had indicated. “Anything else? A horse-drawn carriage maybe?”

“Do they sell those here?” Danny asked as looked around, his serious expression making the girls laugh.

“Probably. They have everything else. Should we ask?” Steve said, making the girls laugh harder.

“What about the footmen? You can’t ride in a carriage without the proper…uhm… people,” Danny said.

“A parasol?” Emma giggled.

“We’re going at night,” Steve said, shaking his head.

“We should have gotten glass slippers,” Dancy whispered to Emma loud enough for the guys to hear.

“How do you walk in those?” Emma laughed. “Or run away at midnight.”

“Come on, you two,” Steve said, shaking his head and leading them over to the counter.

They made their way back to the hotel, John, Zach, and Henry adequately impressed with their new outfits. The girls giggled. The boys listened. Steve called his friend Jackson.

“Pollock,” Steve said when he got an answer.

“Who’s he talking to?” Henry asked as they ate the food from room service.

“One of his SEAL friends, Jackson. I seriously doubt he’s the artist. But you know how they are about their nicknames,” Danny said.
“Jackson Pollock is dead,” Zachary told them to their nods.

“All right,” Steve said as he hung up. “Jackson is owed a favor by the manager of the theater where we’re going to see Stone Soup. We’ll get there an hour early and he’ll get us back stage to meet Chris Drake. For a couple of minutes,” Steve said, holding up one hand to forestall excessive squealing. “He can’t guarantee Drake will agree to it but he’s going to make some calls.”

“Thank you thank you thank you,” Emma said, dancing in excitement and giggling with Darcy. “He’s sooooo cute.”

“You can’t be too disappointed if it doesn’t work out,” Steve warned.

“We won’t. Thank you, Daddy,” Emma said. “I knew you’d do it. You can do anything. Anything!”

“Thank you, baby girl,” Steve said, hugging her back when she threw her arms around his waist. He bent down to kiss her head until she released him to giggle with Darcy.

“They are never going to sleep tonight,” Danny said, shaking his head.

“One night of no sleep won’t harm them,” Steve said with a huge smile.

“I guess that’s true,” Danny said with an indulgent smile.

~o0o~

The interviews the next day were very much like the ones from the day before. Steve didn’t mind answering the same questions, providing the same responses. Kirby Greenly was not a SEAL. No, he could not have been in Pakistan. Yes, Steve was quite sure even though he wasn’t at liberty to reveal how he knew.

He enjoyed talking to the editor of the NY Times Book Review. It was a more relaxed atmosphere as the discussion occurred in the NY Times offices rather than under the hot lights and in front of an audience.

“It’s not even a particularly good work of fiction,” Steve told Sam Tanenhaus, the man in charge of the supplement.

“I agree,” Mr. Tanenhaus agreed with a grimace. “There are times when we wonder how anyone could have decided the words on the page are worth killing trees over.”

“His book doesn’t bear a passing resemblance to the truth,” Steve said.

Mr. Tanenhaus asked other relevant questions concerning the book, some of which Steve could answer and some he had to refuse.

After a very pleasant hour, Lt. Brown knocked on the door to Mr. Tanenhaus’ office to remind Steve that they needed to get to the Chatter With Cathy Show.

“Thank you for your time, Governor,” Mr. Tanenhaus said, shaking Steve’s hand. “And your service to our country.”

Steve acknowledged his appreciation before leaving with the Lieutenant. He had a text from Danny
saying the kids were loving the Museum of Natural History and were discussing the possibility of moving in permanently. Steve laughed before texting back that it would save on food if they moved in. He also had a text from Zach asking if Steve was still going to be able to meet him at the Met. Steve assured Zach he’d be there right around noon.

The interview with Cathy Brady was a little bit dizzying. She had read the book but was more interested in talking to Steve about his life than his reaction to Kirby Greenly. Cathy was bubbly and flirtatious and slightly over the top. Steve was careful to mention several times that he was in New York with his husband and children but he wasn’t sure she heard him.

“That was strange,” he said to Lt Brown as they were driving away from the studio.

“I should have warned you, sir,” Lt Brown said in apology. “She reacts like that when she finds her guest especially attractive.”

“I’m old enough to be her father,” Steve said, shaking his head.

Lt Brown laughed at that, pulling up the Metropolitan Museum of Art. “Do you want me to drive you and your family to the show tonight?”

“That won’t be necessary but thank you. We rented a car. Or I guess the Navy did,” Steve said.

“Very good. I’ll see you Sunday morning at 0530.”

“I’ll be ready,” Steve agreed, closing the door and going up the impressive steps to enter to Museum.

_I’m here. Where are you?_  

_Third floor. Southwest corner_ Zach texted back immediately.

Steve made his way up, not hurrying by the magnificent artwork on display on every wall. It was mesmerizing and awe-inspiring.

“Steve,” Zachary said when Steve arrived in the Picasso exhibit. “Here it is,” he said, pointing at _Les demoiselles d’Avignon_.

Steve joined Zachary in front of the painting, understanding the attraction and the inspiration it had sparked in Zachary. Henry was on a nearby bench, reading from his iPad.

They studied the painting in silence for several minutes before Steve glanced over at Zach who was staring breathlessly at the painting. “What is it about this one in particular?” Steve asked Zach.

Zach started, looking over at Steve. “The women are not hiding who they are. They are presenting themselves for evaluation and do not concern themselves with the opinions of those viewing them.”

Steve nodded, hearing more than Zach was saying. Zachary had been subject to stares and whispers his entire life. He handled it as well as anyone could expect but it still impacted his self-perception and his view of the world at large. Seeing the representation of the women painted in the cubist style, women practically daring the world to disapprove, must have been reassuring and even empowering to Zach.

“I see that now,” Steve agreed. “We need to find a high quality reproduction of the painting for you.”
“Henry is researching that inquiry now,” Zach said, looking over at him.

“Any luck?” Steve asked, going over to the bench to sit next to Henry.

“I’ve found several that are faithful reproductions,” Henry said, showing them to Steve. He silently pointed at the prices, Steve nodding.

“It’s fine. Have you seen these, Zach?” Steve asked.

“They are a lot of money, Steve,” Zach said evenly, as concerned as he ever was.

“I see that, Zach. You have to know I don’t mind.”

“I will be able to work it off for you,” Zach said, sounding a little more hopeful.

“Of course,” Steve agreed. “We’ll work it out. Tell Henry which one you want and he’ll order it.”

Zach nodded very nearly excited, sitting next to Henry. After giving Henry his credit card, Steve wondered around looking at the other paintings. Picasso wasn’t his particular taste but he could almost understand the appeal. And as Zach’s thought processes were very different from his own, he accepted that Picasso sparked Zach in a way his work failed to do for him.

They spent another 45 minutes with Picasso before Zach said he was ready to join the other children at the Museum of Natural History. Steve texted Danny to make sure they were still there, receiving an immediate confirmation.

*Fourth floor. Gawking at the dinosaurs.*

Steve laughed, going to the Museum with Zach and Henry and finding the rest of the family in the dinosaur exhibit. The kids told Steve everything they had seen, rattling off facts he had no idea they could retain.

“We should herd them back to the hotel,” Danny said after another hour at the museum. “It’s going to be a late night.”

“True,” Steve agreed, rounding up the children with Henry’s help. “You’ve been here all morning. And we’re going to be up really late. We need to eat then sleep for a little while.”

The kids tried to protest but reluctantly conceded that sleeping before going to Broadway was probably in their best interest.

It didn’t take long to arrive back at the hotel where they stopped in for a late lunch, the restaurant nearly empty. That made it easier for them to find a table that would accommodate all seven of them.

The waitress was prompt and attentive, alternating between seeing to their needs and flitting shamelessly with Danny.

“Your eyes are so blue,” Emma said in a loud stage whisper.

“So you are from *Hawaii*?” John whispered loudly in the same voice.

“I got nothing,” Steve said, shaking his head. “Should we excuse ourselves so you and Miss Shannon can have some quality time?”

“You are worse than them,” Danny informed Steve. Steve just shrugged, grinning at Danny unrepentantly.

“Are you children done eating everything not nailed down?” Steve asked, getting their general agreement. They went upstairs after Steve had signed the check. It took a while but the kids finally wound down enough to go nap. “If you don’t sleep, that’s fine. You still need to rest.”

“What are you doing?” Danny asked when they were finally in the living area by themselves.

“I need to check my email. Respond to some phone calls. The House Speaker has called eight time. Eight times, Danno. Why can he take it up with Kono?”

“That’s an excellent question,” Danny agreed. “Make your calls. I think I’m going to catch 40 winks too.”

“I’ll be there in half an hour,” Steve said as Danny went into their bedroom.

It was closer to a hour later when Steve was finally able to shut down his email and silence his phone. He shed his clothes to slip into bed behind Danny, curling his body to match Danny’s sleep warmed one.

“Do you know I’m married?” Danny’s sleepy voice asked as he stirred.

“Why do I care?” Steve responded, kissing his shoulder. “You didn’t care in the restaurant.”

“You just aren’t used to me being the one they flirt with,” Danny told him, turning over to smile at his goofy husband.

“That’s bluntly untrue. People flirt with you constantly. You just ignore them.”

“I believe you have me confused with you,” Danny told him with a sleepy smile. “Are you going to talk or nap with me?”

“I was hoping to nap but now all this talk of you being married makes me reconsider.”

“What’s with the air quotes around married? I heard you were married too.”

“Ahhhh,” Steve said, waving it away. “He’ll never know.”

“Uh huh,” Danny said, kissing the hollow at the base of Steve’s neck. “If we tried to do the nasty, the kids would walk in, wouldn’t they?”

“Without a doubt,” Steve agreed reluctantly.

“Your children should be better behaved than that,” Danny scolded sleepily.
“Next time,” Steve promised, kissing his forehead.

“We are not having any more children. What are you even saying?”

“Go to sleep,” Steve laughed, kissing him again.

“Calm down, Emma,” Steve said gently as she bounced on her toes. “We’re leaving in two minutes. We’ll be to the theater well before Jackson arrives.”

“What if there is traffic? What if we can’t find a place to park? What if he’s not there and we can’t get backstage?” Emma said, her words accompanied by a great deal of hand-waving which Danny would never admit looked familiar.

“We have plenty of time, Em,” Danny told her. “You have your sweaters? Boys, you’re ready?” They all agreed they were ready, heading for the door. “You have the tickets?” he asked Steve.

“They are at will-call,” Steve assured them. “I have my driver’s license. That’s all we need to collect them.”

They finally made their way down to the parking garage for the car, Danny arguing that he was driving and that was all there was to it. Steve put up a token protest but easily gave in, making sure the kids and Henry were safely buckled in. Emma and Dancy were so busy giggling they barely heard anything the guys said to them.

They had to circle the block twice before they could find a place to park, the attendant assuring them that they were as close to the theater as they could be. Steve held Emma’s hand as Danny took Darcy’s despite their insistence that they weren’t babies. But Steve and Danny knew that the closer they got to the theater, the more likely it would be that they would make a break for it. The protests were pro-forma at best, neither of the girls minding having their hands held.

When they got to the backstage door, a tall, attractive man was waiting. It was clear from his posture and alert demeanor that, like Steve, he was ex-military.

“Pollock,” Steve said with a smile.

“Governor Smooth Dog,” Jackson responded. “You are looking good for an old man.”

“As are you,” Steve agreed. “You remember Danny and our sons John and Zachary. Our daughter Emma and her friend Dancy.”

“Of course. It’s tremendous to see you all again. Henry,” Jackson said, shaking his hand.

“Nice to see you again as well,” Henry said.

“Are we going to be able to meet him?” Emma asked in excitement when there was a pause in the greeting. She was beaming up at Jackson who could have not disappointed that face if his life depended on it.

“Absolutely. He’s waiting for you right now,” Jackson confirmed. He distributed the backstage passes, admitting it was probably overkill but the theater owner was sometimes too controlling about
who was behind the stage.

Emma and Dancy immediately followed him through the heavy door, a rugged looking older man stopping the family with a quirk of his eyebrow. “What’s this then?” he asked not unkindly.

“These are the special guests to meet Chris Drake,” Jackson said, the older man nodding.

“They look like a motley bunch,” the man said with a laugh. “See that they don’t steal the props.”

“You got it,” Jackson promised, leading them between prop furniture and under a couple of ladders. They emerged into a dimly lit, narrow hallway with faded blue paint. Jackson knocked on a nondescript door that was immediately opened by a young man dressed in jeans and a cotton plaid shirt. He had short brown hair and the bluest eyes they had ever seen. Steve couldn’t help but think that they were bluer than Danny’s and that didn’t seem possible.

“Hello,” Chris Drake said with a warm, open smile. “You must be the Williams-McGarrett family.”

“We are,” Steve said, reaching over Emma and Dancy’s head to shake his hand. “I’m Steve. This is my husband Danny. Henry, Zach, John, Emma and Dancy,” Steve said, indicating each member of the family as he named them.

“Come in,” Chris said, backing out of the doorway. “I don’t have a ton of room but if you don’t mind being crowded.”

“We’re used to it,” Danny told him, making sure they were all in. “We really appreciate you taking the time to see us.”

“It’s my pleasure,” Chris said. “Jackson said you had come all the way from Hawaii in order to see the show.”

“That’s not 100% accurate,” Steve said with a laugh.

“No. I didn’t think that it was. Especially since I saw you on the Jon Stewart show,” Chris laughed.

“You never were closely acquainted with the truth,” Steve told Jackson, shaking his head.

“That’s not entirely true,” Jackson claimed.

“Even though I’m not the main reason you came to New York, I’m glad you were able to stop by,” Chris said warmly. “I heard that two of the kids were possibly fans? I’m guessing it’s John and Zach?”

“It’s not them,” Emma giggled. “It’s me and Dancy.”

“I see,” Chris said, turning his smile to them, making them giggle even more.

“Are you going to be in the next movie?” Emma asked with a huge smile up at him.

“I plan to. How could the Superheroes defend the Universe without Sealman?” Chris asked.

“They couldn’t,” Emma confirmed with a nod.
“Steve was a SEAL,” Dancy said shyly.

“I’ve heard that,” Chris said. “I try to do them justice.”

“You do,” John said. “Dad isn’t a huge fan of superhero movies.”

“I’m sorry,” Steve said.

“I would imagine being in charge of Hawaii doesn’t leave a lot of time for movies,” Chris said in understanding.

“Not a lot,” Steve agreed. “I’ll make a point of staying the next six times Emma insists on watching it.”

“No need to go overboard,” Chris laughed.

“Six times will be one day’s worth,” Danny said, kissing her head.

“Thank you,” Chris said. “Are you going to see my next movie? It will be out at Christmas.”

“Is that Out of Left Field?” Emma asked.

“As though you don’t have your iPhone alarm set for the exact day?” John teased.

“That’s so not true,” Emma claimed.

“Will it open in Hawaii the same day?” Henry asked.

“They generally do,” Chris said. “Then in February we’ll start filming The Superheroes Save the Universe.”

“In Hawaii?” Emma asked, looking from Chris to Steve and back.

“In Hawaii,” Chris confirmed. “If you are interested, I can have the company alert your office and you can come on location.”

“I think there might be some interest in that,” Steve said, looking down at Emma and Dancy nearly in hysterics from excitement.

“You’ll fly us, won’t you, Daddy? To the jungle where they’ll film it. Right?” Emma gushed.

“Yes, baby, I will fly you,” Steve agreed with a laugh. “Let our office know if you need any assistance with permits or resources.”

“Your office of film was extremely helpful during the first shoot,” Chris said. “But I will pass on your offer to the producers.”

“Mr. Drake,” Dancy said softly, holding out the Sharpie she had brought with her. “Would it be okay if I got your autograph?”

“Of course, cupcake,” he said, accepting the pen and signing the playbill Jackson had provided them. He then signed Emma’s before handing them back. “We need some photos, surely.”
Emma and Dancy giggled, Chris sitting on a loveseat and patting the cushions on each side. Emma and Dancy immediately sat next to him, their posture stiff as they avoided contact. He put his arm over their shoulders and they relaxed into him. Danny took a bunch of pictures on his phone, Steve also snapping some photos as back-up.

“We’ll tweet them,” Emma said to Dancy as the photo-op continued. “Make everybody back home jealous.”

“No gloating, girls,” Danny said with a fatherly tone. “Posting is fine. Rubbing it in is not.”

“You need a family picture,” Jackson said, accepting Steve’s phone. They all squeezed on and around the loveseat, the family refusing to let Henry avoid being included.

“Of course you have to be in the picture,” Emma said to him, Henry nodding in acquiescence.

“What else have you done?” Chris asked when the pictures were all taken.

The girls told him where they had gone, John telling him they were going to the Mets game tomorrow.

“Maybe they’ll manage to win,” Chris laughed.

“That would be different,” Danny said.

“We visited the Metropolitan Museum of Art,” Zachary said, speaking for the first time.

“That’s one of my favorite places in the entire world,” Chris said, his face lighting up with the truth of the statement. “Did you get to see the Picasso exhibit? It is out of this world.”

“We did,” Zach said. “I have never seen a more beautiful collection of artwork.”

“I feel the exact same way,” Chris said. “I know some people think he was mad. I think he was a genius. Which may have driven him insane.”

“They are often closely aligned,” Zach said. “Les demoiselles d’Avignon is evocative and expressive in ways I did not expect.”

“I know,” Chris said in excitement. “I mean, I’ve seen it in books and on-line. But seeing it in person is nothing I was prepared for. It is breathtaking.”

Zach agreed with his assessment, discussing the collection, Chris enthusiastic in his appreciation of it.

When they had been in his dressing room for 20 minutes, Jackson told them they really needed to go, to give Mr. Drake time to prepare.

“I hope we didn’t outstay our welcome,” Danny said.

“Not in the least,” Chris said with a genuine smile. “And I’ll contact your office when I’m in Hawaii.”

“We look forward to it,” Steve confirmed, herding the family out. Jackson led them to the box office,
taking his leave after many thanks from everyone, especially the girls. “I have tickets reserved,”
Steve told the woman in the box office. He handed over his driver’s license, very soon getting an
envelope through the slot. He opened it to distribute the tickets, shaking his head. “I think there’s
been a mistake,” he said, sliding the envelope back through. “We don’t have reservations for
orchestra seats.”

The woman typed into her computer before looking up at him, seeing him for the first time. “The
owner of the theater upgraded your seats, sir. Center orchestra,” she said with a nod.

“Oh. Well. Thank you,” Steve said, retrieving the envelope. “Center orchestra,” he said to Danny
who raised an eyebrow at that.

“Nice to be you,” Danny said, taking his ticket.

“Really, Daddy? We’re up front? So we can see everything?” Emma said in giddy happiness.

“Apparently so,” Steve said, going with the family into the opulent theater. The front was much
different from the back. Clearly all the maintenance went into the public areas, not where the actors
were housed.

They got settled in their seats, Emma requesting Danny’s phone so she could post the pictures. She
showed the posts to Danny before making them public to prove she was not planning to rub it in.
With his approval, she put them on-line, Dancy posting the ones on Steve’s phone.

“Everyone’s phone’s on silent, right?” Henry said in reminder. They all confirmed they were just as
the house lights began to dim.

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Emma and Dancy thought the play was perfect. Chris Drake was perfect. It was all perfect!!! The
guys weren’t quite as impressed but didn’t do anything to burst their bubbles of happiness. Zach told
John he found the plot vacuous but the performances were more than adequate. John thought the
leading actress was hot like fire, a remark he had not intended for his fathers to hear. They graciously
pretended they had not.

They finally got Emma and Dancy settled in bed an hour after they had gotten back to the hotel. John
and Zach disappeared shortly afterwards, Henry going across with them.

“Well. This is has been a full day,” Danny said when he and Steve were in bed. Steve was checking
his email and mostly listening to Danny.

“It has. Good thing the baseball game is the only thing we have planned tomorrow,” Steve said.

“Sure is,” Danny agreed. “Anything important going on back home?”

“Kono is threatening to quit. Be a full-time mom. Chin wants to blow up Molokai. The house
speaker sent me 4 more emails. The last one is all caps,” Steve said, turning his computer to show it
to Danny.

“Mature,” Danny said. “Tell Chin he can blow up Molokai if the speaker is on it.”

“Good plan,” Steve agreed. “The Secretary of the Navy sends her appreciation for my appearances.
Apparently I’m going to get a bonus from them.”

“Huh,” Danny said. “We can use it to buy John a car.”

“Or I can buy you the Porsche you’ve always wanted.”

“You’d never let me drive it,” Danny said with a wave.

“I might,” Steve said, typing a reply to an email.

“Okay. As long as it’s red,” Danny said, his eyes drifting closed.

“Not silver like your Camaro?”

“Whatever. If you drive a Porsche, it doesn’t really matter what color it is. I just want it as a chick-magnet.”

“What do you want chicks for? We can’t keep birds in the Governor’s residence,” Steve teased.

“Shut up,” Danny said, falling asleep before he finished saying it.

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The baseball game was a resounding success. The team reps took exceptionally good care of the family, making sure they had everything they needed, including popcorn, soda, peanuts, and more souvenirs than they could carry. A bonus was that the Mets won in the 10th inning on a home run.

The kids were pretty much worn out when they got back to the hotel. They ate a quick dinner in the restaurant before going up to their rooms where they watched some TV. The kids fell asleep before the first commercial, Steve and Danny tucking in Emma and Dancy. Henry herded the boys across the hall, making sure they were settled.

Steve did some work before he succumbed as well, falling asleep way earlier than he had in a very long time. But as he had to be up and ready before the sun the next morning, he gave in and let sleep overtake him.

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“Huh?” Danny grunted when the alarm went off.

“I’m sorry, Babe. Go back to sleep,” Steve whispered as he reluctantly climbed out of bed.

“What is?”

“4:30. Lt Brown will be here in an hour. I need to get ready,” Steve said.

“Eat,” Danny said into his pillow.

“I will,” Steve assured him, kissing his head. “Go back to sleep.”

“Uhn,” Danny responded, following his suggestion and falling completely to sleep.
Steve showered and dressed, going down to the lobby to find some coffee and a couple of muffins. At 5:30 precisely, Lt Brown entered the hotel, finding Steve easily.

“I see you are ready,” she said with a bright smile.

“I suppose I am,” Steve said. “Would you like some coffee?”

“I would. Thank you,” she said as Steve purchased her a cup.

They made their way to the studio, the trip quick with the virtual lack of traffic so early on a Sunday. Steve was escorted to make-up, the experience much like it had been each of the previous times. He was thankful that his tan prevented the need for too much coverage. That done, he was shown the green room where Lt Brown waited with a carafe of hot, fresh coffee.

“Is he here?” Steve asked her as he sipped the coffee.

“He is,” she said. “He’s in a different room. They didn’t think having you wait together was a particularly good idea.”

“It wouldn’t be,” Steve confirmed. He looked over at the door as it opened to reveal a man holding an iPad.

“Commander. Or Governor,” the man said, looking up Steve.

“I’m him,” Steve said with a nod.

“I’m Bruce Vegas, associate producer. Thank you for agreeing to appear on Sunday Morning Round-up.”

“Thank you for having me,” Steve said.

“I don’t think I need to give you the guidelines some of our guests need. Many others, like you, are veterans of TV appearances. You know the protocols and the rules.”

“I do,” Steve said.

“Very good. Do you watch our show?” Bruce asked.

“On occasion. I’m not a regular viewer.”

“I understand,” Bruce said. “Victor Blake will allow a free-flowing discussion but as you may know, he will intervene should the atmosphere become overly contentious.”

“I have seen that,” Steve agreed. “I appreciate the way he balances his responsibilities to allow the guests to disagree but not denigrate into a brawl.”

“It’s a skill he’s learned over the years,” Bruce said with a nod. “I’ll be back by in five minutes to take you to the studio. Do you have any questions I can help you with?”

“No I don’t,” Steve said. “Thank you for the information.”

“You are very welcome, Commander. Governor. Ermmm…which do you prefer?” Bruce asked,
“Governor,” Mr. Blake said, greeting him with a firm handshake. “Thank you for appearing with us.”

“Thank you for having me as a guest,” Steve said in response.

“I don’t think you’ve met Mr. Greenly,” Mr. Blake said, looking over at the other man when he stood.

“I haven’t,” Steve said, not initiating a handshake. Neither did the Mr. Greenly who looked at Steve with an expression of antagonism bordering on hatred.

“Governor Williams-McGarrett. Kirby Greenly,” Mr. Blake said formally. “Sit, please.” The three of
them sat, Mr. Blake at the head of the table, Steve and Kirby on opposite sides. “We’ll begin the interview with a brief recap of your book, Mr. Greenly. I’ll open it to discussion following that. While I understand there will be some disagreement, I expect only civil discourse from each of you.”

Steve felt like he was back in school but he had the feeling the warning wasn’t directed primarily toward him. He agreed, Kirby also acknowledging the ground rules.

“Any questions? We’ll go live in three minutes,” Mr. Blake said.

“I don’t have any questions to ask,” Kirby said, shaking his head. He was silently daring Steve to ask anything which Steve thought was fairly hysterical.

“I’m all set,” Steve said.

There was very little said as they waited for the show to officially begin. Steve could see the director silently counting down after the announcement was made that there were 20 seconds to air.

“Good morning and welcome to Sunday Morning Round-up,” Mr. Blake said to the camera, the lights bright, the studio silent. “After this review of the weekend’s top stories, we’ll turn to our two guests.” The lights faded as the pre-taped news played in the background.

As the lights returned to their on-air brightness, Mr. Blake made the introductions, giving the audience a brief background on Steve and Kirby. Steve’s introduction took twice as long as Kirby’s since Kirby’s main claim to fame seemed to have been writing a fictional book he claimed was fact.

“Mr. Greenly, your accounts of the events in Pakistan have been called into question,” Mr. Blake said bluntly. “What do you say about those statements?”

Steve was watching Kirby with what he knew Danny would call his thousand-yard-SEAL-death-stare. He thought it was still fairly effective although it never worked on the children. They seemed immune from most of his formerly effective tactics to gain the upper hand.

“Those files remain classified,” Kirby said, his voice nearly quivering in anger. “I could not have written my account if I hadn’t been there.”

“Yet there are those, including Governor Williams-McGarrett, who have stated your version is not true,” Mr. Blake said.

“There is no way he can know if my version is right or wrong,” Kirby claimed.

“I do know,” Steve said calmly and firmly. “I know you weren’t there.”

“And you were?” Kirby sneered.

“If you were a SEAL as you claimed, you would know that information is classified. The fact is that you were not a SEAL. Not then and not now,” Steve said. Kirby looked as though Steve had punched him which was a real temptation.

“You have no proof of that,” Kirby countered.

Steve reached down for the folder he had brought with him, pulling out one sheet of paper which he handed to Mr. Blake. “Would a letter from the Secretary of the Navy be adequate proof?” Steve
asked him, still pinning him with his gaze.

“It’s a forgery,” Kirby tried, his desperation coming through.

“It certainly looks authentic to me,” Mr. Blake said, holding it up so that the camera could show it to the audience. The letter said that at no time was Kirby Greenly a SEAL and his account of the events in Pakistan were neither accurate nor sanctioned as official. It was signed by the Secretary of the Navy and witnessed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

“Of course they are disavowing knowledge of the events and my existence,” Kirby said.

“That’s only true on TV and in movies,” Steve said. “They have never disavowed my missions. Nor do they claim I was never a SEAL.”

“If they don’t disavow your missions, are you admitting you were in Pakistan?” Kirby demanded.

“Disavowing and remaining classified are two distinct designations. I have never claimed I was a part of the team who took out bin Laden. I do know that you were not,” Steve said.

“If you weren’t there, you can’t be sure I wasn’t,” Kirby said.

“You were not a SEAL,” Steve stated again.

“Maybe you are the one who’s lying about his service,” Kirby said his desperation growing. He was sweating, his hands shaking, his face flushed bright red.

“I’m Governor of Hawaii,” Steve said. “My opponents would have discovered my lies if I took the service of others as my own. Additionally, I was still a SEAL when I was recruited to head-up the Five-0 task force. Then Governor Jameson would not have asked me to be responsible for Five-0 if I had stolen the uniform I wore when I first met her.”

“Is that the same Governor you were accused of murdering?” Kirby sneered.

“Accused yes. I was also exonerated as I was innocent of the crime. I was a reservist the entire time. The Navy did not strip me of my rank nor my clearance to view classified records.”

Mr. Blake looked at Steve with an expression of reflected triumph. That he wanted Kirby to go up in flames was clear. He finally turned to Kirby to break the brittle silence. “Your response, sir?”

“Documents can be forged. Records falsified,” Kirby tried.

“Then why can I find no records of your service?” Steve asked. “I have been permitted to search all of the SEAL personnel files. You appear in none of the records, classified or otherwise. Annapolis has no record of you. Nor do any of the SEAL training facilities.”

“Do you wish to reconsider your claims?” Mr. Blake asked Kirby. His tone was even with an underlying anger that made them hard enough to cut glass.

Kirby stared at Mr. Blake before turning to stare at Steve. “This interview is over,” Kirby announced. With that, he stood, removed the microphone clipped to his lapel and stormed off the set.

“Well,” Mr. Blake said, turning his focus on Steve. “I believe that settles it.”
“It looks that way,” Steve had to agree. “I’m sorry for his pain. But I cannot understand his motivation.”

“Those who have not achieved any level of professional success have been known to fabricate it to falsely bolster their self-perception.”

“I suppose that could explain it,” Steve said.

“You certainly are not lacking in success,” Mr. Blake said warmly.

“I have been very fortunate,” Steve said. “My personal successes are even more important to me than my professional ones. Nothing I have achieved would have been meaningful if I didn’t have the love of my family.”

“As it should be, Governor,” Mr. Blake confirmed, smiling at him.

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After chatting with Mr. Blake several more minutes, Steve was thanked for his appearance and disappeared during the commercial break. When he was backstage, he had a text waiting for him.

_Hurry the hell back here. You are about to get lucky._

Steve laughed, hitting reply. _Roger that. Get rid of the kids._

.Done._

Steve knew Lt Brown was studying him with a quizzical expression but some things didn’t need to be shared outside of the two parties involved.
Our Children - Our Heroes

Chapter Summary

John is now a quarterback in the NFL. Emma is (hopefully) headed for BUD/s training. Bumps in the road are to be expected and dealt with, with love as always!

Chapter Notes

This chapter is dedicated to minou_demimonde for too many reasons to list. Thanks BB!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was 7:00 a.m. in Hawaii which meant it was 9:00 in San Francisco. Steve had already been for a swim in the friendly ocean, taken a shower, and brought two cups of hot coffee up to settle in with Danny to make their weekly phone call to John. They were pleased at how well John was settling into being a part of the 49ers, not that they thought he’d be anything but spectacularly successful. So far his biggest challenge had been to get his entire last name to fit on the back of his jersey but the 49ers assured him it would be worked out before the first pre-season game.

“Hey,” Steve said when he sat on the bed, leaning against Danny’s back to peek at his face. “I know you aren’t really asleep.”

“I would be if a SEAL octopus wasn’t all up in my personal space,” Danny grumbled.

“Seals don’t mate with octopi,” Steve told him. “If you don’t want this coffee, it’s more for me.”

“Coffee?” Danny said, rolling on his back to look up at Steve. “You didn’t say there was coffee.”

“Right. Because you couldn’t smell it,” Steve said, waiting until Danny was sitting up before handing him his cup.

“Hmm…” Danny snorted. “Call your son before he’s too busy to talk.”

“Roger that,” Steve agreed, speed dialing John.

“Hello?” a breathless, decidedly feminine voice answered.

“Hi,” Steve said, barely disguising his laugh. “Can I talk to John, please?”

“Who may I ask is calling?” she asked. It sounded automatic like she said it a lot when she was fully awake.

“His father,” Steve said.
“Oh shit,” the same voice said. They could hear muted scrambling and very quiet cursing. “Oh shit-shit-shit, John. It’s your father. Oh shit.”

“Calm down,” John’s distant voice said with a laugh. “Dad’s cool.”

“Oh shit-shit….” The connection was cut and Steve looked over at Danny who was laughing with him.

“Oops,” Danny said with a shrug, sipping his coffee.

“Yeah,” Steve said, watching the phone. It didn’t take long for John’s number to appear and Steve immediately connected. “Our future daughter-in-law?”

John laughed. “Not so much,” he said. There was the faint sound of a door closing before John resumed his conversation. “Don’t think we’ll be going out again.”

“Or staying in?” Danny asked.

“We could change the subject,” John suggested.

“Embarrassing you is way too much fun,” Danny informed him.

“Steve,” John said in pleading.

“Sorry, Bud. He’s right,” Steve laughed at him.

“You two are unbelievable. Where is your righteous indignation?” John demanded.

“You’re an adult, Bud. Your choices are yours. You were careful, right?” Danny asked.

“Please. Please change the subject,” John pleaded.

“All right,” Steve said, finally taking pity on him. “How was practice?”

“Really good. It’s clicking like it should. It’s easier than I thought it’d be,” John said.

“That’s an excellent sign,” Steve said. “How’s Millerbeck? He still busting your chops?”

“Some,” John said, sighing at the thoughts of the linebacker who was making it his mission to make John miserable. Maybe it was to keep the rookie humble but John had had about enough of the razing.

“You tell Coach?” Danny asked.

“Not yet. I’m trying to handle it. It may come to blows. You got a problem with that?” John asked.

“No blood no points,” Steve said.

“That is not appropriate,” Danny scolded with a laugh. “This isn’t SEAL school.”

“Whatever,” John and Steve said in unison.
“Are you still coming to the first preseason game?” John asked.

“Of course,” Steve assured him. “We want to meet our future daughter-in-law.”

“Stop, Dad. Just stop,” John pleaded, getting no sympathy but even more laughter at his expense.

“Chin is coming with,” Steve said. “That won’t be a problem, right?”

“No. Of course not,” John said. “I thought he stopped trailing around behind you after you left office.”

“He loves San Francisco,” Danny said.

“The more the merrier,” John said. They chatted for a while longer about John’s learning curve as the incoming quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers. He had been chosen second overall in the most recent draft, the 49ers’ abysmal recent record giving them a high pick. Danny was thrilled that John ended up on the west coast instead of the east. Steve was happy that John was making the transition from college to pros so easily. There was still a lot for John to learn, but so far all signs were positive for his career and by extension his team.

When they finished their conversation with John, they called Emma but it went straight to voicemail. They weren’t surprised since she was fully engulfed in trying to finish at Annapolis in order to be ready to start with the next BUD/s class if she was selected. She was one of three women who had applied and none of them were sure they’d be accepted. Change never came quickly in the Armed Services and accepting female SEALs was no exception. Danny had reservations about Emma being a SEAL but Steve did not bother to contain his pride at her determination. They were all waiting anxiously until the roster of the next BUD/s class was announced. Steve thought it would be right before graduation in a couple of weeks.

~o0o~

Steve and Danny were watching the post-game news conference. John had led the 49ers to a 24-14 victory over the Philadelphia Eagles in his first official professional game. The 49ers had gone 2-2 in preseason, John wishing it had been more in favor of the wins. But it was pretty universally agreed that John was the future of quarterbacking on the pro level.

Steve and Danny would have liked to be there to witness his first “real game” in person except it was on the east coast. And Danny had so much animosity left over toward the Eagles from his days as a Jets fan, Steve didn’t trust him in the “enemy’s” stadium.

They (mostly Steve) decided they would wait to attend John’s first regular season home game in San Francisco. Watching him play on TV was nearly as good, much focus from the commentators on John’s talent. Steve and Danny were beaming in pride throughout the game, barely able to contain their happiness at his success.

Now that the game was successfully in the books, Danny was mostly drowsing with his feet in Steve’s lap. The post-game press conference was playing on the TV although they were not paying a lot of attention. Mainly they were waiting for John’s turn at the podium. His coach had been effusive in his praise of John’s talent and his ability to lead the team to a resounding victory.

At last, John stepped up to the microphone, looking relaxed and profession in his suit and tie. It was actually one of Danny’s ties, John stealing it as a good luck charm the last time he’d been home.
Danny certainly didn’t mind even when Steve had laughed at them both.

John said all those things that were expected – it was a team effort; every team member did their part; as early as it was in the season, he thought they were in for good things; they would play each game one at a time.

“He looks so grown-up,” Danny said, shaking his head in wonder. “Is this really our little boy?”

“Not so little any longer,” Steve said.

“Don’t remind me,” Danny said with a sigh. “When did we get so old?”

“Would you stop?” Steve scolded. “We’re still spring chickens.”

“Old roosters you mean,” Danny said. “When was the last time anyone flirted with you?”

“Yesterday. At the dry cleaners. Lilly wouldn’t stop talking to me. And not just about starch in your shirts either,” Steve said.

“She could be your granddaughter,” Danny said, shaking his head.

“Doesn’t mean I’m dead,” Steve reminded him. “And neither are you. As you proved this morning.”

“That was mostly you proving it, you insufferable controlling bastard.”

“Didn’t hear any complaints this morning,” Steve reminded him with a lecherous grin which should have been ridiculous yet wasn’t.

“Stop talking about sex when our son is on TV,” Danny finally said, turning his full attention to the screen as the news conference was opened to questions from the gathered reporters. The questions were as cliché as John’s answers, all of it well-rehearsed spontaneity. “Why do they bother?” Danny finally asked. “Why don’t the reporters hold up cards that say ‘requisite question #3’ and John can respond with ‘requisite answer #5’?”

“I always wanted to during the endless news conferences,” Steve confirmed.

“You never sounded bored,” Danny said. “I knew you were but nobody else would know.”

“That is reassuring,” Steve said. “I don’t miss their stupidity.”

“I know, Babe,” Danny said. He turned his focus back to the TV, a reporter in the middle of asking a question, an eerie silence falling over the press room.

“What is your response to the rumors?” the reporter was saying.

“I don’t have a response to rumors I’ve never heard,” John said with authority. It was a tone Danny recognized directly from Steve.

“Are you denying that you are gay?” the reporter asked, the rest of those gathered looking at him agape.

“I never said I was. I never said I wasn’t,” John said firmly.
“So you are admitting it?” the reporter responded, sounding like he had the scoop of all scoops.

“I not responding at all,” John informed him. “If I were to respond, I’d remind you that I have two fathers. Two fathers who could not love me or my siblings more. Two fathers who could not be better role models.”

Steve and Danny exchanged a look that was a mix of dismay and pride. It wasn’t the first time the unusual parentage of the children had been a topic of discussion. This was certainly the most public.

“Is the NFL ready for a gay quarterback?” the persistent reporter asked.

A team official began to approach the podium but John waved him off. “Was Hawaii ready for a gay governor? Because my fathers were already married when he was elected. They already had me and my sister. If you want to hold tight to your prejudices, I’m not your conscious. Both my fathers are my real life heroes and I could not ask for better parents. My sister will be the first female SEAL because our dads told us we could be anything we wanted, could do anything we wanted. And if you have a problem with that, both of them will be in San Francisco next Sunday. You can discuss your prejudices with them but they will kick your ass.” With that John nodded and left the podium to the applause of all those gathered.

The silence that had fallen over the living room was dispelled with the ringing of the phone. “Hey Bud,” Danny said, smiling at the identity of his caller.

“I’m really sorry,” John said quietly.

“What for? We couldn’t possibly be more proud of you,” Danny said, love in his voice.

“You have absolutely nothing to apologize for, Bud,” Steve added. “I don’t know that I’ve ever been more proud of you than I am right now.”

“I shouldn’t have used you like that,” John said, sounding slightly less dismayed.

“You didn’t use us, Bud,” Danny assured him. “You were explaining yourself. Your up-bringing wasn’t exactly conventional. If anyone has a problem with that, that’s on them, not you.”


“We will, baby. Stop worrying,” Steve said. “Go celebrate. We love you.”

“I love you too,” John said, taking a audible breath. “I’ll see you on Friday.”

“You know it. And we’ll kick as many asses as we need to,” Danny promised.

“Thanks,” John laughed. “You are the best. Both of you.”

“Ditto,” Danny agreed before disconnecting. He pressed the speed-dial for Emma, her phone answered right away.

“Hi ya, Danno,” she said as cheerful as ever.

“Hey pumpkin,” Danny responded. “Were you watching John’s game?”
“Totally. He really kicked some Eagle ass,” Emma laughed.

“He did,” Steve agreed. “Did you see the post-game conference?”

“I figured that’s why you were calling,” she said more seriously. “Why are people still so stupid?”

“No idea, baby,” Steve said. “He asked us to call you. He was concerned.”

“I’m fine, Daddy. He was right – you are our heroes. You being a SEAL protects me from a lot of the bullshit.”

“I’m glad,” Steve said. “We’ll be in San Francisco to kick some ass next week.”

“Good,” Emma said in approval. “Give John a hug for me.”

“You know we will,” they assured her. “You need anything?” Steve asked her.

“Daddy,” she laughed. “I’m not your baby any longer.”

“You will always be our baby,” Danny reminded her. “We love you.”

“I love you too,” she said before hanging up. She still had to finish packing up her dorm before she was shipped out to Coronado for SEAL school.

“We have the best children in the entire universe,” Danny said with a contented sigh.

“We most certainly do,” Steve said, leaning closer to kiss Danny. “If you will call Henry to make sure he knows he’s about to be flooded with phone calls, I’ll make you dinner.”

“It’s a deal. What are you making me?” Danny asked, trailing behind him to the kitchen.

“Whatever you want,” Steve said with a laugh.

“As you should,” Danny agreed, leaning against the cabinet to watch him root around in the frig. “You going to char meat over open flame?”

“Probably. Go to the store for some salad, please.”

“Nah,” Danny said, shaking his head and dialing Henry. “We’ll have fruit.”

“Copy that,” Steve said, taking the steaks outside to introduce them to the flame. Theirs would not be a long relationship.

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“Hey, Dad,” John said when Steve had the door to the suite open. John was smiling broadly at Steve before Steve waved him and his friend in. “This is Craig Millerbeck. Craig, this is my father Steve. And this is my father Danny,” he said when Danny emerged from the bathroom.

“John,” Danny said, wrapping him in a warm hug.
“Danno,” John laughed, finally extracting himself to hug Steve. “Danno always was a hugger,” John said to Craig who was watching with amusement.

“Always,” Steve agreed, waving them to the loveseat. “It’s good to meet you finally, Craig.”

“You two as well, sir,” Craig said. “John talks about you all the time.”

“He told us about you,” Danny said, narrowing his eyes as he said it. “Thank you for finally stopping with the harassment.”

“It’s my job,” Craig said. “He has to pay his rookie dues.”

“At least we don’t have to have a talk with you,” Danny said, trying for very stern but not entirely succeeding.

“Dad,” John said in request. “Let it go. He’s not a suspect in a crime.”

“Fortunately for him,” Danny said.

“How was your flight?” John asked, deciding Danny had embarrassed Craig enough for the first five minutes.

“It would have been better if someone hadn’t complained about the cramped quarters the entire way,” Steve said, Danny frowning at him.

“Kono wouldn’t loan you the Governor’s jet?” John laughed.

“Steve refused to ask,” Danny complained. “‘Inappropriate use of state funds.’ Pffft….”

“He’s right,” John said. “Anyway, Steve would have been way more crowded than you were.”

“Which I tried to tell him. But you know how he gets,” Steve said, shaking his head.

“Loud,” John said, laughing at Danny’s attempts to protest. “Craig said we should go to Marcelos’ for dinner.”

“They have the best seafood in the city,” Craig said. He was a couple of years older than John, his black hair short and tidy. He looked very much like a football player, not an ounce of fat on his 6 foot 5 inch frame. He was 101% muscles, his long sleeve button down barely able to contain his arms.

“Sounds perfect,” Danny agreed.

“You’ll have to pay,” John said. “I was fined by the league for threatening that reporter.”

“We feel for you,” Craig said. “They’ll take it out of your signing bonus.”

“Was he fined for inappropriate questions?” Steve asked.

“No but I think he was fired,” John said with a smile.

“Even better,” Danny said in agreement. “Of course we’ll buy you dinner. We can’t have you
starving. We’ll even take you there. We rented a car so Steve could drive it. God forbid I’d get a chance to.”

“Stop. Just stop,” Steve said.

“I do owe you both an apology,” Craig said sincerely.


“I am the reason the press thinks he’s gay,” Craig confessed.

“I told you that you have nothing to do with it,” John protested.

“You have to know we aren’t going to hold anything against you, son,” Steve told Craig warmly. “John can handle himself. Especially with appropriate back-up which he clearly has in you.”

“Yes sir,” Craig said, looking down at his hands.

“I don’t know why you keep saying that, Craig. You aren’t gay. Why would our friendship cause anyone to think either of us was?” John asked him. His tone implied he had said it all before – several times at least.

“The press decided I was when I was still in my rookie year. I didn’t have the nerve to stand up for myself then. It doesn’t matter how many women I date, they still report I’m not straight. It’s tiring,” Craig said.

“Any speculation on who you may or may not wish to date would be annoying,” Steve agreed. “We’ve had our share of it. We have learned to ignore it except when it hurts the children. Then we will forcefully intervene.”

“That’s why I wanted to apologize,” Craig said. “You are being mentioned in almost every article about the 49ers.”

“That would have happened no matter what,” John told him. “Steve was governor of Hawaii. Having me as a son is news, apparently. But we’re used to it. They were in the news all the time even before Steve ran for office.”

“Not that I wanted to run for Governor,” Steve said.

“Talk about old news,” Danny said, making Steve frown at him.

“It’s your fault I was elected Governor. I was perfectly happy at Five-0. But you decided I should run,” Steve reminded him.

“You cannot tell me you regret your eight years as Governor,” Danny told him. “I know better. You can lie to yourself but you cannot lie to me. You loved every minute of it.”

“Not the news conferences,” Steve said.

“Okay, not the news conferences. But the rest of it. Being in charge. Telling the whole state what to do. You were in your glory. If there wasn’t a two term limit, you’d still be governor.”
“That is so not true,” Steve protested. “The only positive of being Governor was that I didn’t have to spend all my time with you. I’m thinking of reenlisting in the Navy. The peace and quiet would be welcome after listening to you go on and on.”


“Do they really act like this all the time?” Craig asked John in amusement.

“All. The. Time,” John said, shaking his head. “Why isn’t Chin here? He can make you stop.”

“He has better things to do,” Danny said with a dismissive wave of his hand.

“How’s Emma?” John asked, as anxious for news her time in Coronado as he was to distract Danny.

“It’s a tough a go,” Steve said. “But she’s a tough woman. She’ll be fine.”

“Are you going to see her while you’re here?” John asked.

“I wanted to but somebody said we can’t. Are they held prisoner there? No visitors allowed? What is that about? She’s my baby girl. I should be able to see her when I’m on the mainland.” Danny didn’t pause in his rant as he stood up to follow the other guys out of the suite. That they left so he would stop talking either didn’t occur to him or he simply chose to ignore the obvious hint.

~o0o~

Danny was at the desk in the sunroom frowning at the computer when Steve came in from his swim. He was toweling his hair as he looked down at Danny’s unhappy expression.

“What’d the computer do to you this time?” Steve asked with a laugh.

“$155 for cable, Steven. That’s ridiculous. We barely watch TV but we pay $155 a month for cable. What is that about?” Danny asked still scowling at the computer.

“It’s not like we can’t afford it, Danno,” Steve reminded him, leaning one wet hip against the desk. “It also includes the internet and the landline for the alarm.”

“That’s not the point. The point is that they are thieves. If somebody had done something about their outrageous rates while that somebody was governor, we wouldn’t be paying $155 every month for cable.”

“Why are you even doing the bills? Henry will be here tomorrow to do them,” Steve reminded him.

“Why do we still have Henry? Are we paying him? Or is the state?” Danny asked with a frown up at Steve who was looming over him and dripping on his tee shirt.

“I’ve been out of office for five months. It just now occurred to you to ask?” Steve said with a laugh.

“Are we paying him?” Danny asked, returning most of his attention back to the computer. The part not consumed with having Steve’s warmth soaking into his skin.

“We have him because we are so accustom to him taking care of things, it’s easier to pay him than
deal with it ourselves. And it’s not like he minds. He said he’d do it for free, for the amusement of it. Kono pays him. Something about not ever letting me back near the Governor’s office again.”

“What’s the correlation there?” Danny asked.

“I don’t know. It’s apparently what’s done?” Steve said with a shrug as he took firm hold of the arm of Danny’s chair and swiveled it to face him.

“What? What are you doing? I’m being the responsible adult here and you’re, what, planning to sit on me?”

“Something way better than sit on you,” Steve promised, putting the towel on the floor before kneeling on it.

“Swimming always did make you horny,” Danny said with a smile, pulling him closer to kiss him.

“Lucky for you, huh?” Steve asked, rucking up Danny’s tee shirt to kiss his chest.

“Look at all that grey,” Danny said with a sigh, shaking his head.

“Stop,” Steve said. “I’m trying to concentrate. ‘Oh yes. Please more’ is all you are allowed to say.”

“Bossy,” Danny said into Steve hair when he bent his head to concentrate on opening Danny’s jean shorts.

Steve huffed at laugh, ticking Danny’s skin as he freed his forming erection. Seeing it made Steve smile before taking Danny into his mouth. Danny had to moan – it didn’t matter how long they’d been married or how many times Steve had chosen this particular distraction, Danny melted every single time. Having Steve’s warm, wet mouth around him was heaven, heaven right on Earth.

When Steve pulled Danny’s shorts down to reach for his heavy sacks, Danny moaned again, his hips thrusting up without his conscious permission. Steve, as always, anticipated his reaction and moved with him. Danny had choked him a few times when Steve first did it for him, but since then their rhythm had become as familiar as it was delicious.

“I want to have my way with you,” Danny whispered down to Steve’s hair. “I want to bend you over this desk, spread you out over the cable bill and the electric bill and make you forget about everything except me.”

“Mmm…” Steve hummed around him, increasing the suction.

“I want to mount you like a stallion and ride you. I want to give you everything I have and leave you begging for more,” Danny whispered. “I want to prove I’m not old and neither are you. I am going to show you how much I have left. I’m going to lick your ridiculous tattoos and bite your muscles until they are….” He stopped when the phone on the desk started to ring.

“Uhn,” Steve grunted, managing to shake his head.

“It’s Emma,” Danny said, reaching over with a quivering hand.

“Uhn,” Steve repeated, shaking his head again.
Danny managed to get Steve to back off before Danny connected. “Hey pumpkin,” he said, hoping against hope he sounded somewhere close to normal.

“Hey Daddy,” she said, tears in her voice.

“What’s wrong, baby?” Danny asked, frowning down at Steve who had wrapped one hand around Danny’s erection.

“Is Daddy there?” she asked with a sniff.


Steve frowned at him but reached for his coffee, taking a long drink before accepting the phone. “Hey baby. What’s up?”

“I don’t think I can do it, Daddy,” she sobbed, completely loosing her composure. “It’s so hard. I can’t do it.”

“All right, baby. Take a deep breath,” Steve soothed. “Breathe in and out. In and out.”

Danny stood and zipped up, frowning at the phone. “What happened, baby?”

“They don’t want me here. They said I’m a girl with no business doing this. They said SEALs are the best of the best and just because you are one doesn’t mean I can be,” she said, still crying.

“I know it’s hard, baby,” Steve said gently. “They are using your gender against you but if you were a guy they’d still be harassing you. You know that, don’t you?”

“Did they do it to you? Was it this hard for you?” she asked, a little calmer.

“It’s hard for everybody. It’s supposed to be.”

“Are they threatening you? To hurt you?” Danny demanded.

“No Daddy. They just keep insulting me. Telling me I won’t make it because I’m a girl. That’s so stupid. They aren’t better than me because I’m not a guy.”

“Of course they aren’t,” Steve agreed. “Are you keeping up?”

“Yeah. They say it’s because I get the girl tests. But I haven’t failed one yet.” She took a deep breath, sniffing. “I just don’t think I can do it, Daddy.”

“Do what, Em?” Steve asked.

“I don’t think I can stand the humiliation. And I’m so tired. I can barely think straight. But I don’t want you to be disappointed in me,” she said with a sob.

“Baby, listen to me,” Steve said firmly. “Are you listening?”

“Uh huh,” she acknowledged.
“I love you. Nothing will ever change that. Nothing. If you really want to quit, then quit. That is entirely your decision. I’m not a factor in it. Do you understand?”

“Uh huh,” she said, sounding calmer. “I don’t want to quit, Daddy. I do want to be the first female SEAL. But….”

“I know. It’s really really hard,” Steve said. “Not finishing the training is not anything to be ashamed of. If it’s too much, tell them you are requesting to be reassigned.”

“Danno?” she said tentatively.

“Yes, baby, I’m right here.”

“Will you be disappointed in me?”

“Oh baby. You don’t have to ask me that. You are my hero. I couldn’t be more proud of you. SEAL or not, I love you. I love who you are. And that will never change,” Danny told her.

“What if I robbed a bank?” she asked. They could hear the smile in her voice. It lightened their hearts.

“Then we’d have to talk,” Steve said with a smile. “But we’d know you thought it was for a really good reason or you wouldn’t do it.”

“Besides, you’d have to explain to Chin,” Danny warned.

“Oh. More reason not to do it,” she agreed with a laugh.

“Precisely,” Danny said, looking at Steve with concern in his eyes. Steve sent him silent reassurances, Danny nodding.

“Have you talked to John this week?” Steve asked.

“I tried but it kept going to voicemail. Are you going to Seattle to see him?” she asked.

“Maybe,” Steve said. “Danny is perseverating over the cable bill being so high. Next he’ll tell me we can’t afford to fly to Washington.”

“I would never,” Danny said firmly. “It’s $155. What kind of sense does that make?”

“Maybe John will give you a loan,” Emma suggested.

“We’ll ask him,” Steve agreed.

“Good. I know I interrupted you when I called,” Emma said. “Go back to whatever you were doing that I prefer to pretend you don’t ever do and have never done.”

“Maybe we were washing the dishes,” Danny suggested.

“Oh. Is that what you are calling it now?” Emma laughed.

“Stop,” Danny pleaded.
“Are you okay now, baby?” Steve asked more seriously.

“I think so. I’m not going to quit. Not yet. It would give them too much satisfaction. And I have every right to be here. I qualified just like they did.”

“Yes you did,” Steve agreed. “If you decide to leave, you aren’t to worry about me and Danno. You got that?”

“I do. I love you both. So much.”

“We love you too,” Steve said, disconnecting after their final goodbyes.

“Think she’ll make it?” Danny asked up to Steve.

Steve could only shrug. “She’s our daughter. Stubborn pride will probably see her through if nothing else.”

“You are the stubborn one. Not me. I’m free and breezy. Swaying with the wind.”

“You are also full of shit,” Steve informed him, stalking him and reaching for his tee shirt.

“Stop. What are you doing? We just got off the phone with our daughter who was sobbing. And you want to finish what you started?”

“You promised,” Steve informed him. “And all of our bills come electronically. So how you think you are going to spread me out over them is something I’d like you to explain.”

Danny made an attempt to prevent Steve from removing his shirt and shorts but his heart wasn’t in it. By the time he was naked, Steve’s swim trunks had been lost as well. “I’ll still bend you over the desk,” Danny said pulling him down for a kiss.

“It’s a deal,” Steve agreed lifting him up onto it.

“Wait. How is me sitting on the desk bending you over it?”

“We’ll get to that part,” Steve promised, kissing the protests out of Danny’s mouth. Not that Steve really minded the complaints. The sound of them were the sound of home as surely as the waves crashing on the shore outside the door.

Chapter End Notes

I have every intention of making Emma the first ever female SEAL. But I haven’t done enough research to figure out what that will mean. Hopefully I will be writing a chapter about her transition. But I don't want to do the SEALs any disservice. I hope that makes some sense!
Chapter Summary

Steve and Danny are injured on the job. The kids worry, as they would. Chin, Kono, and Charlie help out once Steve and Danny are released from the hospital.

(It will be posted in at least 2 parts. Yeah, 2 parts, I think.)

Comments are love, as always! <3

Chapter Notes

OMG. I cannot believe how long it's been since I posted a chapter to BPBB! I'm so sorry I've been author-non-grata all this time. I hope to post the next part of this chapter very soon.

(I won't even tell you how long this chapter has been 1/3 finished on my computer!)

Fish Head Soup pt 1

Steve watched as Danny tried cracking open his eyes. He could tell from his few movements that pain was laying over every part of his body, an unwanted blanket weighing him down.

“Easy, babe. Take it slow,” Steve told him gently, laying one hand on Danny’s left ankle. “You have a concussion. That’s why your head hurts.”

As Steve studied him, Danny managed to finally open his eyes, his gaze blank as he stared up at the white ceiling and the too bright lights of the hospital room. He allowed his head to loll to the side to focus on Steve. Steve could see that he was surprised to find Steve occupying the next bed. Steve shook his head before Danny could ask what had happened.

“Don’t try to talk. Your mouth is wired shut,” Steve said.

Steve watched as Danny tested out the warning, his mouth completely immobile as was his right arm. There was a cast from the middle of his fingers all the way to the middle of his bicep.

Danny squinted over at Steve, frowning briefly. Steve’s head was bare. That made Danny reach up to his own head to find his hair still in place although it felt dirty.

“Yeah, they had to shave my head,” Steve agreed to Danny’s silent question.

Danny made a swirling motion with his left hand before pointing from himself to Steve.

“You don’t remember what happened,” Steve said in confirmation of what Danny was trying to
convey. Danny nodded slowly and tentatively, a method of trying out the movement Steve that knew intimately. “We were on the docks and found the van.” At that word, Danny flinched. “When we opened the door, it blew up. Most of the blast was at the engine but we were thrown 15 feet through the air. I landed on top of you.”

Danny frowned at him, barely lifting his right arm.


Danny waved at Steve and the bed Steve was in. Except for his shaved head, Danny saw no visible signs that Steve had been injured. “Oh,” Steve said, moving aside the blanket. There next to Danny’s head was Steve’s left leg in a cast from heel to thigh. Danny frowned at it, slowly reaching over to pat it very gently. “It’s not so bad. Mostly precautionary. I may have dislocated my knee. And I fractured my fibula. Once the swelling goes down, they’ll do more x-rays to see how bad my knee is.”

Danny stared at Steve, touching his own head before pointing at Steve.

“When the van exploded, it sent shards of hot metal everywhere. Our vests caught the brunt of it but once we landed, some of them fell on my head. They had to shave my hair to treat all the burns.”

Danny frowned even more at that, trying to sit up. He had to give up before he even started, settling back with a dissatisfied grunt.

“I’m okay, Danno,” Steve told him. “I only have 12 stitches in my head. You got it worse than I did.”

Danny looked down at himself before lifting the sheet and frowning.

“Yeah, your kidney was lacerated by one of the shards when your vest rode up. They have to monitor the internal bleeding. They won’t do surgery unless they absolutely have to.”

Danny frowned more at that before putting the covers back in place and pointing at his mouth.

“You dislocated your jaw and knocked loose some teeth. Your mouth needs to be wired shut for 3 or 4 weeks. You’ll need to have the braces on for a couple of months afterwards to make sure your teeth are secure.”

Danny squinted at that, staring at Steve with suspicion in his expression.

“Really,” Steve said, holding up his right hand. “I swear. I didn’t ask them to wire your mouth shut.”

Danny rolled his eyes, looking toward the door and back at Steve.

“Chin and Kono will be back in a little while. They’ve stayed the whole time. I finally sent them home to shower and get some real food. Rachel said she’d bring the kids this afternoon. The doctor needs to check you out, then I’ll call Rachel to let her know. She’ll pick up John from school.”

Danny nodded although he looked worried about the kids seeing them so banged up. But there was nothing to be done and he wasn’t going to go without seeing them.

Rather than worry about something he could not control, he turned his focus to gaze longingly at the
“Here, babe,” Steve said, reaching over for a cup with a straw which he handed to Danny. Steve would have liked to help Danny drink the water but since they were head to foot instead of laying head to head, he couldn’t reach up that far. The way they were placed was actually preferable because he could see Danny’s face and monitor how he was feeling. “So on a scale of 1 to 10, how much pain are you in?”

Danny sipped the glorious water, the straw fitting exactly through the space that had been left, a considering look etched in the lines on his face. He sat the water aside before holding up four fingers.

“You are a liar,” Steve told him to his frowns. “I’m putting you at an eight minimum.”

Danny carefully shrugged before pointed at where his watch would be if he wore one which he never did because Steve always had on his.

“You’ve been out for 36 hours. Dr. Decker will be here soon. You may sleep through his visit.”

Danny nodded carefully at that. Steve could see that everything hurt, and his eyes kept trying to drift closed.

“Go back to sleep, babe. The kids are still in school. We’ll wake you up when they get here if their arrival doesn’t do it,” Steve promised. Steve watched as Danny had no choice but to give in and relax back onto his pillow. It didn’t take long for him to lift his head enough to frown at Steve, his bare movements restless.

“What’s wrong?” Steve asked, watching him carefully.

Danny made a writing motion with his left hand, Steve nodding before reaching back over to the table. He gently tossed a small pad and pen at Danny, watching him awkwardly write a note. When he was done, he threw it at Steve, who squinted as he tried to read it.

“Your usual handwriting is bad enough,” Steve teased. “I’ll call the nurse. She can give you something for the pain.”

Danny nodded, pointing at Steve.

“I’m fine,” Steve said.

Danny shook his head, pointing at him again.

“I’m not lying. I’m not in any pain right now,” Steve assured him.

Danny made what sounded like a snort, closing his eye to wait. He kept them closed when he heard someone come in. Steve would tell whoever it was what Danny needed. It was Steve’s job to take care of Danny while Danny couldn’t care for himself.

Steve explained to the nurse that Danny was in quite a bit of pain, at least an eight if not a nine. Danny shifted like he wanted to argue, as was his nature. But clearly it was far too much trouble, what with having to open his eyes to glare at Steve.

“Is that true, Mr. Williams-McGarrett?” a warm, male voice asked. Danny pried open one eye to find
a large Hawaiian looking down at him. His nametag read Nonloi.

Danny nodded, struggling to wiggle two fingers on his right hand, joining the five he held up on his left.

“You’re the one lying, again,” Steve told him. “The pain’s at least an eight.”

“All right, Commander. I have his pain medication right here,” Nonloi assured them both, putting it into Danny’s IV.

Danny pointed at Steve.

“I don’t need it, D,” Steve told him firmly.

“Commander?” Nonloi said, a no-nonsense tone to his voice. He sounded ex-military, accustomed to dealing with the Steves of the world. Not that there was anyone quite like this Super SEAL. Thankfully.

“Really. I’m fine. My leg doesn’t hurt. My head is fine,” Steve assured them both.

“You haven’t eaten since you were admitted,” Nonloi reminded Steve. “You need to eat or to sleep. Those are your two choices.”

Steve glanced over at Danny who was fighting sleep to watch him with most of his usual blue intensity. “I’ll eat,” Steve said to Nonloi’s nod.

“I’ll be right back,” he agreed, leaving them.

“Go to sleep,” Steve said to Danny, his hand resting on Danny’s leg, the contact comforting.

~0~

The next time Danny woke up, it was because his entire ohana was in the room. Steve tried to keep them quiet but with Kono laughing, Chin amused, and all five children giggling, he knew there was no shushing them. Not that he thought quiet was what Danny really needed. He also knew that when he had starting telling one of his infamous not-so-classified stories, they would laugh. Maybe he had done it on purpose, so Danny would wake to the sounds of their love.

“Really,” Steve said with as much authority as he could muster. “The fire was 40 feet high.”

Danny grunted. Steve took that as Danny’s way of saying he knew all about that story and that, maybe, quite possibly, each time Steve told it, the fire grew by a minimum of five feet.

“Hey Danno,” John said, turning on Steve’s bed to face him. John looked worried but at least he didn’t have tears in his eyes like Emma. She tried to climb onto his bed, her four year old legs not able to boost her up. Alicia helped her, settling her snug next to Danny where he wrapped his left arm tight around her. She had a fist full of his hospital gown as well as some of his chest hair. But he was so happy to have the kids with them, he wasn’t about to complain, even if it were possible from him to speak to her. Zacchary watched with his usual intense expression, weighing and measuring. Grace was sitting next to Steve’s bed, smiling reassuringly at Danno.

“Welcome back, Danno,” Grace said for all of them.
“Are you okay, Daddy? Daddy said you can’t talk,” John said, his previous laughter giving way to fear.

Danny smiled as well as he could before looking at Steve.

“He’s feeling better,” Steve translated.

“You really do have ESP,” Kono laughed as she came into Danny’s view.

“Steve says you’ll be here for a little while longer,” Grace said.

“How long?” John asked, sounding worried, as though there was a possibility that Danny and Steve would never be coming home. To his six year old world view, even a few days would feel like a lifetime without his fathers.

Danny could only shrug at the question, looking over at Chin and Kono for help.

“Danny has a pretty big cast,” Chin pointed out. “And Steve won’t be able to look after him like he normally would.”

“So you will, right? You and Uncle Charlie?” John said to Kono and Chin. “Since they can’t take care of each other.”

“We’ll help too,” Emma piped up. She didn’t know exactly what the problem was but she did know the other children were upset. And Danno wasn’t hugging her with both arms. That wasn’t right.

“Of course you will,” Kono agreed. “We’ll all pitch in to watch out for them.”

“Good,” John said, glad he was there to make sure it was settled.

Danny ran the fingers of his left hand through Emma’s blond curls, looking down at her before looking at all of the other children in turn. He hated that he couldn’t talk to them, to assure them he’d be fine and they had no cause to look so worried.

“Tell Danno about your days,” Steve requested of the children, seeing the nearly lost look on Danny’s face. Grace launched into a full-on story about her day in school and her friends and the field trip they were on yesterday, the one Danny and Steve would have been chaperoning if they hadn’t gotten the tip that the gun runners were about to unload their latest shipment. There was probably some exaggeration to what she was saying about how boring the museum was but it made Danny smile. That was well worth any embellishments she may have added.

Alicia told them about her less eventful day, second grade not quite so full of adventures. John thought first grade was still stupid, an opinion he had expressed previously. Mostly they ignored him. Zachary had little to add, and Emma had fallen asleep before she could tell about being at Rachel’s all day.

Chin and Kono talked to Steve as Steve kept an ear tuned to kids’ mostly one-sided conversation, ready to intervene if Danny started to fade. They had talked to the Governor who said that Five-0 would have to stand down for at least a week. He would reevaluate after that and depending on the status of both Steve and Danny, he would make the decision.
“I’m sorry, guys,” Steve said when Chin and Kono had delivered that particular news.

“No, brah. We prefer it this way,” Kono assured him. “We’re going to have to help when you get home. You won’t be able to walk and Danny can’t talk. The kids would starve and you’d burn down the house by the end of the first day if we aren’t there.”

“Probably,” Steve admitted, smiling sheepishly over at Danny who was giving him the evil eye.

“No use looking at him like that, brah,” Chin told Danny.

Danny pointed at Steve with a scowl.

“Oh. You didn’t tell him,” Chin said to Steve with a partially hidden smile.

“Not yet,” Steve said, chancing a glance over at Danny. “Maybe he doesn’t need to know. Not yet.”

Danny was nodding and making the universal symbol for a phone, his thumb at his ear, his pinky at his mouth.

“You can’t talk on the phone, Danno,” Steve said in a failed diversionary tactic. Danny mimed hitting the buttons with his thumb and Steve surrendered. “His phone is in that drawer, Chin.”

Chin retrieved it, giving it reluctantly to Danny. So much for Steve’s quiet. It didn’t take long for Steve’s phone to play the first strains of “Born to Run.”

“I’m not hiding anything,” Steve tried, his most innocent face on as he looked over John’s head at Danny. That made his phone ring again. “No, it’s not my fault we’re in this hospital. Not this time.”

Danny looked surprised and skeptical at that, pointing at Kono.

“Not me, brah. I was still three miles out.”

“Nope,” Chin said, shaking his head, his arms crossed over his chest.

Danny frowned, typing on his phone one handed.

“You opened the door, Danno. I didn’t think it was a good idea but you said it would be fine,” Steve said, watching Danny carefully. “You don’t remember any of it?”

Danny shook his head, looking at his phone before looking at kids’ worried faces. He frowned, reaching out his hand to them. Zachary and Alicia came closer so he could hug them in turn, reassuring them that he was going to be okay. They managed to get their hugs without waking Emma who slept on.

“It’s okay, kids. Steve fell on top of him to prevent him from getting hurt,” Kono said. “Oh. That’s not really helpful, is it?” she realized belatedly, her face melting into disappointment at her own thoughtlessness.

“We know, Kono,” John said far too wisely. “You have a hard job. Sometimes you get hurt.”

“That’s absolutely right, Bud,” Steve agreed. “But me and Danno are going to be just fine.”
“Danno and I,” Grace corrected, earning an awkward kiss from her Steve. The other kids laughed, the atmosphere lighter.

~o0o~

Even while he was still asleep, Steve could sense Danny’s restlessness. He always knew when Danny wasn’t sleeping although the evil insomnia fairy was much more likely to pay an unwelcome visit to Steve than to Danno. Steve wasn’t surprised to open his eyes to find it completely dark beyond the ugly institutional curtains covering the windows. “Can’t sleep?” he asked Danny quietly.

Danny grunted in response, pulling his phone from under his pillow. Sorryy. Didn’t mean to wake you. Go back sleep.

“It’s fine,” Steve assured him. “Are you in pain?”

no. just no sleeping.

Steve nodded at that, placing his hand on Danny’s leg. “You thirsty?”

Danny held his left hand up, his thumb away from his index finger. Steve poured icy water into a cup, holding it over for Danny to sip.

“Better?”

Danny nodded, placing the cup on the shared table. Go back to sleep. I’m fine.

“I’ll call the nurse. That will help,” Steve offered.

Danny sighed but nodded, staring up at the ceiling.

“I’m really sorry.”

you said my fault. I’m sorry.

“It doesn’t matter, Danno. We’re both alive. And we’ll be fine,” Steve said, looking over at the door as it opened to admit the night nurse.

“Commander. Detective,” the woman said, studying one then the other. “What seems to be the problem?”

“Danny can’t sleep,” Steve said. “Can you give him something to help?”

The nurse turned to study Danny, checking the tubes and equipment attached to him before turning back to Steve. “There is nothing in his chart. I can call your doctor.”

Danny was shaking his head at that. No. it’s 2:30 am. I’m fine.

“It doesn’t matter that it’s 2:30, Danno. You need to sleep.”

Slept to much already.

“Do you want me to call or not?” she asked, staring at Steve as though he had interrupted something
far more important.

“No. If he doesn’t want you to call, don’t call,” Steve conceded. She nodded and left.

Charming. You kick her dog?

“Not that I know of. I haven’t kicked any dogs lately. You?” Steve asked with a laugh.

Pretty sure it wasn’t me.

Steve watched helplessly as Danny shifted, trying to find a more comfortable way to lay. But it seemed futile. “So this one time,” Steve said, Danny focusing on him. “I had to go to POW-training camp.”

Danny nodded, waiting.

“We had to learn how to survive if we were taken prisoner. We were flown out to an airstrip in the middle of no place. All rugged, uninhabited terrain where we were confined to an area that did a pretty decent job of re-creating a prison camp. There were armed guards with dogs, and we were held in locked huts. The only time we were let out was to work – dig ditches, shore up the sides of the adobe huts, sweep the dirt if there wasn’t anything else to do. Our primary mission, besides surviving, was finding a way to escape. And the conditions were as abysmal as they could make them without actually endangering us.”

did they feed you?

“After a fashion. We’d get bread and water twice a day. A couple of times they gave us fish head soup.”

Danny made a disgusted face at that, Steve laughing. “Yeah it was as awful as it sounded. But after a while, we looked forward to it. Mostly we concentrated on figuring out a way to escape.”

did you?

“We tried. If we didn’t try, we’d be kept as prisoners for even longer. After we’d been there for five days, we snuck under the back fence in the middle of the night. The dogs barked and we ran. We got across the open field and were 100 yards in the trees before they found us. One guy – we called him Cardinal because he loved the baseball team – climbed a cedar tree. The dogs couldn’t smell him because of the natural scent of the tree. He actually got away.”

what happened to you?

“The rest of us were put back in the hut and didn’t get anything to eat the next day. They gave us as much water as we wanted but we weren’t allowed out. They woke us up in the dead of night to run laps beside the barbed wire fence that enclosed the camp.”

But you were supposed to escape?

“Yeah. We were ‘rescued’ the next day. We returned to base where we got showers, real food, and 3 days of R&R.”

youfind Cardinal?
“He was waiting for us, laughing when we got off the truck from the camp.” Steve shrugged, no hard feelings. That’s just the way it went. “The second time I went to POW-training camp, it was because I volunteered.”

Danny’s eyes went wide at those words. You VOLUNTEERED???

“One of the guys who was supposed to go was exposed to malaria and he couldn’t report until they knew if he was going to be sick. So I volunteered to go for him.”

Why not just go with one less person?

Steve shrugged. “That’s not how it worked. When it was our team’s turn, six of us had to report.”

Of course you said you’d do it. crazy in the head.

“I didn’t mind going. Between the first and the second time, I’d been flying helicopter support for the camp.”

Support?

“I helped them track down the escapees,” Steve said with a laugh. “I knew exactly how most of the escapees got caught so I knew we could get away with it.”

and they let you volunteer???

“They didn’t care. They did isolate me. Put me in my own hut. I wasn’t allowed to be with any of the other prisoners. But when they were out of their huts, I’d talk to them through my tiny, barred window. Told them to escape through the front gate because it was less heavily guarded. It would take longer to find them if they left that way. Denser coverage and the helicopters couldn’t track them as well.”

Bet the guards weren’t happy with you.

“They told me to shut up. Repeatedly. They finally told me that if I’d stop talking, they’d give me hamburgers for lunch and dinner,” Steve laughed.

Did you?

“No. I kept telling the others how best to get out. And they succeeded. They escaped and weren’t recaptured. That was on day four. I finally got out on day eight. After I’d told the next group of prisoners how to escape too.”

Did you get hamburgers?

“No those lying bastards. The next time I flew support, I let the prisoners escape. And the guards got in trouble. They were imprisoned so a new batch of guards could be trained.”

OMG did they pay you back?

“How could they? If they’d given me the hamburgers like they promised, I would have reported the exact location of the escaped prisoners.”
I can't believe they let you volunteer.

“It was all about teamwork. We were training to use whatever was available to make our escape.”

yeha. Danny yawned closed-mouth as he typed his reply. When are we getting out of here?

“They need to monitor your kidneys for another day. If you aren’t bleeding internally, we’ll be discharged on Friday.”

Danny nodded, yawning again.

“You ready to try sleeping again?” Steve asked in concern.

Danny nodded once more, putting his left hand on Steve’s ankle. At least he could maintain that much contact. Not enough but he’d take what he could get.

~o0o~

“I don’t understand why Daddy was with you.”

Danny woke to John asking Steve to explain, finding Emma snug up against his left side. He smiled down at her as much as he could before looking over at Steve.

“I know, Bud,” Steve said warmly but firmly. “I know he usually doesn’t come with us on raids. But he’d done all the research on the gun runners. He knew better than the rest of us where we’d find them.”

“Daddy should be with us,” Emma said as firmly as any four year old could.

“At home,” John agreed, frowning at Danny from the edge of Steve’s bed.

“That’s the way we’d prefer it too,” Steve said. “But sometimes Danno has to come on the job.”

“But he gets hurt,” Emma protested.

Tell them to stop worrying, pls

“Here, babies. Danno said to stop worrying about him. He’s going to be fine. And we’re probably going to get out of the hospital tomorrow.”

“Tomorrow,” Emma repeated, hugging Danny tighter. “We’ll stay here with you.”

“You can’t do that, baby,” Steve reminded her. “You’ll go home with Kono and Chin. And we’ll be fine.”

“We don’t have to leave yet though,” John requested, wide eyes pleading up at Steve.

“Not yet,” Steve agreed. “Here, babe,” Steve said, handing Danny a cup with the straw sticking out. “Are you hungry?”

Danny sipped the water and considered the question. He decided he wasn’t and shook his head.
When the cup was empty, he looked into it with a frown.

“Emma, can you hand me Danno’s cup?” Steve requested, stretching out to meet her part way. He refilled it, giving it to Emma who got it to Danny without spilling it on either of them. “Thank you, Baby.”

*Why*s *John not @ school?*

“Rachel is taking him at 9:00,” Steve explained. “It’s 7:45. Kono and Chin are coming for Emma.”

Danny nodded at that, running his fingers through Emma’s blonde curls. *Kono needs to help her shampoo*

“I’ll let her know,” Steve agreed.

“I want to stay with you, Daddies,” Emma said, holding on tight.

“I know, Baby. But you’re going to have to leave with Kono and Chin. Danno needs to sleep and I need to watch out for him.”

“I can help,” Emma insisted. She had a stubborn expression in place, one she’d inherited from both her fathers. One that they knew they would see many more times.

“You can help at home, Em. We’ll be there Friday,” Steve assured her.

“That’s a long time,” Emma protested, her bottom lip quivering.

“Not so long,” John said. “You’ll go swimming with Kono and Chin today. And we’ll go to sleep. After that, it will be Friday.”

“Friday,” Emma repeated. “Can we have pizza for supper?”

“We can,” Steve agreed. “Danny can’t.”

“How will Daddy eat?” John asked, studying Danny’s mouth with great intensity.

“I’ll make him shakes,” Steve said.

*Not green ones!!!!!!!!*

“No, not green ones,” Steve promised. “The hospital will give us protein powder we can put in anything you want.”

“Ice cream,” Emma decided.

“They aren’t for you, Em,” John said. “They’re for Daddy.”

“I can have one too, can’t I, Daddy?” Emma said with great four-year old authority.

“Yes, Em, you can have one too,” Steve agreed with a smile for her.

“When’s your hair comin’ back?” Emma asked Steve, studying his head.
“It won’t take long,” Steve assured her. “I still won’t have as many curls as you and Danno.”

“I like my curls,” Emma said firmly. Danny nodded in agreement, Steve smiling at them.

“I want to shave my head,” John announced, looking at Steve’s head. He reached up to carefully touch it, avoiding all the bandages that dotted his scalp.

“It’s going to come back, Bud,” Steve assured him, bending his head down so John could feel all of it.

“I know,” John said. “But I can be bald too. Like you.”

“Are you sure?” Steve laughed.

“Uh huh. Will you do it when you get home?” John asked.

“Okay. If you still want me to, I’ll shave your head,” Steve agreed.

“Not mine,” Emma said, shaking her head fiercely.

“Nobody’s making you do it, silly face,” John reminded her.

“My face’s not silly. Yours,” Emma told him.

“No. Yours,” John retorted.

“Stop,” Steve ordered. “No one has a sillier face than anyone else. And no one is going to make you shave your head, Em.”

“Kay,” she agreed with a satisfied nod.

Danny could only shake his head when Steve looked over at him, affection and amusement shining his blue eyes.

Much too soon for the children, Chin and Kono arrived. They were going to take John to school before taking Emma home.

Rachel ok?

“She’s fine,” Kono assured him. “Zach is…worrying about his puppet show.”

“Oh,” Steve said. “We were supposed to help him build the stage.”

“Rachel thinks Stan can do it,” Chin said with a shrug. “I said I would help.”

“We bought the wood already,” Steve told him. “It’s in the garage. Will you let Rachel and Zach know you’ll start the stage? I’ll help finish it when I get home.”

“Sure,” Chin said.

“Can I start painting it?” Kono asked, helping Emma leave Danny’s bed, as reluctant as she was to
“Not until we have it together,” Steve said. “Chin, can you start the curtains? The material’s in the office.”

“Right,” Chin said. “The red material on the desk?”

“That’s it. The measurements are there with it,” Steve said. “You may have to sew the tassels on by hand.”

“I think I can handle that part,” Kono said.

“That’s okay, Cuz. I’ll do it,” Chin said quickly.

“I’m not that bad,” Kono protested.

“Yeah, you are,” Chin had to inform her. She looked at Steve who nodded and Danny who had to agree. “Your many talents lie elsewhere.”

“Fine,” Kono said. “Charlie and I will paint it when you’re done.”

“That’s fine,” Chin agreed.

“Is Uncle Charlie stayin’?” Emma asked from where she was propped on Kono’s hip.

“If that’s okay with you,” Kono teased.

“Uncle Charlie,” Emma cheered. “He makes the bestest waffles ever.”

“He does,” Chin agreed. They all looked over at the door as it opened to allow the doctor to enter.

“Well,” Dr. Decker said with a laugh. “I think this tells me everything I need to know about how you are feeling.”

“Pretty much,” Steve agreed, kissing John’s head before Chin helped him down. “We’ll see you babies this afternoon.”

“Right after school, right?” John asked, trying as hard as he could to be brave. Not just for himself but especially for Emma.

“Right after school,” Steve agreed.

Danny nodded, carefully leaning over to kiss John and then Emma when Kono lowered her to Danny’s level.

“Bye,” Emma said, waving sadly before Kono carried her out, John’s hand safely in Chin’s.

“Now,” Dr. Decker said. “How are you, really?”

TBC…
Chapter Summary

This is just a placeholder.

This is only a placeholder. I wrote the next BPBB chapter (Unalphabetized Spices) as a birthday gift and wanted to post it for her birthday. This placeholder will be used for part 2 of Fish Head Soup as soon as I have it finished. But I didn't want a chapter in between the two chapters of Fish Head Soup.

Apologies for this.
Unalphabetized Spices

Chapter Summary

Danny decides Steve is bored in his retirement and takes steps to change it.

Dedicated with love and best wishes for a happy birthday to simplyn2deep.

Happy Birthday simplyn2deep!!!
“No,” Danny conceded. “Not miserable. Only in that I can’t stand seeing you this unhappily bored. You haven’t had this much leisure time …ever. It’s not good for you. You’ve been out of office for five months and have repainted all the rooms in the house, put in a new garden – for which I am very grateful by the way, rearranged the pantry four times because I have to keep putting it back the way it’s supposed to be. …no. Don’t tell me again that the spices should be alphabetical. I have them the way I use them the most. I almost never use allspice. It does not need to be the most easily accessible spice,” Danny said, finally winding down from his rant.

“You want me out of the house?” Steve asked, a little confused and a little hurt by the idea that Danny didn’t want him around.

“I want you happy. A bored Steve is not a happy Steve. A bored Steve generally becomes a destructive Steve. You need something constructive to do.”

“Oh,” Steve said. “I’m sorry.”

“Why? You have no reason to be. You aren’t a do-nothing kind of guy. I should have realized that sooner. Well, I did realize it sooner but I thought finally having all your time free would be good for you. That was a miscalculation on my part,” Danny said.

“You aren’t the boss of me,” Steve tried. Danny just raised an eyebrow, making Steve duck his head and smile. “Okay. You are. But I was looking forward to being retired.”

“I know that, babe. But it’s not in your nature to be idle. That’s why this job is perfect. You’ll teach Hawaiian Navigation, Weather, Canoe Design And Sail at Honolulu Community College two days a week for four hours a day. The rest of the time, you can be home, driving me crazy and rearranging the spices.”

“Hawaiian Navigation, Weather, Canoe Design And Sail?” Steve repeated, finally accepting the iPad. “I had no idea there was such a class.”

“Me neither. But I called HCC and asked if there was something a former SEAL, retired Five-0 task force leader, and out of office Governor could do to help them. They were thrilled. All you have to do is fill out this application and you’ll start teaching in August when classes resume.”

“Just like that?” Steve asked, studying the form on display.

“You have the credentials. You have the experience. They want you to do it,” Danny said.

“What about when we go see John play? How can we travel to his games if I have to teach class?” Steve asked, warming up to the idea of becoming an instructor.

“The class is Tuesdays and Thursdays. Leaves us Fridays and Mondays for flying. If he plays Thursday night, we’ll watch it on TV. Or I will and tape it for you to see when you get home.”

“Did you ask the kids how they felt about this decision you’ve made for me?” Steve asked.

“It was unanimous. They all voted yes. Even Henry. Zacchary checked at U of H but you don’t have a doctorate so you can’t teach there. I thought about enrolling you in their PhD program but that’s way too much work. I don’t want you tied up that much and I didn’t want to risk you being in the same classes as Zach. Not that being in class with him would be the worst thing ever. Just
“You have this all figured out, don’t you?” Steve asked in an even tone. That was not necessarily a good sign.

“Come and eat lunch. We’ll discuss it,” Danny invited, taking Steve’s free hand and pulling him into the house.

“What are we having?” Steve asked, sniffing the air as he washed his hands. The kitchen was warmer than normal which meant there was something in the oven. That was cause for celebration at any time.

“Cornish game hens,” Danny said, pulling them out as well as a dish of homemade dressing.

“So you knew I’d need to be persuaded,” Steve said, eyeing the standard bribery lunch.

“It never hurts to fix one of your favorite meals while trying to convince you of the soundness of my master plan,” Danny confirmed. “I’m dessert. I thought that would help too.”

“Always,” Steve said, slipping his hand under Danny’s tee shirt to preview his after-lunch treat.

“You sure you want me out of the house?”

“Absence makes the heart grow fonder,” Danny quoted, standing on his toes to kiss Steve. “Please set the table. Lunch will be ready in two shakes of a lamb’s tail.”

“Yes dear,” Steve conceded, gathering the necessary culinary items. It was only moments later that Danny started bringing in their lunch, several trips necessary to get it all to the dining room. “So,” Steve said when they were both sitting at the table. “When did you make all these life decisions on my behalf?”

“I started doing the research a couple months ago, after you almost broke your ankle in the mountain race.”

“I didn’t almost break my ankle,” Steve said, sampling the delicious dressing Danny had made.

“Yeah, you did. All of your distractions can’t be purely physical. We aren’t in our 30s any longer. And there are only so many times you can reorganize the kitchen. ‘What can he do with himself?’ I said to myself. I talked to Henry and he actually suggested teaching. I called the community college and after transferring me 32 times, I reached the right person who said you teaching would be good for you and the students.”

Steve considered those words before nodding. “I do have some trouble filling my days,” he admitted reluctantly. But he knew he wasn’t telling Danny something he didn’t already know. “Don’t you get bored?”

“No, not really,” Danny said. “I’ve been your househusband for so long, it’s become my ordinary life. One I wouldn’t trade for anything.”

“You keep yourself busy,” Steve agreed. “And you have your photography.”

“And the occasional article for the newspaper. Watching out for you. Talking to the kids. Taking care of the house.” Danny said. Such was his life and he wouldn’t trade it for all the pasta in Italy.
“You do an excellent job,” Steve said. Danny just shrugged, passing Steve the grilled asparagus he’d made him special. “Asparagus. You really want me to take the job,” Steve said.

“No, I really wanted asparagus. Chin gave it to me from his garden. Since ours won’t produce for another year.”

“How much does the teaching job pay?”

“What does that matter?” Danny laughed. “Between our savings and all of your pensions plus my paltry one, we and the children are set for life.”

“So the pay sucks,” Steve said.

“You should know. You refused to give them a pay raise when you were governor,” Danny reminded him.

“Hmm…maybe I’ll give Kono a call,” Steve suggested.

“Whatever,” Danny said, waving it away. “Are you going to do it?”

“I will definitely consider it,” Steve finally said. “I want to talk to the department chair first.”

“You have to talk to her anyway. You have to meet with the selection committee and do a mini-teach.”

“I thought you said I have the job,” Steve said with a frown.

“You do. But you have to jump through the requisite hoops. When you call them, you can make an appointment to interview with the committee.”


“Just think of it – a group of students eager to learn everything you know about Hawaiian navigation, weather, canoe design and sail.”

“Will you be my cute TA who grades my papers and attempts to earn extra credit in my office?” Steve asked with what he was confident was a flirtatious wink.

“Oh please. This is to get you out of the house, not me. Anyway, the classes are taught on Sand Island. I told you once I left Five-0, I would never again set foot on Sand Island. Nothing good ever happened to me on Sand Island.”

“You are just superstitious,” Steve laughed.

“Maybe. But I did talk to Henry about it. He will TA for you if you want. I don’t think you’d survive without him,” Danny said.

“I survived the SEALs and Five-0 without him,” Steve pointed out.

“You’ve never taught before. Henry will help make your transition easier.”
“He already agreed to help?” Steve asked, taking more asparagus and pouring Hollandaise sauce on it, a sauce he made Danny swear he’d never admit Steve ate.

“Of course. Didn’t he help repaint all the bedrooms? And help you put in the garden? Personally, I think he’s a little bored too,” Danny said.

“Then why doesn’t he work for Kono? She’d take him back in a heartbeat,” Steve said.

“Because this way he still gets paid but doesn’t have to work 24 hours a day. Just when we need him. He’s coming over tonight to watch the Yankees with us,” Danny said.

“Oh. It’s Red Sox time, isn’t it?”

“Yep,” Danny agreed. “So we’re having hot dogs for dinner. You can grill them or I will. Either way.”

“We have plenty of beer?” Steve asked.

“Chin’s bringing it, if he doesn’t catch a case. If he does, Henry will stop. John may be home but I’m not sure.”

“You don’t know where your son is?” Steve asked casually. He was not at all concerned but wasn’t going to pass up the chance to razz Danny at any opportunity.

“Do you?” Danny retorted. He pulled his phone out of a pocket, smiling as he answered. “Hi ya Zach.”

“Danno,” Zach said. “Am I interrupting?”

“Not at all. Steve and I were just finishing up lunch. What’s going on?” Danny asked, catching Steve’s eye and giving a quick shake of his head. Zach was fine. No need for Steve to be on high alert.

“I’ve decided to come for the game, if the invitation is still available,” Zach said.

“Excellent,” Danny said. “We’re planning to eat about 6:00.”

“Do I need to bring anything?”

“Nope. We’re all set. Do you want to spend the night?” Danny asked.

“If it won’t be an imposition,” Zach said.

“Of course not,” Danny assured him. “We were just discussing whether or not John will be here. I think he’s planning to come but I’m not 100% sure.”

“He informed me that he planned to be present,” Zach said.

“Good. He’ll give you a ride?”

“Yes he will,” Zach agreed. “Is Steve there?”
“Sure. Hold on,” Danny said, giving Steve the phone and clearing the table. He kept one ear tuned to the conversation, certain that he was right and that Zach was okay. He was glad Zach was coming over even though baseball wasn’t his favorite spectator sport. He liked watching football much better, maybe because John played.

“John’s at Rachel’s,” Steve told Danny when he brought more of the dishes into the kitchen.

“Really?” Danny said. “What’s he doing there?”

“Zach wasn’t sure,” Steve said with a shrug, leaning against the cabinet to watch Danny put the dishes in the dishwashers. “Didn’t you promise me dessert?” Steve asked, his hand slipping down the back of Danny’s shorts.

“I don’t recall any such promise,” Danny claimed, standing straight and watching as Steve unbuttoned his shorts, letting them fall onto the floor. “Oh dear. How did that happen?”

“Shoddy workmanship,” Steve claimed, shedding his own shorts before pulling Danny into his body. “You’re sure you want me out of the house?” Steve asked, reaching down for Danny’s erection that was taking notice of the activities being undertaken.

“I’m not throwing you out, you goof. I’m trying to keep you occupied with something other than me and unalphabetized spices,” Danny said, reaching up for a kiss.

“Uh huh,” Steve said, pulling Danny’s tee shirt up over his head. Danny returned the favor, running his hands down Steve’s still hard chest and stomach.

“You are still as beautiful as the day I pulled my gun on you,” Danny said, licking Steve’s collarbone because it was the closest part of Steve to his mouth.

“I believe I pulled my gun on you,” Steve corrected. “And I wasn’t the one holding my badge upside down.”

“Whatever,” Danny said, kissing him. “What do you say to leaning over the kitchen cabinet while I have my way with you?”

“Isn’t it your turn to bend over?” Steve asked, crowding Danny up against the cabinets in question.

“You are so argumentative. You’re about to get lucky and you want to quibble over whose turn it is?” Danny protested, stroking Steve’s firming erection in hopes that it would help him win. Not there were any loser in this game.

Steve shrugged, kissing the rest of the protests out of Danny’s mouth. “Zach said he and John would be here in about half an hour. I think we need to get on with dessert.”

“What?” Danny said, giving Steve a gentle shove. “Our boys are coming home and you still took my shorts off?”

“If you’ll stop arguing, we’ll have plenty of time before they get here,” Steve reminded him, trying to pull him back into his embrace.

“Collect your clothes and come with me,” Danny said, picking up his shirt and shorts. He headed for the stairs, certain Steve would be right behind him. That was confirmed when Steve cupped Danny’s
ass as they climbed to the second floor. Danny pulled him bodily into their bedroom, closing and
locking the door. “Now. Dessert.”

“Mmm…” Steve agreed, kissing Danny and guiding him backward until he collided with the bed. Danny automatically sat, scooting back so Steve could join him. “What do you want?” Steve whispered into Danny’s ear before kissing his jaw and rubbing his cheek against Danny’s stubble.

“Whatever you do,” Danny said. “You want me to blow you?”

“I want you to fuck me,” Steve said, kissing him again.

“You know I hate it when you use that word,” Danny scolded mildly. “It’s so… cheap.”

“You are many things, Danno. Cheap you are not,” Steve said, reaching over for the lube and giving it to Danny.

“I can be cheap when I need to be. I’m also very easy where you are concerned,” Danny reminded him. “Oh crap. Is that your phone?”

“Yeah. Ignore it. They’ll call back,” Steve said, reaching for the lube in Danny’s hand.

“It’s Emma’s ring,” Danny said, leaving the bed to search Steve’s shorts for his phone. “Hey baby.”

“Hey Danno,” Emma said. “What’s new?”

“Not a lot. How about with you?” Danny asked, sitting on the edge of the bed. He had to swat away Steve’s hand when he tried reaching for Danny’s wilting erection. “Act like a grown up, please.”

“I always act like a grown-up,” Emma laughed. “You and Daddy, not so much.”

“You are right about that,” Danny agreed.

“I know all too well,” Emma said. “Can I have some money, please?”

“Of course, baby. We’ll transfer it into your account. How much do you need?”

“Not a lot. I found this fabulous pair of shoes in Annapolis. They are so cute. Dancy already has a pair. She sent me a picture of them.”

“Will a couple of hundred be enough?” Danny asked, swatting Steve’s hand again.

“I don’t need that much.”

“We’ll transfer it anyway. Just in case,” Danny said. “Do you want to talk to your very immature father?”

“Isn’t it his nap time?” Emma laughed. “No. Wait. If he’s right there and you’re on his phone, I interrupted nap time, didn’t I?”

“Here’s Steve,” Danny said, giving him the phone and pulling his shorts back on. He retrieved his shirt, trying to get his hair in a semblance of order. Steve was still on the bed talking to Emma, leaning back on one hand, his entire body on full display. Even after all these years, the sight made
Danny’s heart speed up. Which was how it was supposed to be as far as he was concerned.

“All right, baby. We’ll talk to you soon,” Steve said before disconnecting. “She does not need a new pair of shoes.”

“What does need have to do with it?” Danny asked, turning to look down at Steve. “Get dressed. The boys will be here any minute.”

Steve shrugged, smiling up at Danny. “You could get naked again. They won’t come in with the door closed.”

“No,” Danny said, his hands on his hips. “We’re going downstairs, fully clothed, and making a cake for tonight.”

“We’re making a cake?” Steve asked, still lounging naked on their bed.

“A baseball cake. If you are a good boy, I’ll let you lick the bowl.”

“I’m always a good boy,” Steve claimed, winking at Danny.

“You most certainly are not,” Danny said. “Get dressed, please.”

Steve sighed but finally conceded and pulled his clothes back on. “How do you make a cake like a baseball?”

“With a round cake pan,” Danny said, opening their bedroom door once Steve was dressed.

“We have one of those?”

“We certainly do,” Danny said, leading him down and into the kitchen. “Will you go in the pantry for the cake mix? It’s on the third shelf, unless you’ve rearranged the entire pantry again.”

Steve ignored him, going into the pantry and very soon returning with the box to help Danny with the preparations. At least, Steve called it helping. Mostly he gave Danny a hard time and crowded into his personal space. Danny complained the entire time but only because it was what was expected.

John and Zacchary arrived just as they were sliding the cake into the oven, Zach still dressed from his day of teaching the first year computer science students at U of H. He wore a button down shirt and dress slacks to try and project an air of authority to the students, most of whom were a few years older than he was. But not everyone skipped as many grades as he had. He would change into a tee shirt and jeans before the baseball game, clothes he always kept at the house.

John was wearing jeans and a U of H tee shirt, giving Steve a hard time about “helping” Danny make the cake. “I doubt we’ll be able to eat it.”

“He followed my precise instructions,” Danny assured them.

“I hope so,” John laughed.

“So Danno told me you lot decided I need a job,” Steve said, still licking the leftover batter from the bowl.
“It makes sense,” John said.

“You’ll be a natural,” Zach said.

“Thank you, Zach,” Steve said with a nod. “Danny said I had to teach for the committee. Do you know how long it has to last?”

“Generally about 10 minutes. They should assign you an appropriate topic for your lesson,” Zach said.

“Not like it matters,” John reminded them. “You’ll get the job no matter what.”

“That’s what Danno told me,” Steve agreed. “Apparently alphabetizing the spices was the last straw.”

“I did not say that,” Danny protested.

“You complained to me about it,” John said.

“Me as well,” Zach agreed.

“Stop. Just stop,” Danny said, shaking his head. “Did you wash the bowl and beaters yet? We still have to make the frosting.”

“In a minute,” Steve said, wrapping his tongue around the beaters to get all the batter.

“Emma called a little earlier,” Danny said.

“How’s she?” John asked.

“When was the last time you called her?” Steve asked, washing the bowl and the beaters, finally.

“Few days ago,” John said. “She okay?”

“She’s fine. She wants a new pair of shoes for which she has no need. Your father said he’d give her the money,” Steve said, trying for stern.

“Because if I don’t, you won’t,” Danny scoffed.

“I’d give it to her,” John laughed.

“Of course you would. But it would still be our money. Until you get your first check from the 49ers,” Danny said.

John shrugged at that. “Mary said I should start getting paid right before training camp starts.”

“When are you going to find an apartment?” Zach asked him.

“Next week, I think. Are you coming?” John asked the others.

“I’ll be finished with my classes,” Zach said. “As long as it is after commencement, I would like to
go.”

“It will be,” John said.

“Have you decided to walk for graduation?” Danny asked John.

“Yeah, because apparently I have to give a speech,” John admitted.

“Oh,” Danny said. “When did this happen?”

“It was a vote by the students,” Zach said. “John won by a landslide.”

“I thought the student government president gave the speech,” Steve said.

“If he hadn’t been expelled for showing up to all his classes high as a kite, he probably would,” John said. “Plus they think I talked Kono into being the speaker. So….”

“We’ll be there to cheer you on,” Danny promised, making John groan.

“Please try not to embarrass me,” John requested. “Please.”

“Us? Embarrass you?” Steve asked innocently.

“Oh God. It’s going to be a train wreck, isn’t it?” John asked in dismay.

“I don’t know why you think that,” Steve teased. “It will just be us.”


“Alicia,” Zach added. “Dancy will be in attendance.”

“Sam said he’d be in town. So he’ll be there,” Danny said. “Duke’s planning to come.”

“I knew I should have gone to Syracuse. My life would be so much easier,” John claimed.

“Pfft…you’d be miserable,” Danny told him.

“I wasn’t sure I was going to attend. How did you make all these plans without me?” John asked.

“We knew you’d walk,” Steve said. “And we’ll celebrate afterwards with a luau.”

“That’s an idea I can get behind,” John agreed.

There was much discussion about John’s graduation celebration as well as plans to travel to San Francisco to find John an apartment. They also discussed the change in the state of Steve’s retirement, Steve continuing to offer token protests which the others mostly ignored.

It wasn’t too much longer until Henry arrived, bringing with him beer and his usual good cheer. He echoed the sentiments of the guys, encouraging Steve to pursue this new path.

When Chin arrived, he also said Steve was a natural to teach the class. By the time the game started,
complete with hot dogs and all the appropriate sides followed by cake, Steve had decided he would accept the teaching position.

~o0o~

“Babe?” Danny said. It was 7:30 on the day of Steve’s first class. Danny had felt Steve get up half an hour earlier but he hadn’t come back into the bedroom to dress. Danny left their bed to go into the bathroom where he found Steve sitting on the edge of the bathtub. Steve’s elbows were on his knees, his head in his hands.

“Hey,” Danny said, sitting on the toilet lid and putting a hand on Steve’s knee. “What’s going on with you?”

“I can’t do it,” Steve said, shaking his head. His knee was sweaty under Danny’s palm, his face unnaturally pale under his tan.

“Can’t do what?” Danny coaxed gently.

“I can’t teach anyone. What do I know about teaching? This was a huge mistake,” Steve said.

“This? This is what is giving you a panic attack?” Danny asked. “You are a SEAL. You were in charge of Five-0. As governor you faced loud, unhappy opposition every day. But a class of 19 year olds gives you a panic attack?”

“Making fun of me is hardly helpful,” Steve said, trying to take a deep breath.

“I make fun of you all the time,” Danny reminded him with a smile. “What’s got you so worked up?”

“I don’t know,” Steve said. “I…I don’t know what I’m doing.”

“Of course you do. You have your syllabus. You have your notes. You have the materials for the lab. You’re all set. And – this is really important, babe – and the kids are going to love you. Love you. After they stop being afraid of you. Start all scary Super SEAL. Then when you have their complete and total respect, you can show your mushy, goofy side in small doses. And they will worship you. You have my word.”

“How do you know I’ll be successful?” Steve asked, still talking down to the bathroom floor.

“Because you are Steven J. Williams-McGarrett and there is nothing you can’t do. And once you calm down, you’ll realize that too.”

Steve shook his head, peeking at Danny through his fingers. “Call the school. Tell them I can’t come.”

“Not a chance, buddy. Not a chance. How can you be scared of college students when you could face terrorists without blinking?”

“I can’t use guns and hand grenades on college students. And you won’t be there.”

“Yes I will. I’ll be there in spirit. You don’t need me, babe. Henry will be your back-up if you need it.”
“Yeah,” Steve agreed. “Will you come with me? Please?”

“Oh babe,” Danny said, shaking his head. “You don’t need me.”

“I do. Take me to class. Henry can bring me home,” Steve said. He was calmer but still worried. Danny could not deny him anything when he looked at him with that particular you are my anchor expression.

“All right. I’ll drive you to class. Or ride in the car as you drive us there.”

“Thank you,” Steve said, leaning closer to kiss Danny on the mouth. “Get in the shower and I’ll go get dressed.”

“You got it,” Danny agreed, watching Steve to make sure he really was okay. He was steady on his feet and his color was returning to his cheeks. Danny turned on the shower as Steve shaved, his hands steady as he scraped off the stubble.

Danny didn’t linger in the shower, getting out to return to their bedroom. Steve was ready, sitting on the edge of their bed, watching Danny as always. He looked much calmer, Danny keeping up a running commentary as he dressed.

“I got our tickets to San Francisco,” Danny said, pulling on his shirt. “John’s excited about us coming.”

“It will be great to see him,” Steve agreed, getting up to fetch Danny’s shoes from their closet. “We’re leaving Friday?”

“Yeah. We’ll come back Monday,” Danny said, stepping into his shoes. “Come on, big guy. I’ll buy you a cup of coffee on the way.”

“Good plan,” Steve said, picking up the camo backpack Danny had ordered for him, complete with the SEAL symbol embroidered on it. It was filled with everything he needed for his class, including an extra pair of reading glasses, just in case. Steve had a habit of misplacing his so having a backup pair was required any time he left the house.

Steve didn’t have a lot to say as he drove them to their favorite coffee place. Danny kept talking, helping keep Steve mentally present. Danny knew once his class started, Steve would be a natural. What he was experiencing was simply stage-fright. It would dissipate once he was fully engaged in teaching.

“All right, babe,” Danny said as they pulled up to the building where the class was being held. “Henry’s already here. The kids aren’t due for another hour. Don’t treat them like the enemy but leave no doubt that you are in charge.”

“Right,” Steve said, leaning over to kiss Danny. “I’ll see you this afternoon.”

“Roger that. Call me as soon as you dismiss class so I can hear all about how triumphant you are,” Danny said, getting out of the car to circle over to the driver’s seat. “Kick only so much ass as necessary. Take names if you need to.”

“Got it,” Steve said, giving him one last smile before entering the low building by the dock.
“Hey babe,” Danny said with a smile when he answered his phone. “How’d it go?”

“It was great,” Steve said with enough excitement that Danny worried momentarily that explosives had been involved. “They are smart, interested, well behaved.”

“Good,” Danny said. “And they worship you already.”

“Stop,” Steve laughed. “I have a few more minutes of clean up then Henry will bring me home.”

“Good,” Danny repeated. “The beer’s cold and I’m hot.”

“My favorite combination,” Steve said before hanging up.
Chapter Summary

Danny's away and the kids have the flu. Steve thought being a SEAL was hard. It was a cake walk compared to two sick children.

This chapter is dedicated to dante_s_hell who may have no memory of ever providing me the prompt.

Chapter Notes

About 250 years ago, dante_s_hell requested a chapter of BPBB about Danny being away and Steve taking care of the kids all by himself.

I started this chapter about 248 years ago and it has languished on my computer since. I finally finished, with many apologies to dante_s_hell and appreciation for her patience - if she even remembers requesting this chapter.

“I’m still not clear on why Danny has to go,” Steve said again. He clearly believed that repeating his objections enough times would get him a different answer, an answer he could finally accept.

Steve, Danny, Chin, and Kono were all in Chin’s office, the one that had originally been Steve’s back when he ran the Task Force rather than the entire state. Chin had adamantly refused to move into the larger office, repeating that it would always be Steve’s. Not until Steve and Danny had snuck in one night and made it Chin’s office did he take up permanent residence.

“Dude. Really?” Chin said, studying Steve with the same critical, assessing expression he wore especially when dealing his long-time boss.

“That’s Governor Dude to you,” Steve said, glancing at Kono in hopes of recruiting her to his side.

“I’m with them,” she said to his disappointment. “Chin can’t go. I can’t go. The doctor would have my neck for leaving this close to having this baby. You can’t go. That only leaves Danny.”

“No. I forbid it,” Steve said. He could feel Danny’s body tense where he was sitting on the couch next to him.

“Oh. You forbid it,” Danny said slowly, turning the evil eye squarely on Steve. “You forbid it.”

“All right. I didn’t mean to say that,” Steve said in contrition. “But it’s 10 days. In St. Paul. Minnesota in February. You’ve lived here long enough to have thin Hawaiian blood.”

“St. Paul has buildings,” Danny said, still frowning at Steve. “I won’t be making igloos.”
“I know,” Steve sighed. He reached over for Danny’s hand, entwining their fingers. “It’s 10 days.”

“You’ll survive. And anyone who wants to set up a task force like Five-0 needs first hand information,” Danny reminded him, some of his displeasure melting. As though there was any possibility he could stay mad at Steve longer than five minutes.

“Maybe I’ll go with you,” Steve tried.

“No you won’t. You can’t leave Hawaii for 10 days,” Kono said with a light laugh. “You are in charge.”

“You only say that when you want something,” Steve said, regarding her with narrowed eyes. “What’s your end-game, Kalakaua?”

She just smiled her dimpled-smile at him and didn’t answer.

“When are you leaving, brah?” Chin asked Danny.

“Week from today,” Danny said. “Unless the Governor forbids it again.”

“I said I was sorry,” Steve said, looking down at their joined hands.

“I know,” Danny conceded, leaning over to kiss his greying temple.

“You’ll have to fly commercial. Since I’m not going,” Steve said.

“It’s fine. They are arranging my flight. First class, thankfully.”

They chatted about what records Danny would take to St Paul to help them establish their own task force as well as assist them in avoiding some of the bumps in the road Five-0 had encountered. They all agreed that no task force would ever be just like theirs unless there was another SEAL out there with an undiagnosed death wish who was determined to leap before he looked.

“I don’t have a death wish,” Steve said not for the first time.

“You did until Danny kissed you,” Kono said.

“I kissed him,” Steve corrected.

“Details. You have been much easier to live with ever since you admitted you are crazy in love with him,” Kono said.

“For you it’s been easier,” Danny said, trying to sound grumpy.

“We’re not buying it,” Chin said, shaking his head. “He’s not the only one crazy in love.”

“I’m in love,” Danny agreed. “I am not crazy.”

“Yes you are,” the chorus of three informed him. He just shrugged and otherwise ignored them.

“Come on, Governor SEAL. The kids will be home from school in 10 minutes.”

“Yay,” Steve said with a huge smile. “Milk and cookies.”
“Only if you do all your homework,” Danny warned, pulling Steve up. “We’ll see you at dinner?”

“Not me,” Chin said. “I have a date.”

“Ooohh… we’re not good enough for him,” Danny said.

“I’m staying home and feeding my kids,” Kono said.

“Kids? You have kids?” Steve said, following Danny out as he pulled him by the hand.

“Yeah. You’re the biggest of them,” Kono yelled after him. The current members of Five-0 barely lifted their heads as Danny and Steve went through the offices. Their presence was as commonplace as Kono yelling at them, and Chin laughing at them. It wasn’t any wonder there was a list a mile long of officers hoping for a chance to be assigned to Five-0.

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Steve and Danny arrived back at the residence 3 minutes after the kids had been dropped off by Henry. There were five of them sitting at the dining room table, squabbling over the virtues of plain milk over chocolate.

“Do we have 5 kids?” Steve asked Danny when they entered the dining room.

“I don’t think so,” Danny said, considering the children gazing at him and Steve in complete innocence. “Do you belong to us?”

“I do,” a chorus of voices claimed.

Danny looked over at Steve with a shrug. “They all say they belong to us.”

“Okay,” Steve said with a nod, sitting at his place at the head of the table. “From the looks of them, they wouldn’t lie to us.”

Danny continued to consider that as he sat at the foot of the table. He turned to John, studying him. “Your name?”

“John Williams-McGarrett, sir,” John told him formally. Danny squinted at him then at Steve before returning to look at John.

“I guess you can stay. You bear an unfortunate resemblance to my whack-a-doodle husband.”

“Thank you,” John said with Steve’s exact smile.

“And you?” Danny said to Alicia. “What is your name?”

“I am Alicia Williams-McGarrett-Edwards,” she claimed as seriously as John had.

“Edwards you say,” Danny said, looking down at Steve. “Do we know any Edwardses?”

“I think we may. One or two or a dozen,” Steve said, going to the kitchen to see what the hold-up was with the milk and cookies.
“How are your grades? Do we have to buy you new clothes?” Danny asked her suspiciously.

“I have straight A-s, sir. And I have no need for new clothes,” Alicia told him.

“All right. You can stay,” Danny said, focusing on Emma. “Do I know you?”

“Uh huh,” Emma said with a great deal of nodding.

“Your name?”


“I see,” Danny said, considering it. “You are related to this John Williams-McGarrett?”

“He’s my brother, sir,” Emma confirmed.

“Your brother you say,” Danny said, studying her. “You look vaguely familiar. I suppose it would come to no harm if you hung around.”

“Thank you,” she chirped with a disarming smile.

“You,” Danny said, pointing at the child next to Emma. “Are you mine?”

“No sir,” the girl admitted with a smile. “I’m a friend of Emma’s.”

“Your name?” Danny asked.

“Dancy,” she said brightly.

“I see,” Danny said. “You are Emma’s BFF?”

“Yes sir,” Dancy agreed with a nod.

“I guess you can stay then,” Danny decided. He focused on Zachary who was very nearly smiling at him. “And you?”

“Zachary, sir,” he responded promptly.

“Zachary,” Danny repeated like he was considering it. “The Zach that has been known to fix all of our computers?”

“That’s me,” Zach agreed.

“Excellent. You can most definitely stay,” Danny said with a nod of approval. He leaned back in his chair, twisting toward the door to the kitchen. “Hey, Governor SEAL. What’s the hold up with our cookies? We have hungry children to feed.”

“First, stop yelling,” Steve requested as he returned to the dining room. “And second, they are coming. Cook was making a fresh batch. Apparently the oven burned the first ones.”

“The oven burned them,” Danny repeated as the cook entered with a plate piled high with cookies.
Lolhol Pu had been the official Governor’s cook since before Steve was elected. He happily agreed to remain when Steve asked him, very quickly becoming expert at fixing all the family’s favorites including superb pasta for Danny. He was rarely seen without a smile on his round face, his disposition perfect for his position. There was some possibility that he was related to Chin and Kono but they never entirely confirmed that.

“That’s my story,” Lolhol said, putting the plate on the table. “I dare you to prove differently.”

“Uh huh,” Danny said, eyeing Lolhol in suspicion. “Did you know we have 5 children?”

“I never know how many you claim on any given day,” Lolhol said with a shrug, winking at the children. “Did you settle the great plain versus chocolate milk debate?”

“We’d like 3 plain and 2 chocolate, please,” Dancy requested.

“Of course. Governor? Governor’s other half?” Lolhol asked.

“Coffee for me,” Danny said.

“Same for me,” Steve said. “Then I need to go back to my office.” This announcement was met with a chorus of protests, all five children reminding him that he had said he would swim with them. “I’m sorry, kids,” he said, shaking his head. “I have to finish up at the office.”

“I’ll swim with you,” Danny said, accepting a steaming cup of coffee from Lolhol who had returned with the drinks.

The kids decided he’d make an adequate substitute, some discussion about taking their swim to the beach instead of the pool.

“Much easier at the pool,” Steve reminded them. “And you have to make sure you take Henry or Albert with you.”

“We know,” Emma said with a huge sigh. “No swimming without appropriate supervision.”

“Exactly,” Steve said. “And no sass about the rules.”

She shrugged innocently, dunking her cookie into her milk.

“We could go to our house,” John suggested.

“It’s too late to do that,” Danny said. “By the time we got there, it would be dark.”

That convinced the children to swim in the pool, Dancy assuring Danny that she had brought her swimsuit with her.

“You need to leave one here,” Emma told her.

“I will,” Dancy agreed. “Oh. I mean. If it’s okay with you,” she amended, looking at Danny with a guilty expression.

“Of course you should,” Danny said. “You swimming?” he asked Alicia and Zachary.
“I am,” Alicia said.

“I am not,” Zachary decided. “I’m going to start my homework.”

“That’s fine,” Danny said. “Does Rachel know where you are?”

“Yes, Danno,” Zachary said with a surprising amount of sarcasm and a roll of his eyes which pleased Danny and Steve more than annoyed them. If it had been one of the other children, they would have been displeased. But for Zachary to employ sarcasm was an excellent sign.

“We called before we left school,” Alicia added.

“Good,” Steve said. “Enjoy your swim. How many of you will we see at dinner?”

They all said they were planning on staying, Danny assuring Steve he would tell Lolhol before they went down to the pool.

~0~

“I thought you were telling the kids at dinner that you are going to Minnesota,” Steve said to Danny as he took off his clothes while leaving the bathroom. Danny was already in bed, reading a book. Or at least he was holding it. All he was really doing was studying Steve’s body as more of it was revealed. “Weren’t you?”

“What?” Danny said, shaking himself and focusing on Steve’s face. “Wasn’t I what?”

“Do you ever listen to me?” Steve asked as he climbed into bed, laying next to Danny.

“Sometimes. When you aren’t doing a strip-tease in our bedroom.”

“I was getting ready for bed. How is that a strip-tease?” Steve asked, looking up at him.

“It always is when you undress,” Danny told him. “What did you ask me?”

“I thought you were going to tell the kids at dinner about St. Paul.”

“Oh,” Danny said, waving it away. “I told them in the pool. They made me promise to tell you that they need to eat three meals a day while I’m gone. And a snack when they get home from school.”

“I have never withheld food,” Steve said.

“But you have made them work for it,” Danny said.

“Well. It’s good for them. What did Zachary say?”

“He doesn’t care. Since you aren’t going. And I’ll have my phone. They have cell service in Minnesota, you know.”

“Yeah,” Steve said with a pout. “Not the same thing.”

“I know it’s not. But it’s only 10 days. You’ll be fine. At least I’m not going to some undisclosed location that I can never admit that I’ve visited.”
“Yeah,” Steve said. “Can’t say I’m sorry those days are behind me.”

“Me too,” Danny agreed, leaning over to kiss Steve. “Go to sleep. You can barely keep your eyes open.”

“’Kay,” Steve said, closing his eyes and falling asleep before Danny could reach over to turn off the light. When he was laying next to Steve, he automatically reached over to pull Danny tight against his body, his long arm draped over Danny’s belly where it would stay all night.

~00o~00o~00o~

Danny reached over and silenced the alarm with a faint groan. What an ungodly hour to have to get up. No one should be expected to be awake at 4:30 in the morning. But since his flight left at 6:30, he had very little choice but to obey the call of the alarm.

“Wut?” Steve mumbled into his pillow as Danny carefully untangled himself.

“Go back to sleep,” Danny said, kissing his head. “It was just my alarm.”

“Donn go,” Steve slurred.

“You know I don’t have any choice,” Danny said. “Go back to sleep.”

“Uhn,” Steve grunted, closing his barely open eyes. “Miss you.”

“I know, babe. I’ll miss you too,” Danny assured him before he disappeared into the bathroom. He was not even a little surprised when the shower door opened so that Steve could climb in with him.

“Why in God’s name are you even awake?”

Steve shrugged, reaching for the soap and scrubbing Danny’s warm skin.

“It isn’t forever, you goof. I’ve been gone longer.”

Steve shook his head at that before picking up the shampoo.

“You’re so sleepy you can’t even talk,” Danny said in sympathy as he closed his eyes. “You aren’t coming to the airport with me.”

“Am so.”

“No you aren’t. Because then you won’t be here to get the kids up for school,” Danny told him gently.

“Henry can do it,” Steve said, pouting just a little.

“Henry isn’t their father. And you can’t go to the airport. You have a meeting at 8:30.”

“Your flight’s at 6:30. I’ll get back in time. And to get the kids up,” Steve said.

“There is no reason for you to go. You can’t come inside. Leon and Chin would both kill you themselves.”
“Sometimes being Governor sucks,” Steve decided.

“I know. Hate it for you,” Danny said, patting Steve’s chest. “Let me out so I can get dressed.”

Steve sighed but turned off the water, leaving the shower stall with Danny. He swiped off some of the water with a towel before sitting on the closed toilet to watch Danny shave.

“Don’t forget that Emma has a field trip next Tuesday,” Danny said. “I signed her permission slip but she needs to be at school half an hour early.”

“You wrote it down, right?”

“It’s on your schedule. Henry and Leon both know. John said he’d just go at the same time. And Friday is spirit day. John’s jersey and Emma’s cheerleading outfit are both clean and ready. Emma said she needs white shoes. The cheerleaders are wearing one red and one white.”

“Okay,” Steve said. “I’ll take her to the store after school today.”

“Tell Henry this morning,” Danny reminded him.

“I will. Is there a pep rally?”

“Yeah. So John will be home by 4:30. Emma may stay at school. She’ll tell Henry once Coach Morris decides. The basketball game starts at 6:30. Henry has made all the arrangements if you want to go.” Danny stopped lathering his face long enough to look over at Steve. “Do you?

“Do I what?” Steve asked with a frown.

“Want to go?”

“Where?”

“To the basketball game. Where is your head, babe?” Danny asked gently.

Steve shrugged. “You know the University professors are still talking about walking out?”

“I know they are. You can give into their demands or you can keep the budget balanced. You know you can’t do both.”

“They do deserve a raise,” Steve said. “But that means raising tuition.”

Danny nodded as he carefully scrapped away the stubble. He understood the complications of the demands of the educators but he wasn’t sure walking out on their students was the right way to solve the dispute. Unfortunately, Steve was the main fulcrum of the battle. The stand-off had cost him several sleepless nights already.

“There’s no easy answer,” Steve said as much to himself as to Danny.

“No there’s not,” Danny agreed. “The distance ed is helping a little, isn’t it?”

“It isn’t generating the amount of revenue that was projected,” Steve said. “I don’t see much point in
“adding to the infrastructure if it isn’t going to offset the costs.”

“You still need to upgrade all the servers, babe. Or they’ll be left behind and never catch up.”

“If I had an extra 23 million I’d be glad to,” Steve said, sounding weary.

“I know. Minnesota has a lottery. I’ll see if I can win us a few mil.”

“That’d be great,” Steve agreed, standing up. He used his towel to wipe away some of the left over shave cream clinging to Danny’s chin.

“Go back to sleep while you can. You have the Correspondents’ Dinner tomorrow night and you know it usually goes until 11:00,” Danny said, one warm hand on Steve’s chest.

“Yeah. Did you read over my remarks?”

“I made the changes. It’s on your computer,” Danny said. “And Henry made sure your tuxedo is clean and pressed.”

“Okay,” Steve said with a nod. For all he was protesting Danny going to Minnesota, he knew it was the right thing for him to do. Didn’t make it any easier to consider the prospects of being without him for ten days. It felt ridiculous to even Steve that Danny leaving would have such an impact on him. But Danny was his anchor, his rock, and any other cliché he could think of to use to try to justify Danny’s importance to him. He could not imagine having survived this long without him. And he certainly wouldn’t have the two perfect children they were blessed to have.

“…then it will be time,” Danny was saying when Steve tuned back in. They had gone back into their bedroom without Steve paying any attention, Danny fully dressed for his trip.

“It will be time?” Steve repeated, his eyebrows pulled low over his grey eyes in confusion.

“Oh babe,” Danny said, shaking his head in fond exasperation. “You haven’t heard a word I’ve said.”

“Probably not,” Steve confessed. What good was it to lie to him? Danny would know. “What were you saying?”

“It’s not important,” Danny assured him, approaching where Steve was sitting to kiss him on top of his head. “Go back to sleep. I’ll call as soon as I land.”

“Stay here,” Steve said. He knew his words were useless. And there was a time he couldn’t imagine saying them to anyone.

“Babe,” Danny said with a shake of his head. “Go to sleep. You’ll be so busy you’ll barely know I’m gone.”

“I’ll be busy but I’ll still know you are gone,” Steve said, wishing with all his heart he didn’t sound so needy. But as he loved (and needed) Danny with all of his heart, he supposed he couldn’t help it.

“Okay,” Danny said, having nothing else to offer that might help. “Go back to sleep.”

“Okay,” Steve agreed, watching Danny pull his suitcase out of their bedroom. Too bad he couldn’t
fit in it with Danny’s winter clothes he’d taken out of storage.

~o0o~

Steve was in his bathroom the next evening, struggling with his bow tie. He couldn’t remember having this much trouble the many other times he’d put one on. As he looped the bottom over the top it occurred to him that he was much better at tying Danny’s than his own. That was the reason for his struggle this time. He considered asking Henry to help but then decided he’d get it on his own. There was a time he had no choice but to tie his own. He could still do it.

He had just decided it was going to stay straight when he saw Emma approaching, her pale face reflected back to him in his mirror.

“Hey Em,” Steve said, turning to look at her properly. “What’s up?”

Her hair was standing up like she’d just gotten up. But since it was 6:15, he didn’t think she’d been napping. He’d seen her and John at lunch but concerns of his office had kept him occupied until it was time for him to get ready for the Correspondents’ Dinner – also known as the annual Make Fun of the Governor with Complete Immunity Dinner.

“I don’t feel so good,” she said, her arms wrapped around her waist like she was trying to conserve her body heat. Her tee shirt and jeans looked as they usually did, clean but worn because she had no doubt been chasing John around the yard as they generally did on sunny days like today.

He knelt before her, the back of his hand automatically going to her cheeks. She definitely felt warmer than normal. “Do you have an upset stomach?” he asked, trying unsuccessfully to calm her unruly curls.

“Uh huh,” she agreed, swaying slightly before him. “My head hurts.”

“Oh dear,” Steve said, kissing her forehead. “Let’s put you in bed and I’ll get you some Motrin.”

“Kay,” she said.

He wasn’t entirely sure she’d heard what he had said so he took her hand to lead her to her bedroom. He was already making contingency plans in his head. Henry was going with him to the Correspondents’ Dinner. Chin and Malia were on the Big Island at a conference. Kono was due to have her baby any day and if Emma was contagious, Kono was not a good option to come.

“I’m going to ask Dancy’s mom if she can come and watch out for you,” Steve said as he drew back Emma’s covers. She was struggling to get her jeans off. That she hadn’t taken off her sneakers was making it almost impossible. Steve knelt before her, straightening out her clothes to help her out of shoes and then her jeans.

“Can’t Kono come?” Emma asked. She was finally crawling into bed with an effort as though everything hurt.

“Not with the baby so close,” Steve said, helping her settle in her bed. He was brushing her curls from her face when she straightened with a start, leaning over the edge of her bed, vomiting on Steve’s trousers and shoes. The retching continued for what felt like an eternity but was probably no longer than 20 seconds. Steve held her shoulder until he was sure she was done.
“Oh Daddy,” she said, tears in her eyes as she swiped across her mouth with the back of her hand. “I made a mess.”

“It’s okay, baby,” Steve assured her, concentrating on keeping his sympathetic nausea at bay. He stepped out of his shoes, taking them and his socks over to her bathroom. Looking at his pants in her mirror confirmed that they were out of the picture for the night. He left his soiled trousers in her bedroom, returning to her bedside in his formal white shirt and tuxedo jacket. “I’m going to call Halley to clean up your floor. I’ll be right back with some Pepsi,” he promised, kissing her on the head.

She barely nodded, squeezing her eyes closed.

“Are you still nauseous?” he asked gently.

“Uh huh,” she said, laying stock still.

“All right. Here’s your bathroom trash can. Use it if you need to,” he said, kissing her one last time. “I’ll be right back.”

“Kay,” she whispered as if saying that much was difficult for her.

He went into the hallway, using the residence intercom to contact the head of the housekeepers. He explained what had happened, receiving Halley’s promise to be right there.

He was in the middle of dialing Henry when John appeared at the top of the steps. One look at his face confirmed that whatever Emma had, John had also caught.

“Have you been throwing up?” Steve asked John, wrapping a steadying arm around his waist.

“No but I think I’m going to,” John said. Steve hurried them into John’s bathroom. They didn’t make it, John throwing up in Steve’s tuxedo jacket. “I’m sorry,” John said as he sat on the edge of the tub to continue being sick into his toilet.

“Emma has it too, whatever it is,” Steve said. He removed his jacket and shirt, leaving them in John’s bathtub. He could hear Halley in the hallway on her way to Emma’s room and knew he had to inform her that John was also sick. He supposed the briefs he had on covered him about as well as some of his boardies and that she had seen him in those often enough. “Halley,” he called from the doorway to John’s room.

“Yes sir?” she responded. She was carrying a mop and a bucket filled with all the necessary cleaning supplies.

“Yes sir?” she responded. She was carrying a mop and a bucket filled with all the necessary cleaning supplies.

“I’ll keep an ear open for him,” she said with a motherly nod. She was old enough to be Steve and Danny’s mother and loved the children as though they were her own grandchildren. “You need to dress, sir. You’re due at the dinner in less than 10 minutes.”

Steve looked down at himself and back through the door to John’s bathroom. John was still leaning over his toilet but seemed to be trying to breathe through the need to be sick again. “I can’t leave them like this. Not with Danny out of town.”
“Did you call Mrs. Edwards?” Halley asked sensibly.

“She’s in England. Stan’s with the kids but I don’t want to risk exposing all of them to this if it’s the flu that’s going around.”

“The children had their flu shots,” she said in sympathy.

“You know it’s the best guess when they formulate them,” Steve said. He gave up trying for a semblance of modesty when Henry came down the hallway.

“I don’t think you can attend the dinner dressed like that, sir,” Henry said with a laugh.

“The kids have the flu…or something. It’s making them nauseous. This,” Steve said, waving at his mostly bare body, “is the result.”

“Oh,” Henry said. Steve could see the wheels turning in his head. “I’ll contact Sebastian. He can explain to the correspondents why you are running late. I’ll stay here with the kids. Leon can drive you to the dinner.”

“I’d rather stay here,” Steve said in indecision.

“I understand, sir,” Henry said in sympathy. “But the dinner can’t be rescheduled.”

“What if I was the one with the flu?” Steve asked, trying for stern. But Henry just looked at him, having learned when Steve was bluffing and when he had truly made up his mind.

“You’d be there anyway,” Henry reminded him. “You need to dress, please. I’ll make the calls.”

“Yes, all right,” Steve agreed reluctantly. He went into John’s bathroom, giving him a wet washcloth to use on his heated face before helping him to bed. He strategically placed his trashcan in case John needed. “Henry will be here if you need anything, Bud.”

“Kay,” John agreed, his eyes barely open.

“I’ll get their Motrin. And their Pepsi,” Henry promised, going further down the hall to peek in on Emma.

“She asleep?” Steve asked as he went toward his bedroom.

“Yes sir,” Henry said, following him. “If I may, sir, you need to shower.”

“Oh. Right, right,” Steve agreed with a sigh. “I knew I should have gotten a second tuxedo.”

“I’ll order one tomorrow,” Henry agreed.

“Would you find a suit you think will work?” Steve requested as he disappeared into his bathroom for another shower.

When he emerged from the shower, his black suit was laid out on the bed, a crisp white dress shirt next to it. He pulled them on, stepping into his dress shoes before looping his tie around his neck. He was pulling it in place as he went down to Emma’s room. When he didn’t see her asleep in bed, he went into her bathroom to find her curled over her toilet. “Bad, huh?” he asked in sympathy, pulling
her hair back for her.

“Gross,” she muttered, watery eyes looking up at him. “Can you shoot me, please?”

“Nope. How would I ever explain it to Danno?” he asked, wetting a fresh cloth to cool down her face. “Did you take the Motrin?”

“Uh huh. Not sure it’s still in my stomach,” she said as he helped back to bed. He sat her on the edge as he got a clean nightshirt from one of her drawers. He had to do most of the work pulling off her sweaty tee shirt and getting her to put her arms through the clean shirt.

“I’ll ask Henry to give you a more. If it’s still in you, a little more won’t hurt,” he assured her, kissing her head.

“Can’t you stay?” she asked. She looked so small and vulnerable curled up in her bed he almost agreed.

“I want to, baby. But I need to go to the dinner. I’ll be home just as soon as I can, I promise. Henry and Halley are both here. They’ll hear you if you need anything.”

“What about Bud?” she asked, squeezing her eyes closed. “Did you ship him off to a secure location?”

“It’s too late. He has it too.”

“Uhnn…” she moaned. “Sorry.”

“It’s not your fault,” he said gently.

“Do Zach and Ali have it?” she asked.

“I don’t know. I didn’t call Stan yet but I will. For now, try and get some sleep. And I’ll check on you when I’m home.”

“Kay,” she mumbled.

“Okay,” he agreed with a last kiss, going down to check on John. He was equally miserable in his bed, laying on his back to stare blindly up at the ceiling. “You going to live?”

“Doubt it,” John said, using all his energy to turn his head to look over at Steve. “You’re late.”

Steve shrugged, sitting carefully next to John. “Sebastian is explaining. Henry and Halley are staying in case you need anything.”

“Okay. How’s Em?”

“About the same as you,” Steve said. “Miserable. Asked me to shoot her.”

“Did you?”

“First, you would have heard it,” Steve said with a laugh. “And secondly, what would I tell Danno when he got home?”
“There is that,” John said. “We have terrible timing.”

“Nothing to be done about it, Bud.”

“Yeah. Go to your dinner. Don’t puke on anyone,” John said.

“Good advice,” Steve agreed, leaning down to kiss his forehead. “Try and sleep. I’ll see you when I get home.”

“All right,” John said, closing his eyes and trying not to shiver himself out of his bed.

Steve reluctantly left John’s bedroom, running into Henry leaving Emma’s. “She take the Motrin?”

“She did. I’m going to give John his,” Henry agreed.

“Please call me if they need me,” Steve requested, glancing between the two doors.

“I will. They’re going to be fine, sir. You know that.”

“I know. I just hate leaving them like this.”

“I understand,” Henry agreed, going toward John’s door to give him the Motrin.

“I’ll see you in a couple of hours,” Steve said.

“Yes sir,” Henry agreed.

Steve went downstairs to find Leon patiently waiting for him. “Did Sebastian explain?” Steve asked as he followed Leon out the back door to the waiting sedan.

“I believe so, sir. You’re only going to be half an hour late,” Leon said as he opened Steve’s door for him. “Sebastian told them to begin serving dinner. You’ll still be on time for your remarks.”

“I hope Sebastian told them the truth about the delay,” Steve said, taking out his cell phone, glad it had been on his dresser when Emma was sick on him. “Hey,” he said when Danny answered.

“What’s wrong?” Danny asked on instant alert.

“What makes you think something’s wrong?” Steve responded.

“You should have been at the dinner 45 minutes ago. You aren’t there from the sounds in the background. So something is wrong,” Danny said, a worried edge to his voice.

“I am late,” Steve admitted. “Emma and John have a virus or the flu or something. Emma made it impossible for me to wear my tuxedo to the dinner.”

“Oh no,” Danny said. “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine. Henry and Halley are staying upstairs in case the kids need them. I would stay home but you know I can’t.”
“I know, Babe,” Danny said. “I’d check on immediate flights home but we’re in the middle of blizzard that’s supposed to last into tomorrow evening.”

“I heard that on the news,” Steve said. “I’m going to get Sebastian to reschedule as many of my appointments tomorrow as possible. I know he won’t be happy about it, but I am not leaving the kids alone.”

“I totally agree with you,” Danny said. “When are Malia and Chin due back?”

“Not until Saturday. I’m going to call Malia for a referral tomorrow. Someone willing to make a house call, with any luck,” Steve said.

“Good. Don’t be surprised if she tries to come back,” Danny said.

“I need to call Stan just in case. And Kono,” Steve said, sounding weary to his own ears.

“You do. Call me when you get home from the dinner. And I’ll get the first flight home I can,” Danny said.


“Love you more,” Danny said, hanging up.

Steve called Stan to give him a heads up. Stan assured him that Alicia and Zachary were showing no signs of illness and offered to bring them to the mansion to help out. Steve advised against it, not wanting to expose anyone else unnecessarily.

Kono told him she was fine as were all her kids. Charlie was also just fine and volunteered to go to the mansion as well. Steve said that wasn’t a good idea, fearful of transferring it to Charlie and by extension Kono.

“How are you feeling, sir?” Leon asked, looking in the rearview mirror at Steve.

“I’m fine. I don’t have it. I hope Henry doesn’t get it from staying with them.”

“He undoubtedly has part-time parental immunity,” Leon assured him.

“Probably,” Steve agreed.

It wasn’t many minutes longer until they pulled in front of the hotel where the Correspondents’ Dinner was being held. Leon opened his door and escorted him through the overly ornate entry doors. They found Sebastian pacing the floor in front of the largest of the ballrooms.

“Governor,” Sebastian said, the hint of disapproval always there even more pronounced. As soon as he could, this time Steve was definitely firing him.

“Dinner is being served?” Steve asked.

“Yes sir. It was delayed ten minutes.”

“Unavoidable but regrettable,” Steve said with a nod of dismissal. Leon opened the ballroom door so that Steve could enter, all eyes turning toward him as he crossed the threshold. Several of his closest
supporters came to welcome him, seeming much less disturbed by his tardiness than was Sebastian. It did occur to Steve that he was the only man present not wearing a tuxedo but there was nothing to be done about it. The press could say whatever they wanted. Not wearing it was a favor for all present.

Once Steve had made it to the dais, he was introduced by the MC, one of the newscasters from the most popular local TV new show.

“We promised he’d arrive,” Teri Okita said with a laugh. “We’ll go with ‘better late than never.’” She waited until the laughter had quieted before turning to Steve. “Governor.”

“Thank you, Teri,” he said as he stepped up behind the microphone. “I guess you heard why I am late, which is also the reason I’m no longer in my tuxedo. Emma and John picked a hell of a time to be sick. Danny’s out of town and I’m out of tuxedos,” he said to the laugh of the audience. “I’ll be leaving as soon as I have refuted all the lies and half-truths the local press are planning to send my way.”

That brought some additional laughter and a smattering of applause as Steve sat in the chair closest to the podium.

“My kids had it last week,” Teri Okita said to him as he sipped the chilled pineapple juice.

“Is it the flu, do you suppose?” Steve asked her. When the waiter came to inquire whether he preferred the beef or whitefish, he declined both.

“My doctor thought it was,” she said. “You aren’t coming down with it, are you?”

“No,” he assured her. “I’m just not ready to face food quite yet.”

“Having a child throw up in your shoes is rather off-putting,” she had to agree with a laugh.

“I’m trying to decide if I should throw them away,” Steve admitted.

“This your first time?”

“It is since the time Emma learned walk. She used to use my shoes all the time, for all sorts of… mmm…functions. We never could figure out why. I went through at least two dozen pairs of boots before she grew out of it,” Steve said.

“You couldn’t put them up out of harm’s way?” Teri asked with a genuine smile.

“If we put them out of reach, she’d cry until I gave them to her. Danny thought it was a very bad sign that she was so attached to my boots of all things.”

“It’s unusual,” Teri agreed.

“It was. John dragged around a pair of Danny’s boxers until he was three. We had to keep replacing them on the sly.”

“Danny’s boxers,” she laughed.

“They were flannel, from when he lived in New Jersey. I don’t know why he held onto them. John took them out of the laundry basket and that was that.”
“The laundry basket?” she said, crinkling her nose.

“Danny had just washed them, to use as a dust rag,” Steve said with a laugh. “His mother sent us a dozen exact replicas so John would never be without them.”

“Do you still have those boxers?” she asked with a maternal smile of understanding.

“They are at the beach house, in the box marked ‘save to embarrass the kids one day,’” he confessed.

“Do they know about this box?”

“Only if Danny told them,” Steve laughed. “Surely you and Marvin have one of those boxes.”

“Of course,” she agreed with a laugh. “Doesn’t every parent?”

“I should hope so,” Steve said.

Before too many more minutes elapsed, Teri was once again standing at the podium, introducing the first guest speaker. It was Kunakana Kolekona from Honolulu Star-Advertiser. He’d always been a supporter of Steve’s from the first days of Five-0. His barbs and remarks were not as sharp as the ones Steve knew would follow. But it was all for a good cause – raising money for many of the local charities.

Through some secret, backroom negotiations to which Steve was not privy, there were only five speakers rather than the customary eight or nine. He decided he’d find out whoever was responsible and give them a raise. Unless it was Sebastian. He was not getting a raise under any circumstance.

Steve refuted the insults that had been thrown at him, getting the biggest laughs of the evening. The first time he’d been the ‘honoree’ of the roast, he could only stumble through his responses. Danny had told him he sounded in control and eloquent. Of course the fact that Steve was giving him a blow-job while he commented on Steve’s responses may have colored Danny’s judgment in Steve’s favor.

Each subsequent roast had gotten easier for Steve to respond. It was a matter of making notes as the journalists spoke and turning the insults back on them. It was all in good fun and Steve was careful that none of the barbs were sharp enough to wound.

“And as much as I would love to remain to be regaled with the seemingly limitless litany of my flaws and failures, I have to get home so my children can puke on this suit as well.”

That made everyone laugh, raising to their feet to applaud as he made his slow way out of the ballroom. Leon accompanied him, making certain that his exit didn’t take as long as his remarks had.

“Well done, sir,” Leon said when they were in the sedan headed back to the residence.

“You sure?” Steve asked, looking out the window. “Danny is the only one who tells me the truth.”

“You were brilliant, sir. And I say that as an audience member, not as a staff member,” Leon assured him.

“Thank you,” Steve said sincerely. “Do you know who shortened the program?”
“Henry called the chair of the committee. Heidi Martin’s children were ill last week. She understood exactly how important it was for you to be able to leave early.”

“I’ll have to call tomorrow and thank her,” Steve said. “I hope the journalists who missed their chance to loose their flings and arrows won’t take it out on us.”

“They drew straws, sir. It was purely chance that determined who would be left off,” Leon told him.

“That’s good,” Steve said, reaching up to loosen his tie.

“Your phone,” Leon said, handing it back to him.

There were no voice mail messages, to Steve’s relief. He had a text from Danny that said *blizzard still full on. See you in may maybe?*

“I told Danny not to go to Minnesota in February,” Steve said with a shake of his head.

“It is unfortunate timing,” Leon had to agree.

“Hey Henry,” Steve said after he’d called him. “How are the kids?”

“Asleep,” Henry said. “Halley made Emma some hot tea. That seemed to help. John’s been asleep since you left.”

“All right. I’ll be home in five minutes. Are you feeling all right?”

“I’m fine, sir. No worries here. Lolhol said he’d make them chicken soup first thing tomorrow,” Henry said.

“Good,” Steve said. “Danny said the blizzard is still roaring in Minnesota.”

“I heard that,” Henry agreed. “Maybe it will let up.”

“Hopefully before May,” Steve said. “Thank you, by the way, for arranging to shorten the program tonight.”

“You’re welcome, sir,” Henry replied. He made it sound off-hand, as though it hadn’t taken two dozen phone calls and some possible promises that he’d slowly reveal to Steve as time permitted. Steve wouldn’t begrudge the favors that got him home much earlier than usual.

“I’ll see you in a few,” Steve said, hanging up after appropriate good-byes.

Leon pulled into the covered garage, not surprised that Steve let himself out of the back seat. He generally did when no one was around to witness. He went up the back stairs after wishing Leon a good night.

“Henry?” Steve called quietly as he approached the sitting room.

“Governor,” Henry said, stepping into the hallway. He looked tired and more rumpled than Steve could ever remember seeing him. But he did not look at all ill, much to Steve’s relief.
“Go get some sleep. I told Sebastian to cancel or reschedule all my appointments tomorrow. Except the phone call with the President. I can take that in my office up here,” Steve said, a warm hand on Henry’s shoulder.

“I’m willing to sleep right here,” Henry said, indicating the couch that was long enough to accommodate him.

“I know you would. But I’ll need your help tomorrow. One of us needs a full night’s sleep,” Steve pointed out.

“Very well, sir. I’ll come up at 8:00 unless you need me earlier.”

“Thank you, Henry. For your help and your friendship,” Steve said sincerely.

Henry nodded and left with wishes for Steve to have a restful night, if possible.

Steve peeked in on Emma and John, finding them both sleeping soundly. They felt warmer than normal but they weren’t burning up nor were they restless. Those were good signs.

“Hey,” he said as soon as Danny answered his phone.

“Did you sneak out early?” Danny asked.

“Henry arranged to shorten the program. Only five journalists used me for target practice.”

“Pity,” Danny said. “Their stories are the only thing that keeps your head small enough to fit through the doorways.”

“That’s your job,” Steve said, laying down on top of the covers. “I wish you were here.”

“Me too Babe. If I’d had any idea….”

“I know. They were fine this morning. And they aren’t the only reason I miss you.”

“I know that too,” Danny said with love in his voice.

“Promise me you’ll never go to Minnesota in February again,” Steve said.

“I promise.”

“Or December, January, or March just to be on the safe side,” Steve added.

“This is a hundred year storm, Babe. They never expected it to develop into a blizzard or I wouldn’t have come,” Danny reminded him.

“I know. How are the officers you met with?” Steve asked, needing a brief distraction.

“Fairly clueless to be honest. Hawaii is unique in so many ways, other states don’t seem to understand why it works so well for us. I think they’ll be able to use some of our strategies but I don’t expect them to be nearly as successful as we were.”

“And still are,” Steve reminded him.
“Exactly. Are the professors going to strike?” Danny asked, bringing Steve back to his reality.

“I met with the head of the union today. For almost three hours. What part of ‘there is not money in the budget to meet your demands’ is so hard for him to understand? I’m not just arbitrarily denying their requests.”

“I know that, Babe. And so do they. They are playing hardball to see if you blink first,” Danny reminded him. “But they forgot they are going up against Super SEAL and his thousand yard death stare.”

“He said if we don’t find a resolution by Friday, they’ll walk out.”

“What’d you say?” Danny asked, able to guess the answer.

“I told him to enjoy his unpaid vacation now. Because come June, classes would still be in session. And how was any of that educationally sound for their students?”

“Good for you,” Danny said.

“I had lunch with the University system president yesterday. He’s on my side at least. He sympathizes with their demands as well but sees how unrealistic they are.”

“The good people of Hawaii are with you too,” Danny reminded him. “It’s going to work out. Don’t give in.”

“I won’t,” Steve said.

“You need to get some sleep. The kids are going to need you,” Danny said.

“I know. I love you,” Steve said, trying to not sound as pitiful as he felt with Danny so terribly far away.

“Danno loves you. Get some sleep.”

“Night,” Steve said, hanging up. He traded his suit for sleepwear, checking one more time on the kids before crawling into bed. It felt too big, too cold, and too lonely. But he knew he had to sleep. He’d be on full time Daddy-duty the next day and had to be rested to make it through.

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Steve woke at 6:00 the next morning, laying still to listen. Everything sounded normal but that didn’t mean it necessarily was. After visiting the bathroom, he pulled on a pair of jeans and a battered tee shirt. They could be ruined and he wouldn’t mind.

He checked on Emma who seemed to be having a bad dream. She was fighting her covers, her right arm flailing.

“Shh…baby girl. You’re okay. You’re just having a nightmare,” Steve said, brushing the hair out of her face. “Sleep, baby.”

“Daddy?” she whispered, slowly opening her eyes to squint up at him.
“Go back to sleep,” Steve soothed.

“I couldn’t find you. You left and we looked and looked and looked. You were gone,” she said, scared grey eyes peering up at him.

“I’m sorry, baby girl. I’m right here,” Steve said, leaning down to kiss her forehead. It was a little warmer than normal but not overly hot. “How are you feeling?”

“Not good,” she said. “Achy.”

“The flu is going around. I think you and John caught it,” Steve said. “I’ll get you some Motrin and you can go back to sleep.”

“Can I have some hot tea? Halley gave me some last night and it helped,” she said as she slowly sat up.

“Sure. I’m going to check on John then I’ll go down for it,” he promised. “Do you need help going to the bathroom?”

“No. I’m not dizzy,” she said, carefully getting out of bed and making her way to her bathroom.

Certain she was steady on her feet, Steve went down the hall to John’s bedroom. John was still sound asleep, his only movements his breathing which was normal and not labored.

Steve went down to the kitchen to make Emma her tea, putting on a pot of coffee for himself. He had a feeling he was going to need it. As he was preparing to take Emma’s cup up, Lolhol came in.

“Are you feeling all right, sir?” Lolhol asked Steve, studying him.

“I’m fine. The tea’s for Emma. The coffee’s for me when it’s ready,” Steve said with a nod at the pot.

“I’ll bring it up to you. What would you like to eat?” Lolhol asked.

“I’m not especially hungry.”

“That doesn’t matter, sir. You have two sick kids to care for. You need to eat.”

“All right,” Steve said. “Something simple. Toast and fruit?”

“I’ll bring it up as quick as it’s done,” Lolhol agreed.

“You aren’t due to be here for another forty five minutes,” Steve observed as he headed for the kitchen door.

“I figured you could use the help,” Lolhol said as he put on his apron and started his preparations for Steve’s breakfast.

“Thank you,” Steve said sincerely before leaving.

He took the tea to Emma who drank about a third of it before she decided she’d had enough. Steve
helped settle her back in bed, assuring her he’d be in the sitting room if she needed him. She only had to call.

“Okay,” she said, laying down. “Could you read to me, just for a minute?”

“Of course,” he agreed, reaching over for the book on her nightstand. It had been a long time since he’d had the opportunity to read to any of the children and he certainly wasn’t going to miss this one. He read a page and a half before she was back sound asleep.

When he went to John’s room, his bed was empty. The sounds coming from John’s bathroom made it clear why he was no longer in bed. Steve pushed the door the rest of the way open to find John hanging onto the toilet as though his life depended on it.

“I’m sorry, Bud,” Steve said, helping to brace him.

John took a deep breath and straightened slightly. “I think I’m done for now. But I… uhm… my bed is… uhm… I’m sorry.”

“No worries, baby. I’ll change your sheets. Wash your face and brush your teeth if you can manage.”

John gave a weary nod, slowly standing with Steve’s help. Once Steve had him propped up against the vanity, he went out to John’s room. Years of practice made stripping and remaking the bed the work of only a few minutes. Steve put the sheets in the basket he’d left outside John’s door, just in case. He didn’t want to send them down the laundry shoot. The housekeepers needed to be aware of the ‘special’ mess these sheets represented.

Steve went back into the bathroom to find John still leaning against the vanity. He looked like he’d simply stay there if Steve hadn’t returned to help him back to bed.

“What do you want some tea?” Steve asked. “Em drank some and it seemed to help.”

“Not right now,” John said. “When I wake up.”

“All right,” Steve agreed, giving John the Motrin he’d brought in with him. “I’m in the sitting room if you need me.”

“Thanks, Daddy,” John said, his eyes drifting closed.

Steve checked Emma on his way by, glad she was asleep minus the nightmares. Lolhol was waiting for him in the sitting room, a carafe of coffee and his simple breakfast laid out on the table.

“Thank you,” Steve said as he sat at the small table they normally used for homework and games.

“I’m going down to make chicken soup,” Lolhol said. “I’ll send one of the housekeepers up for the laundry basket.”

“I appreciate it,” Steve said.

“Halley will send your tuxedo to the cleaner today. You may need a new one,” Lolhol warned.

“Henry is ordering me a back-up at any rate. I’d hate to lose that one but if they can’t get it clean, I
“certainly understand,” Steve said.

“Is there anything else you need from me right now?” Lolhol asked, watching to make sure Steve ate.

“No but thank you.”

“Call if you need,” Lolhol reminded him as he left the sitting room.

Steve kept an ear tuned for any possible sounds from the kids as he turned on his laptop. Despite what he kept telling himself, he couldn’t help but look at the coverage of the Correspondents’ Dinner. The reviews said he was funny, on-point, witty, and forgiven for the delay in the start of dinner. None of the reports included why he was late which he appreciated. The kids were in the spotlight enough already. Their bout of the flu didn’t need to be covered.

“Hey,” he said when his phone vibrated, Danny’s picture popping up to smile at him.

“Super SEAL. How are you feeling?”

“I’m fine,” Steve assured him. “The kids are asleep.”

“They still puking?” Danny asked.

“John was this morning. Em had a fight with her covers and apparently misplaced me. She was searching for me.”

“I know that feeling,” Danny teased. “The snow is letting up, if one and a half inches per hour is considered letting up at all. They think I can fly out day after tomorrow.”

“Two more days?” Steve asked, trying not to sound as pathetic as he really did feel.

“I know, I know. I’m never allowed to go to Minnesota in February are again,” Danny said.

“Exactly,” Steve agreed.

“Are you eating? I know how you get,” Danny said.

“Lolhol is making sure,” Steve said.

“He’s there already?”

“He’s worried about the kids,” Steve agreed.

“How’s Henry?”

“I haven’t talked to him yet. I told him to come at 8:00. He needs to sleep while he can,” Steve said.

“That’s true,” Danny agreed.

“Aren’t you supposed to be with the St Paul PD imparting all of your hard earned wisdom?” Steve asked as he sipped his coffee.
“We’re on a break,” Danny said. “I had some time. Thought I’d call my boyfriend to check up on him.”

“And how is he?” Steve laughed.

“Wacko as usual.”

“Give him my best regards,” Steve said, enjoying Danny’s responding laugh.

“You got it. I better go. The Governor can be late to his roast but the instructor can’t be late for his session.”

“Copy that,” Steve said.

“Danno loves you,” Danny said before hanging up.

Steve had finished all of his toast and most of the fruit when Henry came into the sitting room. He was dressed in jeans and a tee shirt, far from his customary attire but more suited to helping care for two sick children.

“How are you feeling?” Steve asked by way of greeting, looking at him closely for any signs of illness.

“I’m fine, sir. I am not among the infected,” Henry said.

“I’m very glad. Did you eat?”

“I did. Before I came up. I talked to Sebastian. He’s decided to remain out of the residence, just in case,” Henry said.

“Makes sense. He hasn’t called me.”

“He doesn’t want to risk interrupting,” Henry explained.

“Ahh…” Steve said, pressing his speed dial for Sebastian.

“Good morning, Governor,” Sebastian said in cool greeting.

“ ‘Morning. Were you able to reschedule all of my appointments?” Steve asked.

“All except the meeting with the chair of the House Finance Committee. He insisted on discussing the final appropriations before they reconvene.”

“If he’s willing to risk getting the flu, he’s welcome to come up,” Steve said in a tight voice.

“I explained the circumstances, sir. He said he will take the chance.”

“Fine,” Steve said. “That’s at 4:00?”

“Yes. Your call with the President is still on schedule for 2:30,” Sebastian reminded him.

“I’ll be available,” Steve assured him. “Did you email me the full briefing?”
“You’ll have it in the next half hour,” Sebastian said.

“All right. Call if you need me. I have my phone on vibrate. If I can’t answer, I’ll call as quickly as I can,” Steve said.

“Understood, sir,” Sebastian said, disconnecting.

“Really?” Steve said to Henry when they were both settled in the comfortable chairs. “He had the briefing ready last night. I told him I’d look at this morning. And now it will be another half an hour?”

“Sebastian is… well. I don’t have to tell you, sir,” Henry said.

“Yeah,” Steve sighed. “Thank you again for staying with the kids last night.”

“You know it’s no problem,” Henry said. “They slept almost the entire time you were gone.”

“They were asleep when I checked a little while ago. John was sick again. Emma had some tea.”

“And you ate?”

“Lolhol made sure,” Steve agreed. “Danny said the blizzard is down to one and a half inches per hour. He thinks he can come home day after tomorrow.”

“It’s quite the storm,” Henry said, reaching for the remote. He turned the TV to one of the channels of all weather all the time, the map of the mid-west solid, threatening purple.

“Danny said they are calling it a hundred year storm,” Steve said, trying not to sound as put-out about the forces of mother nature as he felt.

“Looks like one,” Henry agreed. “Did you call the school about their absences?”

“Oh crap. Danny usually does it,” Steve said, taking out his phone. School wouldn’t have started yet so he was still in the clear. “You aren’t going to tell Danny you had to remind me, right?”

“Never,” Henry said, crossing his heart and making Steve laugh.

“Yes, hello. I need to speak to the attendance monitor please,” Steve said. He waited only a minute to be transferred to the correct extension. “I’m calling to let you know that John and Emma Williams-McGarrett won’t be in school today,” Steve informed the woman on the other end.

“I see,” she said, pausing to apparently make a note. “Thank you for letting us know, Detective.”

“Detective?” Steve repeated.

“This is John and Emma’s father, isn’t it?” she asked, sounding slightly confused.

“Yes, I’m their father. I’m Steve, not Danny,” he explained.

“Oh Governor,” she said in surprise. “I’m so sorry. It never occurred to me… I mean, Detective Williams-McGarrett generally calls.”

“I see, sir,” she said.

“You’ll ask that their teachers send us any urgent assignments?”

“Certainly, sir. I hope John and Emma are feeling better very soon.”

“Thank you,” he said. “I’ll call about tomorrow as soon as we know.”

“Of course. That will be fine. I’ll make a note. And alert all of their teachers. It shouldn’t be a problem.” She stopped abruptly, apparently realizing she’d been rambling.

“All right,” Steve said, hanging up after saying good-bye.

“Surprised it was you, sir?” Henry asked, pretending his focus was still on the TV.

“I guess I’ve never called them out sick before,” Steve said.

“You’re generally a little too busy,” Henry reminded him.

“True that,” Steve agreed just as he heard John calling for him.

“Hey Bud,” Steve said as he entered to sit on the edge of John’s bed. “What’s up?”

“You have to call school,” John said, fevered eyes looking up at Steve.

“I just did. The monitor thought I was Danny.”

“Huh,” John grunted.

“Do you need anything? Some Pepsi or tea?” Steve asked, kissing his forehead to judge his fever. It was still there but not as bad as last night.

“I don’t think so,” John said. “Could you put on a movie for me?”

“Sure. Which one?” Steve asked.

“Mmm…. The second Thor,” John decided.

“All right. I don’t know how you can sleep through all that destruction but I’ll put it on for you,” Steve agreed, going to John’s TV to start it.

“I won’t really hear it,” John reminded him, barely able to keep his eyes open.

“Don’t let Loki take you over, Bud,” Steve said, kissing him before slipping out of his room. He went down to Emma’s to find her watching the door. “You okay, baby?” he asked, sitting on her bed.

“Uh huh. I heard John call you. He okay?” she asked.
"He was reminding me to call you out of school. I had just done it," Steve assured her.

"'Kay. Good," she said with a sleepy nod.

"Do you need anything, sweetie pie?" Steve asked with a kiss.

"No. Since you still won’t shoot me."

"Nope," Steve said, standing up to look down at her. "Do you want a movie? John’s watching Thor 2."

"Uhn," she grunted, slowly sitting up.

"What, baby? You need to go to the bathroom?" Steve asked, on high alert.

"No. I’m going to go John’s room," she decided.

"All right," Steve agreed, helping her down the hall and getting her settled in the second bed.

"Don’t puke on me," John said through barely opened eyes. Steve placed the trash can between the twin beds just in case.

"No promises," Emma said, turning her back to him and closing her eyes.

"Sleep well," Steve said with a last kiss for them both.

When he got back to the sitting room, he discovered that Kamekona had arrived and was happily chatting with Henry. But then he rarely saw Kamekona do anything that he didn’t do happily.

"Hey Big Guy. What brings you here?" Steve asked, sitting back in his chair.

"Back-up. With the keiki sick and Danno out of town, you’ll need the help," Kamekona explained.

"Flippa’s watching the shrimp truck?" Steve asked, reaching over for his laptop.

"You know it, brah. How are the babes?"

"Better than last night, I think. I’m going to call Malia to see if she has a recommendation. I’m pretty sure it’s just the flu but better safe than sorry," Steve said.

"True that," Kamekona said with a nod. "You eat?"

"Lolhol made sure," Steve said, dialing Chin’s computer on his. "Brah."

"How are the kids?" Chin asked, looking concerned.

"News travels fast," Steve said.

"You know it. You need us back?"

"No. We have it covered. Kamekona and Henry are both here. I was wondering if Malia could recommend a doctor that wouldn’t mind making a house call."
“Hey,” Malia said when she appeared over Chin’s shoulder. “You know I’ll be on the next flight if you want.”

“I do know. I’m pretty sure it’s that flu going around,” Steve assured her.

“What are their symptoms?”

He told her what they had endured and that they were both asleep. She confirmed that it was most probably the flu and unless they got significantly worse, there was no reason to summon a doctor. Steve should keep doing what he was already, making certain the kids replaced as much of the lost fluid as possible.

“Copy that,” Steve said. “Emma had some tea this morning. John hasn’t yet but as soon as he wakes up, I’ll get him some.”

“Tea is best,” Malia agreed. “Pepsi is fine if that’s all they want.”

“Right,” Steve agreed. “I’m being hailed. I’ll check in later today.”

“Aloha,” Malia said as Steve passed his laptop to Kamekona to go to John’s room in response to Emma’s call.

“What’s wrong, sweetie?” Steve asked, sitting next to her.

“I’m hot. And cold. I can’t be both,” she complained, throwing off the covers and shivering.

“I’ll get you a fresh night shirt. That will help, to get you out of the sweaty one.”

“The blue one,” she requested. “With Cinderella on it.”

“Right,” Steve said, going into her room to find the correct one. He thought she was getting to be too old to still want the Princesses adorning her clothes but until she said no to Disney, he and Danny would continue to buy every Princess imaginable. “Do you think you can drink something? You can’t get dehydrated,” he said when she had on her fresh nightshirt.

“No,” she said, shivering.

“All right, baby. I’ll get you some tea when you wake up again.”

“When’s Daddy coming home?” she asked with a pout.

“Day after tomorrow if the blizzard lets up,” Steve said.

“Can I talk to him?” she asked.

“Me too,” John said, turning enough to look over at them.

“He’s in meetings right now. I’ll leave him a message and ask him to Skype as soon as he has time.”

“’Kay,” she agreed. “Love you, Daddy.”
“Love you too,” he said, kissing her and John before leaving them to sleep. When he got back to the sitting room, he reported on their condition before leaving Danny a message to request a cheer-up Skype call. He also checked his email, finding the briefing Sebastian had promised to send. He read over it, asking Henry if he thought the proposed budget for the Department of Agriculture was sufficient.

Henry looked over the figures on his copy, comparing it to last year’s figures. “It will be adequate, sir. The businesses help fund the outreach. This appropriation is for standard expenditures.”

“Very well,” Steve said, reading through the rest of the briefing. It was as dry and boring as Sebastian. And it made him long for the days of reading Danny’s Five-0 reports, or at least pretending to, before signing them. He was pretty sure Chin wrote the majority of the reports from current Five-0 but he’d never asked and felt secure in his lack of knowledge.

“What’s the President callin’ about?” Kamekona asked since he was leaning a little too close to Steve. If he’d been worried about what was on his screen, he’d have made sure the big guy couldn’t see it.

“I’m not at liberty to say,” Steve said. His serious tone warned Kamekona that it wasn’t one of his ‘it’s classified’ jokes or evasions. He was not at liberty to discuss it.

“Got ya,” Kamekona said with a nod. “I thought I might see Miss Gracie here.”

“She said she’d come. But I don’t want her getting it too,” Steve said.

“Understood,” Kamekona agreed, reaching for the remote and changing the channel on the TV. He put on one of the local news casts which was reporting the highlights of the Correspondents’ Dinner from last night.

“And we are told that Governor Williams-McGarrett was late due to the illness of his children,” one of the newscasters said, looking properly sympathetic.

“Could explain why he wasn’t in his tuxedo,” the other said, looking unhappy about Steve’s breech of protocol.

“Your tux fall victim to the kids?” Kamekona asked.

“Both of them. Last night could be the last time I ever wear it,” Steve agreed.

“Ah well. You could have worn your uniform,” Kamekona suggested.

“There wasn’t time for me to obtain permission,” Steve said.

“He looked quite appropriate in his suit,” Henry said, watching Steve on the TV.

“Thanks,” Steve said, answering his phone when it vibrated. “Hey.”


“They miss you,” Steve said. “Will you have time to Skype with them?”

“At 2:00 your time,” Danny said. “I’ll be done for the day.”
“All right. I’ll let them know the next time they wake up. I talked to Malia. She said unless they get worse, I don’t need to have a doctor come.”

“That makes sense,” Danny agreed. “You call them out of school?”

“I did. The monitor assumed I was you.”

“You’ve never called before,” Danny reminded him. “She had no reason to think it wasn’t me.”

“True,” Steve said. “How’s the snow?”

“White and furious,” Danny said. “I thought I missed ‘real’ winters. I take it back.”

“Most of Jersey’s winters weren’t like that,” Steve said.

“Thankfully, no. I need to go. I’ll see you electronically at 2:00.”

“Good,” Steve agreed, hanging up.

The majority of the rest of the morning was spent listening out for John and Emma, coaxing them to drink tea or Pepsi before they could fall back asleep. There was no more vomiting for which they were all grateful.

They were both awake right before 2:00 when Steve connected John’s TV to Skype. He had just gotten it ready when Danny’s face appeared, smiling at them over the distance.

“There’s my two infected babies,” he said in sympathy.

“We aren’t babies,” Emma protested as she so often did, her smile nearly normal.

“But we are infected,” John had to confirm. “You aren’t sick, are you, Daddy?”

“No, Bud. I’m fine. Just like Super SEAL. We got cootie shots before we had you so we’d never catch anything you bring home,” Danny claimed.

“That is so not true,” Emma said with a soft laugh.

“It might be,” Danny said. “Have you been drinking?”

They told him what they had eaten, which was not a lot, and had drunk, which was a little bit more. While they were in the middle of describing Lolhol’s delicious chicken soup, Henry appeared in the doorway, motioning to Steve.

“Yeah?” Steve said when he stood in the door with Henry.

“The President’s people want to know if you can talk with him now. The change isn’t urgent but would help with his schedule tonight,” Henry explained.

“Sure. Give me a second,” Steve requested, returning to John’s room to explain. They barely acknowledged his explanation before he left to talk with the President.
Emma and John were still talking to Danny when he returned ten minutes later.

“Everything okay?” Danny asked, focusing on Steve.

“Better than okay,” Steve said with a nod.

“Good,” Danny said. The conversation resumed between the children and their distant father, their close-by father content to simply listen and be with them, even if it was one-quarter electronic.

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“Oh my God,” Danny said as he entered their bedroom. Steve was cross-way on the bed, his head practically in the plastic trash can by the bed. “You look like hell.”

“Shut up,” Steve said, barely able to lift his head to glare with fevered eyes over at Danny. “Did I slip into a coma? You aren’t due home until tomorrow.”

“Henry called and told me you were puking up everything you ever ate. As luck would have it, one of the members of the possible Minnesota Five-0 is a retired Navy SEAL with connections to people who fly in the worst imaginable weather. When he heard the sad tale of Smooth Dog trying to care for sick children while having the flu himself, he got me a seat on a transport,” Danny said. He was sitting next to Steve, rubbing his back in gentle circles. He knew the next step would be to get Steve a fresh tee shirt. This one was soaked through.

“You ride cargo?” Steve asked, his voice rough, his cheeks unnaturally pink.

“Thankfully no,” Danny said, going over to the dresser for a clean tee shirt.

“Kids know?” Steve ask, finally managing to sit up to exchange shirts.

“It’s 2:30 am here. I thought they could wait until morning to give me their germs,” Danny said.

“They’re 80% over it. Their old man is going to die from it,” Steve claimed, laying his fevered cheek on Danny’s thigh.

“You are not. They had it for 36 hours. You will too. Then you’ll be back to ordering people around.”

“I’m totally firing Sebastian this time,” Steve said, wrapping a sweaty arm around Danny’s waist to make sure he didn’t leave him.

“Okay. But not until the sun comes up,” Danny said, leaning down to kiss Steve’s sweat soaked hair. “I’m going to peek in on the kids. Then I’ll be right back.”

“Em’s in John’s room,” Steve croaked.

“John’s room?”

“Yeah. You know how they get when they’re sick,” Steve said, closing his eyes so maybe the room would stop its stupid spinning.

“True. All right. Try not to die before I get back,” Danny said, getting a wane smile in return. He
crept down the hallway, peeking into John’s room to find both kids out like a light. He returned to their bedroom to find Steve in the exact same position. “Get in bed the right way. Then I’ll join you.”

“You should sleep in the guest room. Or Zach’s room. You don’t want this,” Steve said.

“Either I’m going to come down with it or I’m not. Sleeping with you won’t really change that,” Danny said as he began to strip off his clothes. “You have approximately 30 seconds to move or I’m sleeping on top of you.”

“Bossy,” Steve complained, painfully turning so he was laying the correct way, the trash can in quick, easy reach.

“That’s better,” Danny said as he emerged from their bathroom in his sleep clothes. “Drink this. It will help.”

“No,” Steve said, not opening his eyes to see what was being offered. Just the idea of drinking anything made him queasy - more queasy.

“Stop being a baby and drink the water. You need it to wash down the phenergan.”

“Where’d you get phenergan?” Steve asked, opening one eye to squint at Danny’s palm.

“I have my ways,” Danny said, coaxing him to drink. “There. That will help.”

“Huh,” Steve grunted, waiting for Danny to get into bed with him. As soon as he was settled, Steve shifted up against him, his hand in the middle of Danny’s stomach. “I’m glad you’re home. Don’t go again.”

Danny laughed softly, reaching down to kiss Steve’s hot head. “I’ll try to leave only when the kids don’t have the flu.”

“Or not at all,” Steve countered, snoring softly even before he finished saying it.

Danny reached over to turn out the light, Steve’s arm circling him to hold tight. At least Danny knew Steve would sleep with him in the bed. He was glad he could help Steve through his bout of the flu after Steve had braved being nursemaid to the two kids. He deserved a medal for his valor in the face of all that puking.
Proprietary

Chapter Summary

Steve realizes how important Danny is to him and nearly freaks out. Danny understands. They work it out, finally, finally admitting their true feelings for one another.

Chapter Notes

Several faithful readers of BPBB have asked for a "how they admitted they loved each other" chapter. I hope this satisfied. I may add a "sex for the first time chapter" if my muses are amenable.

Steve clipped his badge to his belt and holstered his gun, prepared for his day. Although he hadn’t heard Danny arrive, he knew from his Danny-dar that he was already there.

Steve made his way downstairs, stopping in the doorframe to the kitchen. Danny was emptying out the dishwasher, putting the dishes away with a familiarity that gave Steve pause.

Gave me pause Steve repeated in his head. Was that something he would normally say? It sounded much more like Danny than it did him. But that’s what happened, right? You spent enough time with someone and you started talking like them? Right?

He had been as close to Freddie as he had to anyone but even that friendship was different. Freddie was like a brother. Danny…Danny was like the missing piece of him that had finally slotted into place. He’d never let anyone have the kind of access to every part of him that Danny had. And that included emptying his dishwasher.

Danny paused in his puttering long enough to fill two cups of steaming coffee, handing one to Steve without actually acknowledging his presence. Why did that seem so terribly normal?

“So Grace wanted to make sure I double-check with you,” Danny was saying as he stacked the plates with focused precision in the cabinet. “I told her you had already said you’d come tomorrow but she said the polite thing to do was to make sure. And goodness knows with all the mistakes we’ve made, we’ve done everything possible to make sure Grace is polite.”

Danny paused, which seemed to indicate that Steve was supposed to fill in the space left empty by the absence of Danny’s voice.

“Saturday. Yeah,” Steve said, hoping he got it right. All he could really think about was how uncomfortable he was with being so comfortable that Danny displayed proprietary over his kitchen.

“You have no idea what I’m talking about, do you?” Danny asked with amused fondness when he was leaning back against one of the counters. He sipped his coffee, his blue eyes full of mischief.
“Tomorrow. There’s a…thing…at the museum Grace wants to go to,” Steve said, certain he had the facts right. The response was thankfully automatic because he couldn’t get his brain to do anything but contemplate Danny and his Danny-ness and how the sun scattered around him, making him glow.

“Yes, a thing at the museum,” Danny laughed. “We’ll pick you up at 9:30. The museum opens at 10:00.”

“Come at 8:00. I’ll make pancakes,” Steve said, smiling inside at Danny’s nodding agreement.

Danny tilted his head, looking up at Steve.

“What?” Steve asked, rubbing the back of his hand over his mouth. “Do I have something on me?”

“You have your thinking-thinky-thoughts face on,” Danny said, squinting ever so slightly. “What’s going on in that scary brain of yours?”

“Scary?” Steve said, hoping to knock him off track. “My brain is no more and no less scary than yours.”

“Oh I must disagree, my scary Ninja SEAL. Have you even said good morning to me? No you have not. You have lurked in the doorway, staring at me like you suspect I took your last grenade from the garage.”

“I don’t have grenades in the garage. That wouldn’t be safe.”

“And having them in my glove compartment is safe? How does that even make any sense?” Danny demanded. But Steve could see the tell-tale amusement in his expression.

“Whatever. You ready to go?” Steve asked, turning to go through the living room and scooping up his keys to the Camaro from the bowl by the door.

“Yes, I am ready to go,” Danny said, following him out. He paused long enough to set the alarm and lock the door with his key.

Steve watched him from the Camaro, watched him set the alarm, watched him lock the door, watched him sip his coffee as he advanced to the car. When had he become unable to do anything other than watch Danny like a crazed stalker?

“I want to stop for malasadas even though I know it goes against the very grain of your fabric but it’s Friday and if there is a God, we’ll actually have a weekend for a change.”

Steve was sure that Danny had said all that in one breath. “Malasadas aren’t good for you,” Steve replied, knowing that was what was expected. And arguing was safe, neutral, familiar. He needed safe right now because he was beginning to feel anything but.

“You’ll run them off or swim them off. Grace said something about coming to swim after the museum but I did point out that it is polite until one has been invited before one assumes there is swimming in one’s future.”

“When have you ever needed an invitation?” Steve asked, glancing over in time to see Danny’s barely suppressed amusement.
“Polite. We’re going for polite, Babe. Maybe you missed that earlier part of the conversation when you were having your thinky-thoughts.”

“Thinky-thoughts,” Steve repeated, trying out the words for himself. “Did you get that from *Harry Potter*?”

“You did not just…no, no, no. You are unfamiliar with the wonder that is Winnie the Pooh?”

“Is that the…mmm… fish?” Steve asked to intentionally rile Danny up.

“*Fish* he says. *Fish.* I don’t believe for one minute you don’t know Winnie the Pooh is a bear. Your innocent *I was at war* expression doesn’t work on me, you know.”

“I don’t think I have an *I was at war* expression,” Steve countered.

“You never think you have faces. That doesn’t make it any less true,” Danny informed him when Steve pulled into the parking lot of their favorite bakery. “You want more coffee?”

“Nah. I’m good.”

“All right. I’ll be right back,” Danny said, strolling into the bakery.

Steve suppressed the flare of insecurity that came unbidden when Danny had disappeared from his view. That was ridiculous. Danny was buying baked goods, not confronting armed robbers. When had it become a concern for him to be out of Steve’s sights for longer than it took for him to go to the bathroom?

“I picked up some extra,” Danny said as he got back into the car. “Max hasn’t been up in a while so I thought we’d invite him. We’ll call Charlie too.”

“Good plan,” Steve said although in truth he wasn’t entirely focused on what Danny was saying. His focus was internal, his confusion growing by leaps and bounds.

When had he become so addicted to Danny? When had it become almost impossible for Steve to be away from him? When had Danny’s presence become as essential as breathing? And what was he going to do about it?

“…but I told Rachel absolutely not. That was unacceptable under any circumstance,” Danny was saying when Steve managed to tune back in.

“What did Rachel say to that?” Steve asked, wondering if he could pick up the thread of the conversation.

“She backed down. I think Stan may have had something to do with it,” Danny said with a shrug.

“He’s not as bad as you like to think.”

“I do know that. I don’t want Rachel to know,” Danny admitted. “And he is very good to Grace.”

“Yes he is,” Steve agreed. He still didn’t know what Rachel had suggested that was so unacceptable but he supposed in the long run, it hardly made a difference.
He left the Camaro to follow Danny up the steps, as always admiring the view. He thought he kept his enjoyment of following Danny off his face but he suspected he may have been more transparent than he liked to believe.

Chin and Kono were already in the office when they arrived, Kono looking like she had just swum ashore. Her wet hair was caught in a high ponytail, her cheeks bright with extra color.

Chin looked like his usual calm self, going directly to the kitchen to make fresh coffee when he saw the box in Danny’s hands.

“How were the waves?” Steve asked Kono as she grabbed a malasada. She apparently inhaled it because it had only cleared the box when it disappeared.

“Prime. You shoulda come,” Kono said. “I told you I’d meet you there at 6 this morning.”

“You did,” Steve agreed. “And I told you I probably wouldn’t be there.”

“Youp,” Kono said cheerfully. “These are awesome, brah. Thanks for bringing them in.”

“You’re welcome,” Danny said, extending to box to her so she could have a third one. “I thought we should call Max and Charlie. Invite them up.”

“Excellent idea,” Chin said in agreement as he returned to the bullpen. “I’ll call Max. Kono, you call Charlie.”

“Stop,” Kono said, her color even higher.

“Oh ho,” Danny said. “Something you want to tell us?”

“Chin has a big mouth,” Kono said, turning to go into her office. It wasn’t long until they could hear her laughing on the phone. There was no doubt in any of their minds that she was in fact talking to Charlie.

“So they’re together, finally?” Danny asked Chin.

“Still off and on,” Chin said with a shrug. “They can’t seem to decide what they want. I’m pretty sure he was surfing with her this morning.”

“Good for them,” Danny said, turning to look at Steve. He raised an eyebrow when he caught Steve staring at him. “What?”

“What what?” Steve asked, reaching for a malasada. Anything was better than trying to explain why he was gawking at Danny.

“Charlie will be here in a few minutes,” Kono announced when she had rejoined the men. “You call Max?”

“I’m going to do that right now,” Chin assured her, starting toward his office. His head nod in her direction indicated that she should go with him. She hesitated, wondering what Steve and Danny were up to this time that Chin was trying to keep from her. They seemed fine so with a shrug, she followed Chin into his office.
“I’m going to start on some paperwork,” Steve said, waving in the general direction of his office.

“No you aren’t. You’re going to play Angry Birds and wait for me to do the paperwork. Then you’ll sign it or you’ll forget to and I’ll forge your signature like I always do,” Danny said, licking the sugar off his fingers. His tongue darted out to lick it off the corner of his mouth and that was all Steve could take.

“Okay. I’ll be playing Angry Birds if you need me,” Steve said, trying very hard not to rush into his office. He had to get himself under control.

Or maybe the problem was that he didn’t want to be under control. He wanted to be out of control, with Danny joining him every crazy step of the way. He wanted… he just wanted. He wanted what he could not have. And that was the sum total of the problem.

He watched Max and Charlie arrive, chatting and eating and enjoying the time together. He knew he should have been out there but he couldn’t make himself go. Because if Charlie laughed at one more of Danny’s jokes, or Kono touched him one more time, or Danny called anybody but him Babe, Steve was very afraid he was going to lose what little composure he’d managed to gather.

The coffee klatch broke up about fifteen minutes later, Steve pretending with all he was worth that he was actually working on the forms that needed to be completed and filed. But they could have been in a language completely foreign to him for all the sense they were making.

He felt closed in. He couldn’t go out into the main office. They would notice something wasn’t right. And he wouldn’t be able to explain what. Because he didn’t think he could put his rising panic into words they could understand.

He needed to get out of the palace. He was in charge. If he wanted to absent himself from the office for a little while, especially when nothing was going on, there was no one to tell him he wasn’t allowed to leave.

Taking a fortifying breath, he crossed over to Danny’s office, entering before he lost his nerve. “I’m going to be out for a little while.”

“Out?” Danny said, looking up at him. “Everything okay?”

“Yeah, yeah. Everything’s fine. I have some… stuff I need to do. And since it’s quiet, I thought I’d use the time to do it. I won’t be gone longer than a couple of hours.”

“A couple of hours,” Danny repeated, seeing more than Steve would have preferred.

“Yeah. Call if you need me sooner,” Steve said, backing out of the office. He practically fled down the steps, not slowing until the Camaro was safely out onto the street.

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“Hey, Danno,” Steve said when his phone rang 45 minutes later. “Everything okay?”

“Stand down, babe. Everything’s fine,” Danny assured him.

“Okay,” Steve agreed, taking a deep breath. “What are you up to?”
“I’ll tell you in person. In approximately ten…five minutes.”

“Tell me in person?” Steve repeated. “Are you tracking the Camaro?”

“Oh babe,” Danny said with amusement and… something else. Something more. “I don’t need Chin to tell me you’re at the bottom of the Lewa Puka Trail wishing you had your running shoes and shorts in the trunk.”

“Oh,” Steve said, looking again over at the steps looming in front of him. He supposed he did come here when he needed to think but it hadn’t occurred to him that it was a habit Danny knew about.

“You’ll still be there, right?” Danny asked.

“Yeah,” Steve agreed. “At the bottom.”

“Good. I don’t want to have to walk up all those stairs. But I would if you left me no choice.”

“No choice?” Steve repeated.

“I’m turning into the parking lot,” Danny said, very soon pulling up next to the Camaro. He got out of Kono’s red car, studying Steve as Steve did the same to him.

“How did you know I’d be here?” Steve asked, moving to lean against the trunk of the Camaro right next to where Danny was standing. The warmth of Danny’s body seeped into Steve’s core, unfreezing something deep inside him.

“It’s your default when you’re trying to figure something out,” Danny informed him. “I know you think I don’t know but I am a detective, after all.”

“There is that,” Steve had to agree.

“I also detect that something is scurrying around in circles in your head. You need to tell me what it is so I can help you stop the merry-go-round.”

“I don’t know what that means,” Steve claimed, squinting down at him.

“You most certainly do,” Danny said, turning to face him. He looked up at Steve with an intensity that from anyone would else would be disconcerting. With Danny, it was… right, natural.

“It’s about proprietary,” Steve admitted before he could stop himself.

“Proprietary,” Danny repeated, tilting his head in confusion as he continued to meet Steve’s eyes.

“Yes, proprietary. I know you know what it means, Mr. Word-of-the-Day.”

“I do know what it means. I don’t know what it has to do with us,” Danny said, waving his hand in the tiny space that separated them.

“There isn’t an us,” Steve said quietly.

“Of course there is,” Danny said with a warm laugh.
Steve shook his head. “There’s you. And there’s me. Sometimes there’s you and me and Grace. But that’s not an us.”

“Leaving that misinformed opinion aside for a moment, explain why proprietary is furrowing your eyebrows and making your jaw clinch,” Danny requested, looking up at him with an open, warm expression.

“They aren’t. It’s not,” Steve claimed, making himself relax and release the tension he was holding onto. But what if it was the only thing still holding him together?

“Proprietary, babe. You said it for a reason,” Danny reminded him.

Steve nodded, turning to look up the stairs instead of meeting Danny’s all knowing eyes. “This morning, when you were emptying my dishwasher… I’ve never let anyone have complete access the way you do.”

“I didn’t realize it bothered you,” Danny said in sincere regret.

“It doesn’t,” Steve rushed to assure him. “And that’s what bothers me. That I don’t mind. That you have proprietary over my house, my life.”

“I don’t think you are making a lot of sense,” Danny said warmly. “Can I try to help you?”

“Sure,” Steve said with a shrug, trying to act like it wasn’t exactly what he wanted, had wanted for longer than he could admit even to himself.

“You’ve spent most of your life looking for some place you belong,” Danny said. “Considering your…unconventional upbringing, it’s understandable. You never thought the place you belonged would be a person.”

“Oh,” Steve said, amazed at the amount of insight Danny had provided in those few words. “But…”

“But what if I don’t feel the same?” Danny guessed, smiling up at him. The affection in his expression was nearly overwhelming while it was equally affirming.

“Yeah,” Steve agreed tentatively. He thought that was a doubt that could be dismissed, finally. He hoped so, very much.

“What does your heart tell you?” Danny asked. He frowned when Steve laughed. “What? What is that?”

“That’s so cliché, Danno. I expected more from you.”

Danny shrugged. “Clichés are clichés for a reason, you know. Stop prevaricating and answer my question.”

“That you feel the same way?” Steve asked. That his voice was barely a whisper confirmed his lingering uncertainty.

“What I don’t understand is how you can doubt it,” Danny said. “You honestly don’t know how I feel about you?”
“You’ve never said anything,” Steve pointed out.

“I didn’t want to scare you away. Just so we are clear, and for the record, I’ve probably been in love with you since I thought about killing you in your garage.”

“You never intended to kill me,” Steve said with happiness in every syllable.

“I considered it. You were so arrogant and SEAL-like and insufferable,” Danny informed him.

“Yet you fell in love with me?” Steve asked, amused by the typical Danny-contradictory manner.

“It was the lost puppy dog face that did me in,” Danny said, reaching up to gently stroke Steve’s cheek. “You looked so vulnerable for all your bluster, your ‘I’m a Lieutenant Commander and a SEAL and I have the governor’s permission to run roughshod over your life.’”

Steve shrugged at that, staring down at Danny’s mouth. He really, really want to see if it tasted as delicious as it looked. Danny removed any hesitation, reaching up to initiate the first kiss. It was light and sweet and left them wholly unsatisfied.

“When did you know?” Danny whispered, staring up at Steve.

“I don’t know,” Steve said. “I can’t seem to remember a time when I didn’t love you. I think before I met you, I was looking for you.” He could feel the heat rising in his cheeks at the confession but Danny just smiled more brightly at him.

“So I’m right,” Danny said.

“The place I belong is you,” Steve confirmed in a soft, warm voice.

“And you aren’t going to worry about the propriety, are you? I mean, familiarity is not a concept you have a lot of experience with. But I know you. And that’s why I can put away your dishes. Not because I know where they belong. But because they belong to you and I handle them with as much care as I will you.”

“I do know that,” Steve said.

“Good,” Danny said, straightening away from him and clapping his hands once. “Since you are in charge, you are going to call Chin and inform him that you and I are taking the rest of the day off. Unless all of Hawaii comes under attack from alien forces, we are not to be disturbed.”

“If I’m in charge, why are you giving me orders?” Steve asked, barely stopping his laughter.

“Because you are so busy trying not to freak out, your brain is mostly off line. If I wait for you to decide, the next ice age will be upon us.”

“Oh yeah. That,” Steve agreed with a laugh. He took his phone out and called Chin exactly as directed. Chin was not in the least bit surprised that they were taking the rest of the day to themselves. By themselves. Together.

“Leave Kono’s car. We’ll collect it in a few,” Chin said.
“I didn’t say anything about you two having the rest of the day off,” Steve teased.

“Uh huh. Call us tomorrow so we’ll know you survived,” Chin said before ringing off.

“Done,” Steve informed Danny unnecessarily.

“Good. Now, drive us far too fast to your house. I want proprietary rights to your body.”

“Done,” Steve repeated, happiness nearly overwhelming him. And this time he could admit he was more than okay with the feeling.
Despite their best efforts, Danny ultimately had no choice but to return to New Jersey to testify at the trial of a mob boss he’d investigated in his time with the Newark Police Department. He and Steve had explained to the court in New Jersey that it was an incredible imposition to expect Danny to leave their six year old son and four year old daughter when Steve couldn’t take the time off to be with them. Five-0 was in the middle of their own huge investigation and Danny leaving could potentially ruin a year’s worth of work.

The prosecuting attorney was willing to allow Danny’s testimony to be via computer. The defense attorney, trying everything possible to get his client off, refused the compromise. If Danny didn’t appear in the courthouse in Newark, the charges could be dropped and the mobster released.

Danny didn’t believe the consequences would be quite so dire if he didn’t go to Newark. By the same token, the man was a horrible example of humanity and deserved to be put under the prison for the rest of his natural life.

“It should only be a week,” Danny told Steve the night before he was leaving. They were laying in their bed, staring at their ceiling when they should have been asleep.

“I know,” Steve sighed. “And I’ve left you for longer.”

“You have,” Danny agreed, trying to make light of the situation. He could feel the tension in Steve’s body. Neither of them could manage to relax, one more reason neither of them were sleeping.

“Chin and Malia are on stand-by,” Steve reminded Danny. “Kono said Charlie would help as much as he could.”

“Chin’s not going to have time either,” Danny said. “The kids will be fine. Emma loves her day care. Even if she is going every day instead of twice a week.”

“She’ll probably be there all day,” Steve said in some regret. “This couldn’t have come at a worse time.”

“With Five-0, there is never a good time,” Danny said, scooting closer to kiss Steve. “Go to sleep. I have an early flight and you have two children to chase after all day.”

“Yeah,” Steve said, taking a deep breath. “I’m going to check on them.”

“All right,” Danny agreed, remaining in bed as Steve crept down the hall. It didn’t take long for him
to return, crawling back into bed.

“Sound asleep,” Steve said, turning on his side to wrap an arm around Danny’s waist.

“Just like we should be,” Danny pointed out, kissing Steve’s head before closing his eyes, determined to fall asleep.

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“Emma,” Steve called again. He was about to burn John’s second helping of pancakes which would make them even later. It was inching ever closer to 7:25 when they all had to be out of the house. And Emma still hadn’t come downstairs.

He’d gotten her up at the usual time, making sure she brushed her teeth. After he’d braided her hair, she informed Steve that she would get dressed all by herself. That had been twenty minutes earlier.

“Emma, what are you doing?” Steve called. When he got no answer, he went up to her room to find her sitting on her floor still in her pajamas. She was having a tea party with three of her Barbies and two of John’s GI Joes.

“We need to put your toys away so we can get you ready for school,” Steve said.

“Play Barbies with me, Daddy,” she said with a bright smile up at him.

“I can’t. We have to get you ready for school,” Steve told her.

“Daddy plays Barbies with me,” she told him, sounding like this Daddy was a major disappointment.

“Daddy isn’t here which is why you have to go to school today. We need to put your toys up so we can get you dressed,” Steve repeated. She frowned as he collected the Barbies to put them in their carrying case.

“I want to play Barbies,” she protested, her bottom lip quivering.

“I know you do. But I really need you to get dressed,” Steve said, putting the Barbie case on the shelf where it belong. “Now, we can get you dressed and ready to go.”

“I can do it by myself,” Emma informed him.

“Are you sure you don’t want me to help, Em? It’s getting late and we need to leave soon,” Steve asked, looking down at her determined expression. At four, she was very much her own person with her own mind. Much like her fathers, once she made a decision, very little would change it.

“I’m a big girl, Daddy. I can do it,” Emma informed him, her arms crossed much like her father’s.

“Daddy,” John called from downstairs. “I’m still hungry.”

“I’m coming, John. And please stop yelling,” Steve called back.

“Can I make my own more pancakes?” John yelled up.

“No. Eat some granola until I get back down.”
“I don’t want granola. I want pancakes,” John protested, the pitch of his voice rising in his indignation.

“Do you want to be in a time out with no dinner when you get home from school?” Steve asked, resorting to leaning over the banister and frowning down at his son. Steve’s expression made John back away, returning silently to the dining room.

“Let’s put on your shorts and shirt,” Steve said after taking a deep breath. He was kneeling before Emma who was standing stubbornly in the exact same place. Refusal was radiating off her in waves.

“I can do it,” Emma told him again, firmly.

Steve knew from the look on her face, a look that was all too familiar to him, and one on which he would always blame Danny, that this was a battle of wills he was destined to lose. “All right, little miss. Come down when you’re dressed so you can have breakfast.”

“Okay Daddy,” she said, watching him leave.

Ten minutes and four pancakes later, she still wasn’t downstairs. John was silently eating the pancakes Steve was giving him, devouring them like he’d been denied food for all the days that Danny had been gone. Steve decided if John was going to give him the silent treatment, he’d wait him out. Ultimately, Daddy would win. Daddy always won.

Steve put three more pancakes on John’s plate and poured him more milk before once again heading for the bottom of the stairs. “Emma,” he called sharply. His exasperation was loud and clear. “We have to leave in a few minutes.”

When he got no answer, he went back upstairs and directly to Emma’s room. She was looking at herself in her mirror, twirling to see all of her outfit. She looked very pleased with herself.

Steve was rendered speechless. She was wearing her pink and purple tulle princess skirt that reached past her knees. Under the skirt was a pair of bright orange tights that ended just above her ankles. On top of that was a neon green shirt that had blue diagonal strips. While all of that was...interesting, the yellow feathered Belle tiara she had placed on top of her head was the proverbial icing on the cake.

“Emma,” Steve said, trying for patient. But he was beginning to seriously run short. “You can’t wear that to day care.”

“Uh huh,” Emma said with a nod. “I’m a princess.”

“You are my princess but you can’t wear your princess clothes to school,” Steve told her.

“I can,” she said, her face going from bright and sunny to unhappy and dangerous. “I’m a princess.”

“You are a princess inside our house. At school, you are Emma. You need to wear Emma clothes to school.”

“These are my clothes,” she told him firmly.

“Yes they are. They are not school clothes. We don’t allow John to wear boardies to school. This is the same thing. There are school clothes and not school clothes. These are not school clothes,” Steve
I’ll wear ‘em to school. That’ll make ‘em school clothes,” she said, being far too logical for Steve’s peace of mind.

“Em,” Steve said, squatting down to try to get to her eye level. “You need to put on these shorts and shirt.” He reached over onto her chair, picking up the pink shorts and matching shirt he’d laid out for her. “These are appropriate school clothes.”

“I’m wearin’ this,” she informed him with a streak of determination that was in no way a surprise. It wasn’t as reassuring as it would have been under other circumstances. They had raised both kids to be independent but this was a step too far.

“No you are not,” Steve countered. “You need to take off your princess clothes and put on your school clothes.”

“I’m a princess,” Emma repeated firmly.

“Emma,” Steve said, standing to loom over her. “You know it’s against the rules to wear princess clothes to pre-school. You need to put on your school clothes right now.”

“No,” she said, staring up at him. He detected some tears in her eyes but he was not going to give in. Princess clothes were for home not school.

Rather than continue to argue, he reached for her tiara, removing it from her head. He felt bad when she started crying but it could not deter him. He looked down at her when she collapsed onto her floor, crying and yelling ‘I’m a princess.’

“Stop this,” Steve said sternly, sitting next to her. “We have to get to school. You can’t wear your princess clothes to school.”

“Daddy lets me,” she cried. “Daddy loves me. Why’d he leave me?”

“Em,” Steve said, pulling her into his lap. She beat her tiny fists against his chest, still crying and repeating ‘I’m a princess.’ “Is that what this is about? Danno being gone?”

“Daddy loves me,” she wailed.

“I love you. Why do you think I don’t?” Steve asked, trying very hard to keep his calm and restore hers.

“I’m a princess,” she said, sobbing into this tee shirt.

“You are my princess, Emma,” Steve agreed, holding tight to her.

“I want to stay home. Today is a home day,” she said, sniffling and rubbing her nose on his shirt.

“I know it’s supposed to be a home day, baby. But with Danno in New Jersey, you need to go to school so I can go to work,” Steve said gently.

“I want to stay home,” she said, her sobs getting quieter. Now that he’d gotten to the root of the problem, he was better able to understand her unusual behavior.
“Okay, Em. What if we compromise?”

“What’s compromise?” she asked, her tears matting her eyelashes together as she looked up at him.

“What if you wear your princess skirt over your shorts? Then when you go outside to play, you can take it off and it won’t get dirty.”

“Daddy,” John yelled from downstairs. “I’m going to be late for school.”

“I’m working on it, John. Please stop yelling,” Steve requested again. “We’ll be down in five minutes.”

“You said that ten minutes ago,” John informed him.

“John,” Steve said in warning. John had no response to that tone of voice. Satisfied by the returning silence from downstairs, Steve smoothed Emma’s hair where the tiara had been. “You’ll put on your shirt and shorts and wear your princess skirt over them, right?”

“Okay,” Emma whispered, sounding like she was being forced to agree to never watch her Disney movies again.

“Okay,” Steve said, kneeling to help her out of her mismatched clothes. It didn’t take long for her to put on her matching pink shirt and shorts, her princess skirt billowing out over it. “There. That’s better. Let’s wash your face and we’ll be ready to go.”

She nodded, sadly following him into the bathroom. He helped her rinse her face with cool water, drying it and deciding that she didn’t look too much like she’d been hysterical.

“I’m hungry,” she said quietly as she followed him into his bedroom so he could put on a clean shirt. Blood he could take. His daughter’s tears and accompanying snot, not so much.

“You’ll have to make do with a granola bar,” he said, picking her up to carry her downstairs. He got two of the chewy ones out of the pantry to give to her.

“Where’s John?” she asked as she started on the first bar he’d opened for her.

“He better be in the truck,” Steve said, Emma not really listening as she concentrated on her granola.

Once the front door was closed and locked, Steve carried Emma to the truck to put her in her seat. John was already buckled in the backseat, steadfastly ignoring his father.

“Why are you wearing that?” John asked Emma with a frown.

“I’m a princess,” she told him like he should have known when it was so very obvious.

“No you aren’t,” John retorted. “You’re just a regular little girl.”

“John,” Steve said, staring at him in the rearview mirror.

“She’s not,” John said, turning to stare out his window.
Steve glanced at Emma who was not bothered by what her brother had said. She was happily eating her granola bar, careful not to get any of the fruit filling on her skirt.

He drove to John’s school first, John maintaining his stony silence the entire way. Steve found a fairly convenient place to park, not too far from the front door. The first bell had already rung so there were almost no students or teachers to be seen.

“Hold up, Bud,” Steve said as John prepared to leave the truck. “We’ll go in with you so I can get your tardy excused.”

John shrugged but waited patiently by the truck as Steve unbuckled Emma and put her down at her request. Holding tightly to her hand, he walked with her behind John who led them into the school. They all went directly to the front office, John standing back as Steve approached the front desk.

“How can we help you?” the school secretary asked, looking up at Steve with no recognition in her eyes.

“I’m Steve Williams-McGarrett. John’s tardiness is not his fault,” Steve explained patiently. When Emma tugged on his pants’ leg, he reached down to pick her up.

“I see, Commander. Hello Emma,” the woman said kindly. “What a pretty outfit you have on.”

“I’m a princess,” Emma told her happily, the woman nodding as though it was truly obvious.

“We’ll inform his teacher,” she assured Steve who nodded.

“Thank you,” Steve said, turning to look down at John. He used a finger under his chin so John would meet his eyes. “I’ll pick you up at 3:00.”

“Unless something more important happens,” John muttered.

“John,” Steve sighed. “We’re going to talk about this attitude of yours after school.”

“Bye John,” Emma chirped, leaning over in Steve’s arms to hug him. That seemed to cheer him up slightly, finally smiling up at Steve.

“I’m sorry,” John said quietly.

“Okay,” Steve said, kissing his head. “You have your lunch money?”

“Uh huh. I’ll see you at 3:00,” John said, leaving the office with Steve. John turned to go to his classroom, Steve leaving the building to return to his truck.

Once Emma was safely strapped in, Steve drove to her preschool, getting her out and taking her inside.

“Hello Emma,” Lally, the director, said happily. “It’s wonderful to see you again today.”

“Today is a home day,” Emma said seriously, the director nodding.

“Yes, usually it is. But sometimes we have to change our plans, don’t we?”
“Yeah,” Emma said, wandering away to join her friends at the pretend kitchen. They were busy making pretend food, Emma quickly organizing them and assigning them specific jobs.

“We had a minor crisis over what to wear,” Steve said quietly to the director.

“I can see that,” Lally agreed. “She’s very self-determined.”

“Gets that from her other father,” Steve said with a smile.

“Both fathers is more like it,” Lally said, laughing in sympathy.

“I told her she needed to take her skirt off when she went outside to play.”

“Of course,” Lally agreed. “And she has clean clothes here if she needs them.”

“Right,” Steve said. “I’ll be by to get her at 3:15.”

“Yes, of course,” Lally said, walking him to the door. “We’ll see you then.”

Steve glanced over at Emma one last time before leaving the building, taking out his phone to call Chin.

“Boss,” Kono said cheerfully as always.

“Didn’t I call Chin?” Steve asked with a smile.

“Ahhh…who’s counting? You’re late,” she said, laughing.

“I noticed,” he said with a sigh.

“What was the crisis today?” she asked.

“What crisis?”

“Don’t try that on me,” Kono laughed. “You wouldn’t be late if the kids had been the perfect angels you always claim them to be.”

“That’s Danny, not me.”

“So what happened?”

“Emma decided to wear her princess clothes to school. Turns out she knows what day of the week it is and it’s a stay home day. After a brief bout of hysteria, we compromised. John ate 100 pancakes and wanted more. I told him what I thought of him treating me like the local diner.”

“A full morning,” Kono said with a distinct lack of sympathy.

“Yeah. I’ll be there in five minutes.”

“Roger that,” Kono said before hanging up.

Precisely five minutes later, Steve entered the office, gratefully accepting the giant cup of coffee Chin
was holding out for him.

“Kids decided to be their own people, I hear,” Chin said.

“Something like that,” Steve said, standing over the tech table. “What do we know?”

They spent the day chasing down clues and one suspect who turned out to be both stupid and clueless. It didn’t matter how many times Steve questioned him about the location of the warehouse, he claimed to have no idea what Steve meant.

Steve turned to the door of the interrogation room when it buzzed to let Chin enter. “Chin,” Steve said in acknowledgment.

“It’s 2:45,” Chin told him.

“Oh great,” Steve said, looking from Chin to the suspect and back to Chin. “Take over here. He may actually be as stupid as he pretends.”

“Roger,” Chin agreed, waiting as Steve left.

“Where’s he going in such a hurry?” the suspect asked.

“None of your business, that’s where,” Chin replied.

It was exactly 3:00 when Steve arrived at the school. Two minutes later, John was entering the truck, smiling up at Steve.

“Hey,” John said cheerfully. “How was your day chasing bad guys?”

“Tiring,” Steve admitted. “How was school?”

“You know,” John said in dismissal.

“Did you get your math test back?” Steve asked as they waited to leave the parking lot, the line snaking slowly out onto the street.

“Yep. Got a 98,” John was glad to report.

“Excellent,” Steve agreed. “Good for you.”

“What are we having for dinner?” John asked.

“I haven’t had the time to give it any thought,” Steve admitted. “Is there something you want?”

“Your chicken and shrimp stir fry,” John said as Steve pulled into the street.

“We can do that. Here’s some dried pineapple,” Steve said as he passed the package back to John.

“Yay,” John cheered, stuffing several pieces in his mouth at once. “When’s Daddy coming home?”

“He’s supposed to fly back day after tomorrow,” Steve said.
“Did you talk to him today?”

“I didn’t have time. We’ll Skype with him when we get home,” Steve promised.

“‘Kay,” John agreed, eating more pineapple.

“Are you going to have room for stir fry after all those pineapples?” Steve asked as he drove toward Emma’s daycare.

“Yes.”

“All right,” Steve said, shaking his head. Well, Danny was right when he said John was a growing boy. Eating as though it would soon be banned was normal if somewhat… disgusting. ‘But,’ Danny’s voice inside his head reminded him, ‘we aren’t allowed to be disgusted by anything they do that’s natural.’ Steve wanted to argue with that but it was hard to do when Danny was thousands of miles away.

They got out of the truck at Emma’s daycare, entering together to look over the room filled with Emma-sized children.

“Where’s she?” John asked, standing up on his toes to get a better view of the room.

“I don’t hear her,” Steve said, going to the tiny office off to the side of the entrance. “Lally?”

“Ahh… Commander,” she said as she left her office. “Hi John.”

“Hi,” John said, looking up at her. “Where’s Emma?”

“In the bathroom. We had a little bit of mishap with some paint,” Lally said.

“Is she okay?” Steve asked, all tense alertness.

“She’s fine. It spilled on her shirt and shorts. Melissa is helping her change if you want to go and check on them,” Lally said, pointing over at the bathroom.

“Stay here. I’ll be right back,” Steve said to John as he went around and stepped over several children between him and the bathroom. “Em?” he said as soon as he was in the bathroom.

“Daddy,” she squealed from around the corner. She came running toward him wearing nothing but her bright pink panties.

“Where are your clothes?” Steve asked, scooping her up.

“We were in the process of getting them on,” Melissa said, holding the blue shorts and shirt. “Did you want to take over, sir?”

“Sure,” Steve agreed, accepting the clean clothes. “Where are the ones you were wearing this morning?”

“I have them right here,” Melissa said, giving Steve an oversized Ziploc bag with Emma’s formerly pink clothes. Now they were a bright orange. “One of the children got a little too excited with the paint and knocked it over. Emma caught most of it.”
“So I see,” Steve agreed. “Well, as long as only clothes were harmed, we aren’t going to worry about it.”

“No other harm, sir,” Melissa said. “I’ll leave you to it.”

Steve nodded, kneeling to put Emma on the floor and checking her over. “You’re okay, baby?”

“I was orange, Daddy. Orange,” she laughed.

“I can see that,” Steve agreed, looking again at the plastic bag of clothes. “We may not be able to get all the paint out of these shorts.”

“You’ll do it, Daddy. You can do anything,” Emma told him in certainty. She took the clean blue shirt from his hand, pulling it on over her head.

“Good job,” Steve said. “Except you have it on backwards.”

“Oh,” she said, looking down at herself. “How’d I know?”

“The flowers go in the front, where you can see them,” Steve explained, helping her take it off to turn it around.

“Daddy?” John’s voice said as the bathroom door opened.

“John- John,” Emma squealed in delight. She would have jumped into his arms if Steve hadn’t been holding her as still as he could while she pulled her shirt back on.

“Hey,” Steve said, looking over his shoulder at John. “Emma had paint spilled on her. We’re getting her fresh clothes on.”

“The teacher gave me her princess skirt,” John said, showing it to Steve. It was neatly folded and stuffed into another Ziploc bag.

“Did you get paint on your princess dress?” Steve asked Emma, helping her step into her shorts.

“Nuh hun,” she said, shaking her head. “It was in my cubby.”

“Good,” Steve said. “Where are your shoes?”

“Sink,” she said, pointing to it. Her slippahs were soaking in orange colored water, looking lost and ruined.

“All right. We’ll do without them for now,” Steve decided, taking them out of the orange water and stuffing them into the bag with her shirt and shorts. “John, you carry these too.”

John accepted the ruined clothes as Steve picked up Emma to carry her out.

“Do you need anything else from your cubby?” Steve asked Emma as they crossed the main room.

“No,” she said. “Tomorrow’s stay home day, right?”
“I have to work, Em. You’ll have stay home days when Daddy’s back,” Steve reminded her.

“I want to be home. It’s home day,” she said firmly, her bottom lip quivering in a prelude to tears.

Steve bid a hasty good-bye to Melissa who made sure John had all of Emma’s ruined clothes as well as her princess skirt. Emma was starting to cry as Steve carried her out, John running over to the truck.

“You love being here, Em. You get to play with your friends and cook in the pretend kitchen,” Steve told her as he put her into her seat.

“I pretend at home. Daddy lets me pretend,” she said, tears falling in her unhappiness.

Steve sighed and glanced over at John who was wisely staying out of it. He, unlike his shorter father, knew when it was best not to say anything. “I have to work, baby.”

“It’s home day,” she sobbed, her heels kicking against the seat.

“Not tomorrow,” Steve said, getting into the driver’s seat. He tried very hard to ignore her sobs, glad John was talking to her and trying to cheer her up.

“I don’t wanna go. It’s home day,” she sobbed, swatting at John. John scooted further away from her, glancing at Steve in a silent plea for help.

“Emma,” Steve said sharply. “I know you’re upset but that’s no excuse for hitting your brother.”

“It’s home day,” she repeated through her sobs.

Steve valiantly tried to ignore her nearly hysterical sobs, feeling sorry for John who was too close to be able to block out any of it. Fortunately, it didn’t take long for them to get home, Steve pulling a sobbing Emma out of the truck as John escaped the noise by running up to the house. He got the door open and kept going, flopping down on the sand. Steve followed more slowly, sitting in one of the Adirondack chairs with a sobbing Emma on his lap. Well, he’d started the day with her in tears. Ending this part of the day the same way seemed appropriate.

“Emma,” Steve said, wiping the streaks of tears from her cheeks. “I have to work. You have to go to daycare. John has to go to school.”

“No ‘care. Home day,” she wailed.

“Baby,” Steve sighed, holding her tight. He looked down at John who had jumped up with a shout of Daddy. “What, John-John? What’s wrong?” Steve asked, on highest Daddy-alert, ready to run down to find out what had happened to John.

“Daddy,” John repeated, running up past Steve. Steve twisted around to watch him, speechless when he saw Danny hugging John on the edge of the grass.

“Danno?” Steve said, standing up and turning to face them. Emma was wiggling in his arms so he carefully put her down so she could run as fast as possible to be scooped up by Danny.

“Hey babies,” Danny said, squeezing Emma with the arm that held her, hugging John with the other. “I missed you too.”
They were both telling Danny everything he’d missed, and he was trying to keep up. But all he could really do was stare at Steve like he hadn’t seen him in years.

“Hey,” Steve said quietly as he crossed the yard to where Danny was standing with the kids. “You aren’t due back yet.”

Danny smiled at that, hugging Emma tighter. “Case got done earlier than expected.”

“You should have called,” Steve said.

“It was the middle of the night here when I found out I was free. Then I was on a plane for three years. Once I landed, I didn’t see any point in calling when I would be here by now.”

“Right,” Steve said with a smile. He leaned over Emma enough to kiss Danny, taking Emma back. He dug out his handkerchief and mopped up some of the tears and snot before more of it got on this shirt.

“What’s with the tears?” Danny asked.

“Home day versus day care,” Steve said. “She knows what day of the week it is.”

“Oh dear. We thought she was still too young,” Danny said in sympathy.

“Not any longer. This morning it was about princess clothes versus school clothes,” Steve said, holding his handkerchief to her nose. “Blow.”

“Emma got orange at day care,” John piped up.

“Orange?” Danny asked in confusion.

“Paint spill. No harm done except to her clothes,” Steve explained. “Which is also why she’s barefoot.”

“I see,” Danny said, tickling Emma’s foot and making her squeal.

“Daddy said he wouldn’t feed me,” John said, making Danny frown.

“What?”

“That’s a little out of context,” Steve protested. “What were you doing right before I said that?”

“Yelling,” John admitted.

“About pancakes?” Danny guessed.

“Uh huh,” John said.

“What’d you bring me?” Emma asked Danny all wide-eyed innocence.

“I’m home. Isn’t that enough?” Danny teased.
“Presents. You bring presents all the time,” Emma insisted.

“All right. Let’s go inside and I’ll get your presents,” Danny conceded.

“Did you get a conviction?” Steve asked, putting Emma down so she could run into the house with John.

“We did. One of the reasons I could come home early,” Danny said, putting a hand on Steve’s arm to stop him. Steve turned to face him, a questioning look on his face. “I missed you.”

“Not nearly as much as we missed you,” Steve assured him, leaning down to kiss him. “And you are never leaving us again.”

“I see,” Danny laughed. “Full time Daddy duty wore you slap out, didn’t it?”

“Being a SEAL is a cake-walk compared to an hysterical four year old.”

“How well I know,” Danny said. “How well I know.” Danny gave into Emma’s insistence and the tugging she was doing on his hand. They all knelt by his suitcase as he opened it, taking out a new Barbie for Emma. She was wearing a Jersey Girl tee shirt and seemed to be holding a Born to Run CD. Steve wondered why she was so old school with her CD but Emma squealed in delight and that was all that mattered.

John was the excited recipient of a replica Jets jersey, #50 proudly on display. The white 5 on the front had something scrawled on it. “What’s this?” John asked, pointing to it when he had the way-too-big jersey pulled on.

“Joe Murphy’s signature,” Danny said like it was an everyday occurrence to bring home a Jets jersey that had been signed by their star quarterback.

“Joe Murphy?” John said. “Really, really, Daddy?”

“Really, really,” Danny confirmed. “Turns out his brother is one of the prosecuting attorneys. He felt so bad dragging me away from home, he said he’d do me a favor. This is it.”

“Wicked cool,” John said in excitement. “Wait until the guys see this.”

“What’d you bring Daddy?” Emma asked Danny, looking up at him with wide eyes.

“Me,” Danny laughed.

“That’s more than enough,” Steve assured them all, reaching over to kiss Danny. “As long as you promise not to leave us again.”

“Not any time soon,” Danny promised, kissing Steve and making the kids squeal in delight.
Five Times Steve Totally Didn’t Get What Danny Was Saying and One Time Danny Didn’t Need to Explain

Chapter Summary

For this month’s challenge on LJ’s 1_million_words, I gave out prompts for Five +One stories. That made me want to write one (because I do love them so!)

This is five times Danny said something that didn't make sense to Steve and one time Danny said exactly what Steve needed to hear.

It was one of the first cases they worked, after Steve abducted Danny onto the task force. Invited was the word Steve always preferred to characterize how Danny became ‘the back-up’ but Danny had less charitable terms to describe it.

The retelling of that first meeting and their first cases was a source of constant amusement to the children, and they would compare Steve’s versions to Danno’s and vice-versa. While the details as related by Steve and Danny might vary slightly, one fact remained consistent – according to Danny, Steve forced him to join Five-0. In Steve’s version, Danny was a reluctantly enthusiastic supporter of the formation of the taskforce.

“Reluctantly enthusiastic,” Danny repeated to Steve after John had regaled Danno with Steve’s most recent retelling of their first encounter.

“Yes,” Steve agreed, smiling that damn smile of his.

Danny thought, but knew better than to admit, that if Steve had smiled at him like that in the garage, joining the task force was not the only thing to which he would have agreed. Shaking those images away, Danny refocused enough to glare at Steve. “You are familiar with the term oxymoron, right?”

“This doesn’t qualify,” Steve claimed. “Jumbo shrimp. That qualifies.”

“Is that a veiled crack on my height?” Danny demanded, fists on his hips. If he hadn’t been wearing a bright red apron adorned with sparkly hearts and the words ‘Kiss the Cook,’ his supposed unhappiness might have been more convincing.

“Nope. If I want to crack on your height, I’ll just come out and do it,” Steve assured him, demonstrating the fact by kissing Danny on top of the head.

“How in God’s name have I stayed married to you this long?” Danny asked, sounding far less put-upon than his words would imply.

“Who else would have you?” Steve asked with a laugh.

Danny snorted at him, turning back to the chicken cooking on the stove. “It’s you that has more than one screw loose.”
“You’re the one who always uses expressions no one has ever heard before. And ones nobody who lives on the outside of your brain understands.”

“Oh please, Governor SEAL. Just because I don’t punctuate my everyday vocabulary with BooYah doesn’t mean I don’t…can’t… wait – what?” Danny asked, looking up at Steve.

“I have no idea,” Steve laughed. “You get your dander up and forget the reason for your righteous indignation.”

“You are always the reason,” Danny claimed.

“Okay,” Steve said, watching Danny test the chicken for readiness. “We have five hungry children waiting for you to finish, you know.”

“Right. If it were up to you, they’d eat it raw and if they got salmonella, you’d tell them to rub dirt on it and power through.”

“Maybe,” Steve said with a shrug. “They’re soft. We mollycoddle them. No, I take that back. You mollycoddle them.”

“I am well aware that you’d have them walk five miles to school uphill both ways in snow if I left it up to you.”

“Doesn’t snow in paradise,” Steve pointed out, stealing some steamed broccoli to pop it into his mouth.

“You’d order the National Guard to haul it in to toughen them up,” Danny claimed, pouring the sauce over the chicken with a satisfying sizzle. “You could make yourself useful as well as decorative.”

“Do you think I’m decorative?” Steve asked in a patently fake attempt at modesty.

“Please shut up and get me the big bowl from the cabinet behind your even bigger ego.”

“Certainly sir. Right away sir,” Steve said, snapping to it.

Danny tried to keep his supposed unhappiness firmly in place but Steve made it impossible. That smile, and those eyelashes, and the tattoos so wrongly hidden under the sleeves of Steve’s button-down shirt. “Let’s go to the house this weekend.”

“What brought this on?” Steve asked as he helped Danny transfer the food from the pots to the bowls.

“Your ink. I can’t see it here,” Danny said.

“Ahh… you want me half naked this weekend,” Steve confirmed.

“I’d prefer you all naked but I don’t want to traumatize the kids more than you have already,” Danny claimed.

“Uh huh,” Steve said with a laugh. “Leave the dishes. I’ll do them after.”
“No,” Danny said, continuing with his cleanup. “You have work to finish after dinner. And I don’t want Lolhol to ban me when he gets back from vacation.”

“All right,” Steve said, accepting a third bowl from Danny. “I’ll make sure they save you some.”

“Appreciate it,” Danny said, watching him carry the bowls out. Because watching Steve was a habit he never intended to abandon.

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“What?” Steve asked, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. “Do I have something on my face?”

Danny shook himself, looking up to meet Steve’s ever-changing eyes. “Huh?”

“You’ve been staring at me,” Steve said, his head tilted to try and understand what Danny was thinking. “Is anything wrong?”

“Wrong?” Danny asked, resorting to bluster when he was once again caught staring at his new partner. They’d only been working together for a week and Danny knew without any doubt Steve would be the gung-ho, ask questions of the survivors death of him. And he couldn’t find it within himself to mind. There was something so attractive about this man, this soldier. No, Danny corrected himself mentally - this SEAL. Not just the packaging which was breathtaking. But the soul of the man, the way he was determined to keep his world and all those in it safe. “Nothing’s wrong,” Danny finally added when he’d brought himself back to the current conversation. “Nothing except we’re at a crime scene and you have no idea what to do with any of the evidence.”

“That’s not true,” Steve retorted. “I know what I’m doing.”

“If it comes to explosives and gunfire, I’m sure you do,” Danny said, gesturing to the technicians from the crime lab. “They’ll get the prints. You don’t have to resort to airplane glue and Scotch tape.”

“I got the prints we needed, didn’t I?” Steve asked, his dander up at Danny’s reminder of his unorthodox approach to problem solving.

“Right. So we could find him and you could hang him off a roof,” Danny said, still in disbelief that Steve had done that.

“It worked,” Steve reminded him firmly. “We got the information we needed.”

“Chin got the information we needed,” Danny pointed out.

“Because I got the fingerprints from the crime scene.”

“Yes, okay. You got the fingerprints for Chin to process. Congratulations. There’s no flies on you,” Danny said, turning to walk toward Chin who had been careful to avoid getting anywhere near them while they were arguing.

“What?” Steve said loudly at Danny’s retreating back. “There’s no what where?”

Danny looked over his shoulder at Steve before returning his focus to what Chin was telling him.
Neither of them were surprised when Steve came to loom over Danny.

“What does that mean?” Steve demanded to Danny.

“What does what mean?” Chin asked, certain he didn’t really want to know.

“He said there’s no flies on me,” Steve said. “Is that some Jersey thing?”

“Is it?” Chin asked, one eyebrow elevated in amusement or confusion or… frankly, it was hard to tell.

“I guess,” Danny said with a shrug. “My father says it.”

“What does it mean?” Steve asked, enunciating each word with care.

“That you are aware of what’s going on,” Danny said. “That if a fly did land, you’d shoo it off.”

“Oh,” Steve said, the wind taken out of his sails of indignation. “Is that all?”

“What did you think it meant?” Chin asked, looking from Steve to Danny and back.

Steve shrugged, turning to the side to supposedly look out over the ocean at the end of the dock.

“Did you think it meant I thought you were full of shit?” Danny ventured. He could tell he’d guessed right at Steve’s stiffening posture. “That’s not what it means,” he said in a softer voice.

“Doesn’t matter,” Steve said, turning to look back at Danny.

Danny could see that despite what he’d said, Steve was hurt by the notion that Danny would think that of him. “Babe,” Danny said, laying a hand on Steve’s arm. “It means you don’t sit still long enough for one to land. You are in the moment. That’s all.”

“Really?” Steve asked, his heart mending before their eyes.

“Yes. My lips to God’s ears,” Danny said solemnly.

Steve nodded, straightening ever so slightly before asking Chin what the techs had found.

~o0o~

“How many times did you threaten to quit in the first month?” Grace asked, laughing with the other children when Danny had told an edited version of that story.

“It didn’t matter,” Danny said, squinting down at Steve. “I wasn’t allowed to quit.”

“Is that true, Daddy?” Emma asked, still laughing. “You told him he wasn’t allowed to quit?”

“I don’t recall,” Steve claimed, avoiding Danny’s glare which was a thin veneer over his laughter.

“I don’t recall,” Danny repeated. “You recall every moment of your life. But you don’t recall telling me I couldn’t quit Five-0.”
“I don’t recall every moment of my life,” Steve said. “That would be virtually impossible.”

“Most of it consists of Daddy yelling at you,” John helpfully pointed out.

“Somebody has to,” Danny said. “How do you think he’s survived this long?”

“He survived the Navy before he met you,” Alicia said because they all knew Danny would rant about it.

“Barely,” Danny said. “You should have seen him. Skin and bones. Unhappiness in every line of his body. And those cargo pants. Dear God.”

“Don’t start,” Steve requested, a groan from the children at the mention of his beloved cargos.

“You should have seen them,” Danny said, ignoring all of their pleading looks. “Ridiculous. Just ridiculous.”

“So are you,” Steve said, accepting the salad from Zach.

“At least I knew how to dress like a professional,” Danny reminded him.

“Says the man in a Kiss the Cook apron and jean shorts,” Steve said.

Danny shrugged at that. “I’m not Governor. I didn’t have any meetings today. I did have five hungry children to feed.”

“Excellent chicken and broccoli,” Zach said, taking more from the bowl.

“Thank you,” Danny said with a smile just for Zach. “There’s plenty more.”

“That is good to know,” Zach said.

“Is there sherbet for dessert?” Alicia asked.

“What makes you think I made sherbet?” Danny asked.

“You always do,” the kids told him simultaneously.

“Maybe this time I didn’t,” Danny claimed.

“Of course he did. He made two churns of it,” Steve assured them. “One lime.”

“And one pineapple,” John said in triumph.

“I’m not eating the pineapple,” Danny said even though none of them believed it.

“All right, Danno. Whatever you say,” Steve said with a laugh.

“Why do you say things that are so clearly untrue, Danno?” Grace asked. Even though she was now a married woman with a baby of her own, Danny could only see her as his little girl, his first child, all brown eyes and pigtails.
“He talks so much, he’s bound to say things that don’t mean anything at all,” Steve reminded them.

“Stop helping,” Danny said, giving Alicia more rice.

“What else did he say that you did not readily comprehend?” Zachary asked, using his chopsticks like a pro. Chin had shown him once and that’s all it had taken. Even more impressive was the fact that Zach was three at the time.

~o0o~

Danny was leaning on the doorframe of Steve’s office, watching him pull open each drawer of his desk, make a quick search, then push it closed. He’d done it at least three times to every drawer in his office before turning to frown at Danny.

“You could help.”

“I would but as I have no idea what you’re looking for, it’d make it real hard me for to find whatever it is you’ve lost,” Danny said.

“I haven’t lost anything. I’ve misplaced my passport,” Steve admitted, opening his center drawer to rifle through the few papers.

“Misplaced,” Danny repeated, watching Steve in barely contained amusement. “When was the last time you saw it?”

“I don’t know,” Steve admitted.

“And why is it at work instead of at home where normal people leave their passports?”

“Because you never know when we might need to leave the country unexpectedly.”

“We might need to leave,” Danny repeated, slowly approaching Steve’s immaculate desk. “In the name of all that is holy, please tell me you did not ninja my passport out of my apartment and bring it here where you have now misplaced it.”

“Okay,” Steve said, crawling underneath his desk. “I won’t tell you that.”

“Steven,” Danny said, crouching down to look him in the eye. “When did you take my passport? What else have you stolen?”

“I didn’t exactly steal it,” Steve claimed, crossing his legs in front of him and looking like he was completely comfortable sitting under his desk.

Danny could only imagine that Steve had sat longer in worse places. “Taking without permission or knowledge of the one to whom the item in question belongs qualifies as stealing,” Danny said, sitting down to face him.

“Well,” Steve hedged.

“Hey Boss, I need…” Kono was saying as she came into Steve’s office. When she saw only Danny sitting on the floor, she stopped and stared down at him. “No,” she said, backing slowly out, one hand up. “I don’t want to know. Sorry I interrupted. I’ll be going to…”
“You have scarred her for life,” Danny told Steve conversationally.

Steve shrugged, looking up at the bottom of his desk.

“Don’t think you’re off the hook, because you aren’t,” Danny warned.

“What hook?” Steve asked, opening his drawer a couple of inches from where he was examining the underside of his desk.

“When and why did you steal my passport?” Danny asked again.


“A new one,” Danny repeated slowly. “Mine hasn’t expired.”

“I know that. But I got you one in a new name. Just in case.”

Danny sighed. What else was there to do? “Did you get Chin and Kono new ones too?”

“Uh huh,” Steve agreed.

“Grace?”

“Yes,” Steve said.

“And all of these passports are now lost,” Danny said, summing up what he’d discovered. No wonder he always seemed to have a headache.

“Misplaced,” Steve corrected. “I put them in my desk and now I can’t find them.”

“All right,” Danny said, scooting backward so Steve could crawl out from under his desk. “They aren’t food. We’ll find them.”

“They aren’t what?” Steve asked, standing up to look down at Danny with a confused expression on his face.

“They aren’t food. So they have to be here somewhere. We’ll find them.”

“Is that one of Grandma Giordano’s sayings?” Steve asked, turning to open the drawers of his credenza.

“I guess?” Danny said, taking down the picture of the tall ship on Steve’s wall.

As Steve watched agape, Danny used the combination to open the hidden safe, reaching in for a manila envelope. “How do you know the combination? I never gave it to you.”

“I’m a detective, Steven. Snooping is our job, in case you forgot. Like you forgot that you put the passports in here.”

“Did you know I put them there?” Steve asked with a frown.
“No but it was something you would do. I’m just surprised you forgot that’s where you put them.”

Steve shrugged, looking in the envelope to make certain they were all accounted for.

“Why did you want them today?” Danny asked, leaning closer to see into the envelope. That Steve’s body heat was radiating out and warming him to the core of his being was a real bonus.

“I was wondering when mine expired. When I went to check, I couldn’t find them.” Steve said, extracting his and looking at the date.

“Another year,” Danny said, pointing at the date. “Is every country you visited recorded in here?”

“The ones I entered legally,” Steve said, putting all of the passports back into the safe.

“Uh huh,” Danny said. “Come on, Ninja SEAL. I’ll buy you some lunch.”

“Sounds good,” Steve said. He most definitely did not comment when he saw Kono in Chin’s office, her voice too low to hear what she was saying. He was pretty sure he knew at any rate.

~000~

“Really, Dad?” Grace said with a laugh. “You got me a fake passport? Even before you two were married?”

“It’s best to be prepared for all contingencies,” Steve told her, winking at Danny.

“Do we have fake passports?” Emma asked, studying Steve then Danny.

“I can neither confirm nor deny,” Steve told her.

“That totally means yes,” Emma said in certainty. “Can we see them? Where are they?”

“He burned them, Em,” Danny said.

“Oh,” she said in disappointment. “I wanted to see.”

“You burned them?” John asked with a laugh.

“When he was elected Governor,” Danny agreed. “Didn’t think he should be caught with them.”

“Is that true, Daddy?” Emma asked him.

“Maybe,” Steve said with a smile.

“Did you ever have reason to use the artificial passports?” Zach asked.

“They stayed in my office safe,” Steve said. “We used our real ones but not the fake ones.”

“You should have seen the stash of money in his safe,” Danny said with a laugh. “Pound notes, Euros, yen, rubles. It was unbelievable.”

“That’s how we paid your college tuition,” Steve claimed, making the kids laugh.
“Uhmm…scholarships,” John said.

“Scholarships,” Alicia agreed.

“Scholarships,” Zach chimed in.

“Huh. I wonder whose tuition we did pay,” Steve said, looking down at Danny with a quizzical expression.

“You are… oh why do I bother?” Danny said, standing to collect the empty plates.

“You can’t help it, Danno,” Alicia reminded him.

“I guess not,” Danny had to agree with a smile, watching Steve help collect the plates. “Come in the kitchen for the sherbet.”

The kids agreed, helping with scrapping and stacking the dishes. One of the assistant cooks would deal with them in the morning. She had volunteered to cook while Lolhol was away but Danny assured her that he enjoyed having the chance to feed his unruly mob.

“What else?” Emma piped up as they all waited for Danny to serve the freshly made sherbet. “What else did Daddy not understand back then?”

~o0o~

“Even you couldn’t get her to smile,” Danny said, shaking his head at the clerk in the courthouse. “You would think when two people turn in their marriage license, they’d at least get a smile in exchange.”

“Yeah, she was…” Steve said, shrugging. Apparently not everyone was as open-minded about two men getting married as Steve and Danny would have liked to believe. “Wait. What do you mean, I couldn’t get her to smile?”

Danny laughed, looking up at Steve and his innocence. “Babe,” Danny said like that explained everything.

“I wasn’t flirting with her,” Steve protested, shoving his hands in his pockets. He looked like a little boy about to be scolded for eating the Oreos without express permission to do so.

“I know that,” Danny said, putting a warm hand on Steve’s arm. “I don’t care who you flirt with. You know that, don’t you?”

“Are you sure? It annoys you,” Steve said, tilting his head to try and figure out how exactly Danny was feeling about flirting and the lack thereof.

“What doesn’t annoy me?” Danny laughed.

“Well, there is that,” Steve agreed.

“You can flirt with the entire world, Babe. Because I know it’s me you’re coming home to each night.”
“Nobody else,” Steve confirmed. “You do a fair amount of flirting.”

Danny shrugged. “But I’m not supermodel gorgeous.”

“Stop,” Steve said, resuming his walk to the Camaro.

“Okay,” Danny laughed. “What she really needs is someone to blow some sunshine up her skirt.”

“What?” Steve asked, looking over at him when they were in the Camaro. “Somebody needs to do what to who?”

“Somebody needs to blow some sunshine up her skirt. Change her attitude. Give her a more positive outlook on life,” Danny explained.

“Huh,” Steve said, considering what Danny had said.

“You don’t use that expression? I thought everybody did,” Danny said.

“Not as far as I know. This is the first time I’ve ever heard it.”

“Oh,” Danny said. “Okay.”

“Is that from Grandma Giordano?”

“I don’t think so? I grew up hearing it,” Danny said.

“It’s a pretty good saying,” Steve said. “And that is definitely what she needed.”

“Yes,” Danny confirmed, watching Steve drive them back to work. If he was lucky, he would be the one Steve flirted with before the day was over. And wouldn’t that be the very best to have sunshine blown up his skirt, if he wore one of course?

~o0o~

“Blow sunshine up her skirt,” John laughed. “Seriously, Danno?”

“I thought everybody said it,” Danny protested, giving Emma more sherbet.

“Nobody talks as much as you, Daddy,” Emma reminded him. “So you’re bound to say things nobody else would say.”

“I guess so,” Danny said. “And did you want more sherbet or not?”

“Yes please,” Emma responded. “I didn’t mean you talk more than anybody. I meant you talk more than Daddy.”

“Uh huh,” Danny said, smiling up at Steve who was eating the pineapple sherbet like he’d been without food for weeks. “I’m sorry you don’t like it.”

“Shut up and give me more,” Steve said, holding his bowl out to Danny.
“Shut up and give me more” he says. Like I’m the hired help. I don’t know why I put up with such abuse,” Danny grumbled as he dished out the frozen treat.

“Somebody needs to blow some sunshine up your skirt,” Steve said.

“I don’t wear a skirt in case you haven’t noticed,” Danny returned.

“You do have on an apron,” Alicia reminded him.

“That’s kind of a skirt,” Grace added.

“I blame you,” Danny said to Steve who could only smile at him in return.

“I’m not surprised.”

“Tell another one,” Alicia requested, the other children agreeing they wanted to hear more examples of Danny’s circumlocution.

~o0o~

“Danno?” Steve was saying as he walked in the house. He had closed the office early, Friday finally arriving and not bringing any new cases with it. It was the earliest he’d been home in a couple of weeks.

“Hey Babe,” Danny said quietly as he left the kitchen to smile over at him. “What brings you here?”

“Isn’t 78 hours enough for one week?” Steve asked as he untied and kicked off his boots.

“I should say so,” Danny agreed, standing up on his toes to kiss him. “Come in the kitchen. I was just cleaning up from lunch.”

“Is John sick?” Steve asked. He was surprised that John hadn’t come racing to him as soon as he opened the front door. Instead, John was laying face down on the couch in only a diaper, clutching tightly to his blankie.

“No, Babe. We went swimming then he built a monster sand castle. He’s DFO,” Danny said, pulling Steve into the kitchen.

“DFO? What does DFO mean?” Steve asked, accepting a cold bottle of water.

“Done fell out,” Danny said as though that explained everything.

“Done fell out,” Steve repeated. “I don’t know what that means.”

“You don’t?” Danny asked, looking up at him. “It’s…you know…run out of steam. Crashed into the proverbial wall.”

“Oh,” Steve said. “Done fell out.”

“Yes. That’s John. Ran and ran and ran until he was DFO.”

“Are you DFO?” Steve asked.
“Nope. Only your little boy is. Although I think you are on the verge of it,” Danny said, studying him critically.

“Right on the edge,” Steve had to agree.

“Then go nap with your baby. He’ll be thrilled to wake up to find you next to him.”

“That sounds like a good plan,” Steve said, returning to the living room. He shimmed out of his jeans, carefully laying next to John who didn’t move. Danny covered both his men with a light blanket, Steve’s eyes closed from the minute his head touched the pillow.

“DFO. Just like Bud,” Danny said, kissing both of them.

“DFO,” Steve agreed, sleep weighing down his words.

~o0o~

“You call us DFO all the time,” John said to Steve.

“Not all the time. And that was the first time I’d ever heard it,” Steve said.

“It’s an excellent way to describe running out of steam,” Zach said.

“I’ve always thought so,” Danny said. “Now, Steve needs to go back to work. And I need to try and restore some order to the kitchen.”

“One more, Danno,” Alicia said. “Please?”

Danny sighed, looking up at Steve who shrugged.

~o0o~

“Daddy,” Emma said when she was standing beside Steve’s beach chair.

“Yeah baby?” he responded, looking over at her. As always, he felt his heart swell at the sight of this precious child, his daughter that had his grey eyes and her other father’s blonde curls that were tumbling out of the rubber band he’d used earlier to secure her ponytail. He guided her between his knees so he could take out the band and gather her hair back into a semblance of order.

“Why do you bother?” Chin laughed, watching Steve try to bring order out of chaos before turning back to keep an eye on John who was playing at the edge of the surf.

Steve shrugged at his question. Wasn’t it what fathers did?

“Danno wants to know where the cabbage is. He can’t make coleslaw without it,” Emma said as she patiently waited for Steve to finish with her hair.

“Tell him it’s in the refrigerator. Where else would it be?” Steve said, watching her run up the house before turning back to wave at John.

“You shouldn’t do that to her,” Chin observed, no judgment in the words.
“Do what?” Steve asked innocently. But Chin was wise to his ways.

“Fight with Danny using Emma as an intermediary.”

“We aren’t fighting,” Steve said, getting up to check the coals. Deciding they weren’t quite hot enough, he resumed his seat.

“Call it what you will, brah,” Chin said with a knowing smile. “You are fighting.”

Steve shrugged, watching Emma race back to him.

“Daddy says he found the cabbage and wants to know if the fire’s ready yet,” Emma reported breathlessly.

“We’re using charcoal, not an open flame. And no, it’s not quite ready. Another five minutes,” Steve told her. She charged back up to the house as Chin laughed at him.

“Not fighting, huh?”

“He may have said something to which I objected,” Steve grudgingly admitted.

“Which was?” Chin prompted.

“He said…” Steve stopped, considering the words they had exchanged earlier that day. In retrospect, it really was stupid. He should go to the house and apologize. But then, Danny owed him an apology as much as he owed one to Danny. “Never mind.”

“Not worth being upset over,” Chin said knowingly.

“It’s not,” Steve had to agree.

“So why aren’t you going to apologize?”

“Why isn’t he?” Steve countered.

“Now it’s just a matter of pride,” Chin said as Emma ran back down to them.

“Daddy said it doesn’t matter if it’s charcoal. He wants to know if it’s ready,” Emma reported.

Steve did not look at Chin as Emma made her announcement. It was hard to deny that he and Danny were using Emma to fight. Steve sighed under the weight of Chin’s silent disapproval and stood. “Let’s go tell Daddy it’s ready,” Steve said, taking Emma’s hand so she could pull him up to the house. He knew without having to ask that Chin would keep a close eye on John. “Hey Danno,” Steve said when he was in the cooler, dimmer kitchen.

“Steve,” Danny said, all his concentration on the coleslaw he was mixing.

“I’m sorry,” Steve said succinctly.

Danny looked up at him, studying his expression. “Are you really?”
“Are you going to make me beg you?” Steve asked, one eyebrow raised.

“That’s something I’d like to see,” Kono piped up to say.

“Don’t you need to keep Chin company?” Steve asked her.

“Nope. I’m good right here,” she assured him, picking up Emma to watch the show.

“I shouldn’t have said it,” Steve tried, hoping to break through the icy wall surrounding Danny.

“So you are admitting that you were wrong?” Danny asked, studying him.

“I wasn’t 100% correct,” Steve hedged.

“Try again,” Kono said to him in a stage whisper.

“I was wrong,” Steve said, taking a step closer to Danny. “I was wrong and I’m sorry.”

Danny put down the mixing spoon to focus on Steve. “Maybe you weren’t completely wrong. You may have been right.”

“Well,” Kono said. “That’s unexpected turn of events.”

“Why are you doing a play-by-play on our discussion?” Steve asked her.

“Because Emma’s too young to do it,” Kono said with a dimpled smile.

Steve shook his head, turning back to Danny who was watching him with a familiar smile. “So I was right?”

“Yes,” Danny said. “As much as it pains me to admit it, you were right.”

“Well,” Steve said, trying to disguise his sense of triumph.

“Don’t gloat,” Danny said. “Even a broken clock is right twice a day.”

“And we’re out of here,” Kono decided, carrying Emma into the backyard.

“You know I don’t know what that means,” Steve said, taking a step closer to Danny.

Danny laughed, reaching up to kiss Steve. “That’s because you are too busy thinking about the make-up sex we’re having after Chin and Kono leave.”

“Yep,” Steve admitted, kissing Danny again. “Are they taking Emma and John with them?”

“God I hope so,” Danny said breathlessly, making Steve laugh.

~o0o~

And the one time Steve knew exactly what Danny meant.
“I told you not to go in there,” Danny said, pointing at the remains of the warehouse and then to Steve.

Steve was using his left hand to hold a towel to a head wound above his right temple, trying to steam some of the bleeding. His right arm was wrapped tightly around his body as though it was the only thing holding him together.

“I told you to wait. I told you it was too dangerous. But did you listen? No. I’d be better off talking to the wall than trying to keep you out of harm’s way.”

“You’re making my headache worse,” Steve muttered, staring down at the pavement. He was sitting on the curb to wait for the ambulance because he knew if he tried to stand up, he’d face plant. Not that he had any intentions of admitting that to Danny.


“Just a graze,” Steve said, his voice sounding hollow and wheezy. “Head wounds look worse.”

“Babe,” Danny said with a sigh. “Why do you always have to put your safety before anyone else’s?”

“It’s my job,” Steve said as he struggled to get enough air, his face ashen under his tan and the forming bruises.

“No, it’s who you are, God help me,” Danny said. “Kono,” he called over to where she was talking to a couple of uniforms.

“Yeah other boss?” she said, looking down in sympathy at Steve when she had crossed over to where they were.

“Can you find out how much longer until the ambulance arrives?”

“Sure thing,” she said, taking out her phone.

Danny accepted a bottle of water from Chin when he’d retrieved it from one of the black and whites that had arrived. “Here babe.”

“Uhn,” Steve said, accepting the bottle to sip from it.

“Are you nauseous?” Danny asked in concern.

“Little,” Steve said, worrying them even more. For him to admit to being anything but gung-ho and ready was a very dangerous sign.

“Kono,” Danny called in more urgency.

“They’ll be here in three minutes,” she promised, crouching to check on Steve. “He’s going to pass out.”

Danny had to agree with her assessment, sitting quickly next to him and pulling Steve over so his head was in Danny’s lap.
“Not a dog,” Steve muttered breathlessly, keeping his eyes closed tight.

“I know, Babe,” Danny said, taking towel duty when Steve let his left hand drop.

“Blurry,” Steve complained.

“I’m sorry. The ambulance will be here soon. Don’t pass out if you can help it,” Danny said, leaning over to get a glimpse of Steve’s face. It was contorted in pain and dizziness.

“Can’t,” Steve muttered, his body going limp. Danny’s panic was short-circuited by the noisy arrival of the ambulance. The techs correctly assessed the situation as urgent, putting Steve on the stretcher and into the ambulance as quickly as they safely could.

“Go pick up the kids,” Danny requested of Chin. Chin naturally agreed right before closing the ambulance doors and knocking to give the ‘all clear’ signal.

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They had to wait 45 endless minutes before the doctor finally came out to give them news on Steve’s condition. Kono kept assuring Danny that the long time span was not necessarily bad news. He tried to believe her but didn’t entirely succeed.

“How is he?” Danny asked as soon as the doctor appeared.

“He’s going to be fine, Detective. We sutured the head wound. He has a mild concussion. We need to keep him for a couple of days so we can monitor his breathing,” the doctor said.

“His breathing?” Danny repeated, confused by this news.

“From his punctured lung,” the doctor said as though it was an every day occurrence. Well, with Steve it sometimes felt like it was.

“He has a punctured lung?” Kono finally asked, her arm around Danny’s waist making sure he wasn’t going to face plant. He was silently grateful for her support although he was too busy trying not to freak out to thank her.

“From the broken ribs,” the doctor confirmed.

“Broken ribs,” Danny parroted.

“Three of them. From the falling debris is what we could make out. The Commander was in and out of consciousness. He was worried about the kids,” the doctor said.

“There weren’t any kids in the building,” Kono said. “It was empty.”

“Our kids,” Danny reminded her. “He must know it’s after three.”

“Oh,” Kono said, looking up at the clock. “Of course. Chin got them.”

“Can they come see him?” Danny asked the doctor.
“It would be better if they didn’t,” the doctor said in sympathy. “At least not until tomorrow. He has an intubation tube to help with his breathing. And he’s pretty badly bruised.”

“Okay,” Danny agreed, checking silently with Kono who agreed to call Chin and tell him. “Can I see him?”

“Of course,” the doctor agreed. “We have enough experience to know you are the only thing which will keep the Commander in the hospital.”

“Thank you,” Danny said to Kono as he followed the doctor down the corridor. He entered Steve’s room alone, sitting in the chair next to the bed. Steve’s head was wrapped in a huge white bandage which he knew was mostly precautionary. The tube in Steve’s mouth looked as uncomfortable as he remembered, understanding why they were keeping him sedated at least until the morning. Otherwise he’d try to remove it.

Steve’s bare arms and hands lay on top of the stark white sheet, too still and lax for Danny’s comfort. Those hands held his heart and the hearts of their children. Those hands picked them all up when they were tired, and healed them when they were broken. Danny took Steve’s left hand into both of his, holding tight.

“I’m so sorry this happened to you, Babe,” Danny said, kissing Steve’s hand where his wedding ring rested. It was a wonder to Danny that after eleven years of marriage, they hadn’t had to replace either of their rings. He’d have predicted that one or both of them would have destroyed their ring by now. They were scratched in a few places but for the most part, remained a shining beacon of the love they shared.

“I’m sorry I didn’t get there one minute sooner. But the doctor said you’re going to be fine. Even with broken ribs and a punctured lung. Two things you neglected to mention. And don’t think I’m going for one minute to forget that you didn’t tell me. Why don’t you care for yourself as much as you care for us?”

Danny kept up a steady stream of words, certain that on some level, Steve could hear him. He knew equally well that his voice was a balm to Steve’s wounds, healing his mind so that his body could take care of itself.

Danny was still talking when the nurse came in three hours later to take Steve’s vitals.

“No change,” she assured Danny.

“That’s good, right?”

“It is,” she said, placing a light hand on his shoulder. “He’s going to be out all night. Don’t you want to go home to the kids and get some sleep?”

“Chin and Malia have the kids,” he said, warmed by her concern. “And Steve won’t rest if I’m not here.”

“All right,” she agreed. “I’ll get you a blanket.”

Thank you,” he said as she slipped out.

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“And you know what Grandma Giordano always told us,” Danny was saying the next morning as Steve slept on. The doctor had come in to check on Steve, certain he was going to make a full and complete recovery. They’d be removing the tube in a few minutes, then would allow Steve to wake up by himself. “Worry gives a small thing a big shadow,” Danny was saying to Steve. Maybe it didn’t quite fit but it felt appropriate.

“I’ll need you to step out,” the doctor said as he finished washing his hands. A new nurse had come in with the equipment they needed to remove the tube.

“Right,” Danny said, standing to the snapping and popping of his back and knees. “I’ll go get some of that sludge that passes for coffee.”

“Give us fifteen minutes,” the doctor said, nodding to the nurse.

Danny took the chance to go outside and call Chin. “They’re removing the tube,” he explained when Chin had answered.

“That’s excellent news,” Chin said. “The kids want to know when they can come.”

“I don’t know when he’ll wake up. And they need to go to school.”

“You better tell them,” Chin said, handing the phone to John.

“Daddy?” John said, a tiny quiver in his voice.

Danny could tell he was trying to be strong and not necessarily succeeding. “Daddy’s going to be fine, Bud,” Danny assured him.

“Can we come?” John asked, Emma echoing his words in the background.

“You need to go to school,” Danny told them both.

“Please let us come, Daddy,” Emma pleaded.

Danny knew he should say no but he could understand their need to see Steve. “All right, babies. For a few minutes. He’ll still be asleep. Then you’ll need to go to school.”

“We will, Daddy,” Emma promised, John agreeing in the background.

“You gave in, I see,” Chin said, not gloating as was his due.

“What chance did I realistic have?” Danny admitted.

“We’ll be there in half an hour. Call the school and let them know.”

“Roger that,” Danny said. “Thanks again.”

“Ohana brah,” Chin said before hanging up.

Danny alerted the school that both the kids would be late and might be distracted throughout the day. The attendance monitor had enough experience with the Williams-McGarretts to know what to
watch for. She promised to call Danny and/or Chin if either of the kids began showing signs of being overwhelmed.

Danny called Chin back to let him know before going down to the cafeteria for something resembling coffee. Checking the time on his phone, he decided he’d been gone long enough and made his way back up to the floor with Steve’s room.

“We just finished up,” the doctor said as he and the nurse emerged from Steve’s room. “He should remain asleep for another couple of hours.”

“The kids are going to stop by on their way to work…school, I mean,” Danny said, sounding distracted. He was trying very hard to get a peek inside Steve’s room, fighting the overwhelming need to make sure Steve was still okay. It wasn’t as though something bad could have happened in the twenty minutes he’d been gone.

“You prepared them?” the doctor asked kindly.

“I did. I told them he’d still be asleep,” Danny said, edging closer to the door.

“All right,” the doctor said with a nod. “We’ll see you later this morning.”

“Thanks,” Danny said, entering Steve’s room. Of course Steve was right where Danny had left him, still asleep. His face was more relaxed now that the tube had been replaced by a small oxygen tube going into his nose. “I’m back, Babe. The kids will be here soon. They know you’ll still be asleep. They need to see that you are okay and then they’ll go to school. I wanted to keep them away but you know how they get.”

He kept talking until the familiar sounds of the arrival of his children made him smile. He went to the door to let them in, hugging Emma and John at the same time. “He’s pretty bruised and he’s still asleep,” he told them while they were still over by the door.

“He’s going to be okay, right?” Emma asked, her grey eyes wide and scared.

“Is he going to be okay?” Danny repeated. “He’s Super SEAL. Of course he’s going to be okay.” He stood and took their hands, leading them over to the bed. Emma held on tighter when she got her first look at Steve, tears rolling down her cheeks.

“He’s okay, Em,” John told her, staring at their father with a slightly horrified look on his own face.

“His face is bruised because some of the bricks hit him,” Danny explained gently. “And the bandage is there to cover the stitches. There are only 6 stitches but it does look worse than it is.”

“That’s a big bandage,” Emma said breathlessly.

“Head wounds always need lots of bandages,” Danny said. “Even minor ones.”

“Can he breathe?” John asked, watching Steve carefully.

“Much better than when it happened. He’s going to be fine, babies. I promise,” Danny said, sitting in the chair and pulling them both onto his lap. He held them tight as Emma cried and John tried to pretend he had no intention of it.
“Hey,” Steve said quietly, carefully turning his head to blink at his family. “No crying, Baby.”

“Daddy,” Emma said, scrambling over to the bed. “Daddy said you’d be asleep still.”

“I was. Two angels woke me up,” Steve said, trying to smile with his cracked and swollen lips.

“Hey Babe,” Danny said smiling down at him. “I’m surprised you’re awake.”

“Me too,” Steve said with a soft cough. “Had to see my kids.”

“Hey Daddy,” John said, sniffing quietly. “We were so worried.”

“I know, Bud. ’m sorry. Be home soon,” Steve said, his eyes drifting closed by themselves.

“Okay, babies. You need to go to school,” Danny said, squatting down to face them. “Chin will bring you back as soon as school is done. And if you get worried, you can go to the office and tell them. They know about Daddy so you’ll be allowed to call.”

“Okay,” John said as bravely as he could. “We’ll see you after.”

“Yes you will,” Danny confirmed, walking them to the door and having a soft word with Chin. When he couldn’t see the children any longer, he went back and sat next to Steve’s bed, taking his left hand in his because he couldn’t not hold onto to him. “You know what they say, babe,” Danny said as though he hadn’t stopped talking. “When you’re going to through hell, keep going. That’s what I need you to do.”

He would never know what all he said while Steve was still asleep but he refused to run out of words. All of the words were worth it when Steve’s eyes fluttered open, searching for Danny. Tension ebbed from his body when he found Danny right where he was supposed to be.

“Hey Babe,” Danny said with a relieved smile. “Welcome back to the land of the living.”

“Huh,” Steve grunted.

“I know. Everything hurts. I need to tell the nurse if you’re really awake this time.”

“Think so,” Steve said. “Shouldn’t be DFO when you get back.”

“All right,” Danny laughed, kissing his forehead. “Be right back.”

“’kay,” Steve agreed, watching him leave. His eyes didn’t leave the door until it reopened to admit Danny and the doctor.

“Hi,” the doctor said warmly. “Thank you for waking up.”

“Welcome,” Steve said, looking up at him.

“Besides everything hurting, how are you?”

“Thirsty,” Steve said, trying to moisten his lips.

“Anything else?” the doctor asked.
“No,” Steve decided. They’d already set aside the pain engulfing him. What more was there to say than that?

“All right,” the doctor said as he held Steve’s wrist to check his pulse. After making note of the readings, he also listened very carefully to the sound of Steve breathing. “Much better. Does breathing hurt?”

Steve held his finger and thumb an inch apart, the doctor nodding. “Understandably. The muscle relaxers will help some. We don’t want to give you too much until your lung heals a little more.”

Steve nodded but that was about all he had the energy to do. “Go home?”

“Not for a couple of days,” the doctor said. “A punctured lung isn’t something to be taken lightly.”

“’kay,” Steve said, trying to see around the doctor. He knew Danny was still in the room but not being able to see him made him feel like Danny had left. He knew the pain was making him unreasonably needy but there wasn’t anything he could do about it in his present condition.

“I’m right here, Babe,” Danny said, circling around the bed to stand on the opposite side from the doctor. He took a firm hold of Steve’s hand, proving he was still watching out for him.

“’kay,” Steve repeated, relaxing a fraction. Danno was there. Nothing more was required of Steve except to heal and get home to his family. He was vaguely aware of the doctor telling Danny some medical stuff, and under other circumstances Steve would have been an attentive audience. But it was simply too hard to follow the conversation under the weight of the pain and the medication going into veins in both arms.

“Thank you,” Danny was saying. Steve wondered why until he saw the doctor leaving the room.

“’m sorry,” Steve said when he was looking up at Danny’s face. His worry lines were etched deep, black circles under his eyes revealing the lack of sleep Danny would never admit to missing.

“You have no reason to be, knucklehead. You are who you are. Nothing will change that,” Danny said. “But you should have told me about the broken ribs and punctured lung.”

“You couldn’t do anything,” Steve said, his words slightly slurred.

“I could have…well. Next time please tell me.”

“Next time,” Steve agreed with a tiny nod. “I knew you were talking to me. It sounded like love.”

“It was supposed to,” Danny said warmly. “I knew the sounds of my mellifluous murmurs would speed your healing.”

“Don’t make me laugh,” Steve wheezed, his arm carefully wrapped around his side.

“I’m sorry,” Danny said.

“What would Grandma Giordano say?” Steve asked when he’d gotten up sufficient air to talk again.

Danny laughed at the question, leaning down to kiss his forehead. “She’d say we are both very
lucky. Me more so right now because I’m not the one injured. She’d also say smooth seas do not make skillful sailors.”

“Does that apply?” Steve asked with a tiny smile.

“Let’s say it does,” Danny said, giving him more ice. “Mostly she’d say how much I love you. And she’d be right.”

“Smart lady,” Steve agreed, accepting the blessed ice and love so freely given to him. He was very lucky and never wanted to take that for granted. Grandma Giordano would surely have even more to say about that. He’d have to remember to ask Danny, just as soon as he was finished being DFO.
Another Fine Mess

Chapter Summary

Steve and Danny's day at the beach is cut short by Koreans who abduct them and demand that they retrieve the stolen gold. What gold? Where is it stashed? When did they supposedly steal it? All questions Steve and Danny try to answer as they hope for rescue.

Chapter Notes

This chapter is a gift for simplyn2deep's birthday.

Happy happy birthday, BB! Hope you enjoy it!

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As Steve clawed his way up out of the darkness shrouding his brain, he was slowly able to assess the situation. Things he knew for sure: his head was throbbing, he was secured to a chair in a mostly dark room, he may have broken his right foot. Things he was fairly certain about: Danny was in the chair behind him, their backs touching. Things he could not figure out at all: why they were tied to a chair, where they were being held, or who had abducted them.

“Easy babe,” Steve said as he felt Danny’s first stirrings against his back. “Take it slow.”

“Oh God,” Danny groaned. “What’s happened now?”

“I’m not sure,” Steve said, trying to twist to get look at Danny. From the sound of his voice, Danny was in roughly the same shape as Steve, which boiled down to not good. “What is the last thing you remember?”

“Mmm…” Danny said, taking a deep breath. “We were putting our boards in the truck. Then… nothing.”

“Same with me,” Steve agreed. They had gone surfing by themselves early in the morning, the kids with Kono and Charlie for the weekend. They certainly hadn’t intended the morning to end with… whatever this was that they were caught up in. “Your head hurt?”

“You have to ask?” Danny responded. “How are you?”

“I think my foot is broken, considering how it’s trying to burst the laces open.”

“Oh dear,” Danny said in concern. “Did you pull on your boots when we quit surfing?”

“I don’t think so?” Steve said, glancing down at the cargos and tee shirt he was wearing. “Did we
“Maybe?” Danny said, looking at his own tee shirt and jeans. “We were going to get pancakes?”

“Right,” Steve said. “But I don’t remember getting dressed.”

“Yeah, me neither. But we must have.”

“I guess,” Steve said, listening silently for a moment. “I think we’re on a boat.”

“Of course someone would want to kidnap you and put you on a boat,” Danny complained.

“I don’t see how it’s my fault,” Steve said, feeling Danny twist his hands within the handcuffs. “Any luck with your Jersey slip?”

“None. You don’t have your light saber on you, do you?” Danny joked.

“It’s in my other cargos,” Steve said. “You know, they will never become real. You can’t just stop the laser at the length you think is appropriate.”

“That’s what they said about the communicators from the original Star Trek,” Danny pointed out. “We’d never be able to talk to someone else just by flipping open a device that’d fit in the palm of our hand. Now our iPhones are more powerful than the first NASA computers.”

“There is that,” Steve had to agree.

“You really think you broke your foot?” Danny asked, trying again to look over his shoulder to catch a glimpse of it.

“Pretty sure,” Steve said.

“Can you swim?”

“Yeah, if we get the chance,” Steve confirmed. “And you’re okay?”

“Except for miners excavating inside my skull, I’m fine,” Danny assured him.

“Have we pissed off anyone new lately?” Steve asked.

“Not that I know of,” Danny said. “No one’s been released. We haven’t made any new arch-enemies that I know of. We apparently pissed off someone without knowing how or why.”

“Seems that way,” Steve agreed.

“With you, it’s not that surprising,” Danny informed him.

“Oh please. You are as likely to piss people off as I am,” Steve said firmly.

“Not on such a regular basis, babe. I’m still blaming you for this.”

“I don’t see how it could be my fault,” Steve protested.
“I didn’t say it’s your fault. I said I’m blaming you,” Danny clarified.

“Oh. Well – in that case, I can’t really argue,” Steve agreed.

They stopped their bickering long enough to look over when the hatch in the ceiling opened. The light spilled in, illuminating the walls that were plain white, forming a room no bigger than eight by six feet. It must have been intended as a storage hatch as there were no furnishings other than the two chairs they were secured to.

Moments after the hatch screeched open, a metal ladder was lowered to allow a woman to climb down into the room with them. She had harsh features, hard angles and an unpleasant expression on her face. Her khaki pants and shirt gave no indication of her origins although she did appear to be Asian. Her salt-and-pepper hair was held in a tight braid down to her waist.

She advanced on them with purposeful strides, speaking far too loudly for the small space and the condition of their heads.

Danny looked up at her, watching her talk. He could not understand a word she was saying. He thought she might be speaking Japanese. When she paused, Steve answered her, making her frown at his words. She said something else, louder and more forcefully. Steve responded in his same calm tone, repeating whatever he’d already said. She made one last angry statement before turning and climbing back up the ladder.

“Well,” Danny said when the hatch slammed closed, plunging them back into almost total darkness. “Old Japanese girlfriend?”

“Nope - Korean,” Steve said. “They are taking us to Kahoolawe where apparently we stashed the gold we stole from them.”

“We stole gold from Koreans and hid it on an uninhabited island?” Danny said, in need of clarification.

“That’s what she told me. Have you been stealing Korean gold again?” Steve asked.

“Not lately,” Danny said. “Great. Is it better or worse that they don’t know we’re Five-0?”

“That’s a good question,” Steve said.

“Yeah. Here’s another one – how are we going to find gold we didn’t steal or stash on the island?”

“That is an excellent question,” Steve agreed. “We have about half an hour to figure it out.”

“Surely someone will see the boat at Kahoolawe. Since no one is supposed to even enter the waters around it,” Danny said.

“It’s trolling weekend,” Steve said. “That will make it easier for them to approach without raising alarm.”

“Great,” Danny said. “We’re headed to a forbidden island that has unexploded ordinances where we are going to be forced to locate a stash of gold we have no idea how to find.”

“That pretty well sums it up,” Steve had to agree.
“And you have a broken foot which is going to make finding this mysterious gold even harder.”

“Yeah,” Steve said.

“Any chance she said how many of them are on board?” Danny asked.

“No but she said ‘we’ several times.”

“Maybe we can overtake them,” Danny said. “It would really help if you did have your light saber.”

“Next time,” Steve said. “Who would have stolen the gold that they would mistake us for? Is there a gang of tall brown haired men with short blond sidekicks?”

“Sidekick? I am nobody’s sidekick I’ll have you know. And if you ever plan to have sex again, you’ll refrain from referring to me as such,” Danny informed him.

“Huh,” Steve said.

“*Huh? What huh?*” Danny demanded.

“Tall brown haired thieves with loud blond husbands?” Steve tired.

“Stop,” Danny said, shaking his head even though Steve couldn’t clearly see him. “What are we going to do?”

“It depends on how many of them there are. And how heavily armed they are,” Steve said.

“Don’t you think they would have checked our IDs at least?”

“Our drivers’ license were in the glovebox,” Steve reminded.

“Right, right. Under the grenades.”

“I don’t put grenades in the glovebox. Not since the last time you had a conniption over it,” Steve said.


“Stop,” Steve said much as Danny had earlier. “Kahoolawe is about 45 square miles. The center is volcanic rock. If there is gold hidden on it, it has to be on one of the beaches. The beaches to the left of the docking shallows are the widest and longest.”

“So we should start there,” Danny said.

“No, we should go right. That’s where I’d hide the gold. There are a couple of natural caves to the right, about half a mile down the coast line.”

“How is it you know so much about an island which white people are forbidden to visit?” Danny asked.

“I may have gone there during my time in the Navy,” Steve said.
“Ahh…a double top secret mission on a island of ordnances. It’s a dream come true for you.”

“I can neither confirm nor deny,” Steve replied.

“Of course not. There’s no way you are going to be able to walk half a mile,” Danny pointed out.

“How did they break my foot?” Steve asked although he knew Danny had no idea.

“They need to be more careful of their prisoners,” Danny told him. “Be sure and point that out the next time our lovely hostess returns.”

“I definitely will,” Steve agreed.

“Do you have any idea who these people are?”

“None. We haven’t gotten any reports of Korean nationals up to no good on the islands,” Steve said.

“No,” Danny agreed. “And where did they get the gold we supposedly stole?”

“And when did we supposedly steal it?” Steve asked.

“We have way too many questions and no answers,” Danny pointed out unnecessarily. “Being married to you is a real pain sometimes. I got to say.”

“I know,” Steve agreed. “But it’s been a while since either of us has been kidnapped. Don’t I get any credit for that?”

“No, no credit,” Danny said, taking a deep breath. “And I don’t think you fully understand the gravity of the situation.”

“Gravity on Earth is generally nine point eight meters per second squared. There are some miniscule variations depending on your distance from the equator or your sea-level.”

“Thank you, Mr. Science Geek. None of this helps us to find gold or escape our captors,” Danny said.

“Mr. Physics Geek to be accurate,” Steve said sounding smug.

“Yes, let’s be as accurate as possible while we await certain death.”

“Certain death,” Steve repeated, trying to suppress his laugh.

“Shut up,” Danny finally said. “With your broken foot, you’re going to have to stay behind. I’ll have to pretend to take them to the pretend stash of gold. Then what?”

“Let’s see how many of them there are. And don’t assume they don’t speak English.”

“I’d never make that mistake,” Danny assured him. “If we can take them out, can you navigate this boat back to Oahu?”

“I’m pretty sure it’s a standard fishing trawler. Not huge from the sounds of the motor. It won’t be a
“All right,” Danny said. “If we had stolen the Korean’s gold, how would they know we put it on Kahoolawe?”

“Another excellent question,” Steve said.

“We have a whole cavalcade of them,” Danny agreed.

“Yes we do,” Steve said, shifting his right foot and grimacing with his entire body.

“Easy, babe,” Danny said gently, twisting to try and see Steve’s face. “Your boot is probably a blessing.”

“Yeah,” Steve agreed. “I’d like plunge my entire leg in ice.”

“I can understand that,” Danny said.

“We’re slowing down,” Steve said, titling his head to listen to the change in the sounds of the motor.

“Okay. I’m as ready as I’ll ever be to guide kidnappers to gold I have no hope of finding.”

“Roger that,” Steve said, mostly because he knew it would make Danny laugh. Or at least smile.

As predicted, it wasn’t long until the boat came to a shuddering stop. The hatch opened once the yelling topside stopped, the same woman climbing down the ladder. She was followed by a large Korean man holding a huge gun. Danny thought if they weren’t in such an unfortunate situation, Steve would be having gun-envy.

There was plenty of unnecessary shouting before the woman opened the handcuffs, separating them to secure their hands in front of them. That was followed by more shouting and pointing at the ladder. Steve said something in Korean that drew an unhappy frown from the woman. She squatted next to his right foot, feeling it with surprising gentleness. Satisfied that Steve wasn’t lying to her, she helped to hoist him upright so that he could gingerly limp over to the ladder. The large angry man standing guard over Danny simply waited and watched Steve make his painful way up the ladder using only his left foot and his always admirable upper body strength. Once he’d made his way topside, the angry man gestured with his gun that Danny was to follow.

When Danny was on deck, he found Steve sitting under the shade of a tarpaulin, listening to the woman, his head slightly tilted. Danny recognized that look from when one of the kids was telling him something he was pretty sure was a lie. Danny called it his ‘you’ll finally break and tell me the truth’ face. The kids called it Steve’s ‘Danno, Daddy’s patronizing me again – make him stop’ face. Steve claimed it was his ‘I’m listening and reserving judgment’ face but none of them bought that explanation for a minute.

The woman stopped talking, waiting for Steve’s response.

“She said you’re going to take three of her people to the gold,” Steve explained, glancing behind Danny to the six Koreans. Danny turned to look at them as well.

They were two huge men, two women with rugged faces, and two people whose gender was unknown to Danny. Not that it especially matter. All six of them were armed with gigantic guns and
had equally large and scary knives strapped to their thighs. More weapon-envy, Danny thought.

“You have 45 minutes to return with it or they’ll kill me,” Steve added after the woman had given him further instructions.


“Good luck,” Steve said as one of Danny’s three Korean escorts shoved him toward the open end of the stern where Danny plunged into the waist deep water. Wading to shore would have been easier if he’d had full use of his hands but he knew that was out of the question.

Steve watched Danny and his guards struggle through the water until they were on the dry sand, setting off to the right as they had agreed. Danny looked like he knew exactly where he was going and exactly how long it would take to get there. Steve knew he could lie with the best of them when it was required but couldn’t remember a time when Danny was so utterly convincing in his falsehood.

The woman in charge ordered the remaining guards to watch Steve closely before she disappeared into the small wheelhouse at the bow of the boat. Steve measured his guards. If his foot wasn’t broken, there was a chance he could take all of them. But he would be working at a disadvantage. There was the possibility that Danny would disarm his three guards. That would mean he’d return armed, and could take out the rest when he got back, preferably without killing Steve in the mêlée that would result.

As Steve was contemplating the odds of survival and whether or not it would hurt less to cut off his own foot, a fishing boat was slowly making its way beside the one they were on. Steve looked over at the controls of the arriving boat, finding Kawika at the pilot’s wheel. Steve caught Kawika’s eyes, shifting his hands slightly to attract Kawika’s attention. Kawika looked at him with a questioning expression, Steve shaking his head very minutely. He was pretty sure Kawika understood. At least Steve hoped he knew not to admit they knew each other.

“What are you doing?” Kawika asked loud enough to be heard over the sound of his engine and the crashing waves against the shore.

“What did he say?” one of the guards asked Steve in Korean.

“He said what are you doing,” Steve translated, looking up at the angry man in khaki pants and shirt, just like his companions.

“Why is he asking us that?” the guard asked Steve.

“He wants to know why you want to know,” Steve informed Kawika.

“You are not native. You have no rights to fish these waters,” Kawika said sternly. He was joined on his deck by three Kapu, one of whom was Diego. If there was a contest for hugest enforcer, Diego would absolutely win.

Steve translated what Kawika had said, the Korean frowning at Steve. He turned toward the wheelhouse, asking that Min-seo come to the deck. She left the wheelhouse, frowning over at Kawika and his men.

“What is it you want?” she asked him, Steve translating.
“You aren’t native. You have no rights to these waters,” Kawika repeated. Steve translated his words, looking up at Min-seo, wondering what she was going to do.

Her expression became even angrier at Steve’s words. “Tell him we have whatever rights we want.” The Korean guards took a menacing step closer to her, and therefore closer to Kawika’s boat. Steve thought that was a tactical error but one he was glad they had made. “Tell him,” she ordered Steve.

Steve repeated to Kawika what she had said, Kawika shaking his head. “Only native Hawaiians are allowed access to Kahoolawe. You need to leave these waters now.”

Steve translated, watching Min-Seo’s anger rise. This could be bad in so many ways. “Tell him we will leave the waters in the next hour. We have people ashore and must wait for their return,” Min-Seo said while still engaged in a staring match with Kawika.

Steve told Kawika what she had said, Kawika shaking his head again. “You must leave immediately. We will bring your people to you.”

Once again, Steve translated it into Korean, knowing that she was not going to accept Kawika’s offer. A stand-off was at hand. At least he knew if he was shot, it would most probably be an accident. That brought a tiny measure of comfort, although Danny’s voice inside his head chose right then to tell him you’ll still be shot if not dead and what does it matter in the long term how it happened? And, by the way, Steven, you are not allowed to die by anyone’s hands other than mine. Danny’s voice had more to say but Steve asked it to please wait. He couldn’t translate the shouting match and listen to Danny scolding him at the same time.

“We are staying here until they return,” Min-Seo told him, loudly.

After Steve told Kawika what she’d said, the Kapu raised their guns. Surely fishing rights weren’t worth killing over. Not these fishing rights at any rate.

“Who is this haole you have locked up?” Kawika demanded, gesturing toward Steve.

Steve repeated his question, substituting white man for haole. So much easier that way.

“You don’t know him?” Min-Seo demanded.

“All haoles look the same to me,” Kawika claimed. “You are trespassing and need to go.”

Steve decided no I don’t know him was an adequate answer. And if any of them did speak English, they’d hopefully realize that an exact translation wasn’t necessary.

“I’ll leave when my people return,” she responded through Steve.

“Listen,” Steve said in Korean and then English. “They aren’t fishing these waters. They will leave inside an hour. This boat will be gone as soon as those who went ashore return.”

Kawika and Min-Seo stared at each other, Steve waiting and watching. Who would blink first?

“We are waiting right here,” Kawika finally informed her.

“Do what you will,” Min-Seo said, speaking quietly to two of her guards. Steve thought he heard
dispatch and no witnesses but he couldn’t be completely sure. If Danny were to find the gold and return with it, the Koreans would attempt to kill the Hawaiians in order to reduce the chances of their apprehension. He figured he and Danny were already on the list of those to be dispatched since the Koreans weren’t hiding their faces.

The worst part of the situation, other than the prospect of imminent death, was that he didn’t know where Danny was or if he was okay. He glanced over at Kawika who was still watching the Koreans. He met Steve’s gaze, raising an eyebrow in a faint gesture of question.

Steve took the chance that the Koreans didn’t speak Hawaiian and said husband on shore in Hawaiian.

That made one of the Korean guards backhand him, yelling that he wasn’t to speak until ordered to do so. Steve stared definitely up at him, refusing to be intimidated no matter how much bigger he was.

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Kawika motion Diego to go below deck. Good, Steve thought. Calling for reinforcements.

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Danny couldn’t understand the words being said by the Koreans following him across the sand but he could tell they were growing more impatient by the minute. He hadn’t found any of the caves Steve had told him were located on this portion of the island. He hoped he’d find one soon in order to put in motion his half-formed idea on how to escape and then rescue Steve. The Koreans with him were huge and muscular but that would work out to his advantage. He’d sparred with Steve enough to know how to use their own body weight as leverage against them, even with his hands cuffed in front of him. He was pretty sure they were underestimating his fitness, thinking he was no match for one of them, much less all three. The trick would be to separate them if possible.

“How longer?” one of his guards asked, stumbling over the unfamiliar words.

“Right up there,” Danny said pointing arbitrarily down the beach with both hands. He thought he spotted something that might be a cave. He sure hoped he was right. The walk had made him even more thirsty and hot. His head was still pounding from being struck unconscious. Walking in the sand with bound hands made it feel twice as difficult as it should have been.

To his immense relief, they rounded a gently curve and discovered a low, dark cave to their immediate left. “Here. This one,” Danny said, pointing over at it. The guards exchanged a look, talking among themselves. It was finally decided the shortest guard would go with Danny. The other two didn’t look keen on entering such a cramped space. The selected guard would still have to squat to enter the cave, a situation Danny knew was a plus in his column.

He led the guard confidently into the cave as though he knew exactly where to find the supposed stash of gold. As he got deeper into the cool area, he thought he detected the sound of running water. That too would be a plus. He’d disable his guard, finally wet his mouth and throat then dispatch the two remaining guards.

When the cave narrowed slightly, he stopped, pointing toward the even darker space ten steps further in. The guard waved his gun toward the rock walls, giving Danny the distraction he needed. Reaching down for a handful of sand, he threw it up at the guard’s face, temporarily blinding him. A lightening quick kick and a hard twist of the guard’s arm put him face down on the ground. Danny
used the butt of the gun to render him unconscious, hoping he hadn’t killed him. He knew he shouldn’t care but killing never came easy, even when it was well deserved.

With the gigantic gun locked and loaded, Danny returned to the mouth of the cave, shooting both guards before they could do anything to stop him. He shot out their knees, their shouts of pain making him cringe. Their distance from the boat would prevent the others from hearing it so no rescue was imminent. Knowing the guards wouldn’t be going anywhere on their own, he threw their guns into the ocean after removing the ammo.

Running back toward the boat was made more difficult by the weight of the gun and by the sand that wanted to claim Danny’s shoes as a prize. He slowed when he spotted the second fishing boat. Great. More Koreans. His position on the beach prevented the first boat from seeing him as he studied the second. To his relief, he recognized the captain of the second boat who was now surreptitiously studying him. Danny judged the distance from the shore to Kawika’s boat, trying to decide if he could swim to it undetected. And was that the best plan for rescuing Steve?

As he was weighing the pros and cons of swimming out, one of the Kapu snuck over the side of the boat and silently swam ashore.

“How’s Steve?” Danny asked as soon as Kuna waded to the dry sand.

“He’s okay,” Kuna said. “What are you doing here?”

“We aren’t entirely sure,” Danny admitted, explaining about the gold and the mistake by the Koreans. Kuna used a length of wire he’d extracted from one of his pockets to release the handcuffs from Danny’s wrists. Danny rubbed the reddened skin, restoring some circulation to his fingers.

“Complicated,” Kuna said.

“Terribly,” Danny agreed. “We need to get Steve away from them.”

“Diego called for the Coast Guard. We guess they’re ten minutes out. Did your kidnappers send you out here alone?”

Danny told him that the three Koreans remained where he’d dropped them, Kuna agreeing that the Coast Guard could deal with them. “And Kawika is sure the Koreans won’t just kill Steve when the Coast Guard arrives?” Danny asked with a frown of concern. He wasn’t going home without Steve. He was not going to tell the kids that Daddy had died over a stupid misunderstanding.

“…still be there,” Kuna said.


“You aren’t going to have to tell John and Emma Steve’s not coming home,” Kuna promised.

“Okay, okay,” Danny said with a deep breath. “Can we swim back to your boat?”

“Yeah,” Kuna said. “Leave the gun. We have plenty.”

“All legally registered, I feel sure,” Danny said as he kicked off his shoes.

“Totally,” Kuna said before entering the surf to swim back to the boat. He helped Danny ease up
onto the deck, hidden from the Koreans.

“What now?” Danny whispered when Kawika sat on one of the benches that was hiding Danny from view.

“We can try shooting them but…” Kawika said.

“We can’t risk Steve getting caught in the crossfire,” Danny said in acknowledgment. “Steve’s okay?”

“They’ve left him alone for now,” Kawika said, glancing over at him. “Mostly he’s bored.”

“I hope he doesn’t try anything stupid,” Danny said.

“He wouldn’t be Steve if he didn’t,” Kuna pointed out.

“Coast Guard’ll be here in two minutes,” Diego said when he had climbed up from below deck.

“Thank you,” Danny croaked, trying desperately to wet his cracked lips.

“Here,” Kuna said, handing Danny a bottle of water.

“Thanks,” Danny said, not gulping it down the way he wanted to do. He knew it’d come back up if he drank it all in one go.

“The Koreans went below deck if you want to see Steve,” Kawika said down to Danny.

Danny straightened enough to look over at the Korean’s boat, witnessing the smile that broke over Steve’s face. Danny winked at him before returning to his hiding place. As he was settling back behind the bench, the welcome sound of the three Coast Guard boats could be heard approaching.

“This is the US Coast Guard,” came the announcement over the water. “Lay down your weapons and prepare to be boarded.”

The Kapu laid theirs down at the same time as three of the Koreans emerged topside on their boat.

“Lay down your weapons. You are under arrest,” the voice announced loudly. The three Coast Guard boats had boxed in the Korean’s boat and the Kapu boat, preventing either from escaping.

The Koreans shouted at Steve who answered in Korean. Danny couldn’t understand the words but the tone was familiar. You’re screwed. Surrender now.

When Min-Seo came up on deck, it looked momentarily like all hell was going to break loose. She grabbed a gun from one of her henchmen, looking angry and determined. The sound of a dozen or more guns being cocked changed her mind and she placed the gun on the wooden deck. She and the other Koreans raised their hands, watching in disgust as the Coast Guard swarmed their boat.

A couple of Coast Guard sailors boarded Kawika’s boat but only to make sure everyone was all right. Danny assured them he was fine and really wanted to talk to Steve before he told them everything else.

“Of course, Detective,” the sailor said, helping Danny onto the Coast Guard boat where Steve was
heading. Two members of the Coast Guard were helping him off the Korean boat, Steve able to walk only on his left foot.

“Hey,” Danny said with a smile up at Steve when he finally arrived.

“Hey yourself,” Steve returned. “Where are your Koreans?”

“At the cave,” Danny said, sitting next to Steve as one of the medics squatted in front of him. “You’ll have to cut his laces and possibly his boot.”

“Yes sir,” the medic said.

As Steve’s foot was being tended to, Danny explained to the Coast Guard captain about the gold in the cave. At least they thought it was in a cave but couldn’t be entirely sure. They didn’t know who had stolen it or how the Koreans knew about it.

“We’ll search the island. And arrest the other Koreans once they are patched up,” the Captain said.

“Have you had reports of missing gold?” Steve asked, looking for a distraction from the medic who was carefully slicing away Steve’s boot. As gently as he was being, it was still causing shooting pains up Steve’s right leg, making him grit his teeth.

“We heard rumors of a salvage operation not far from here,” the captain said. “Kawika may know.”

“Kawika,” one of the Coast Guard sailors called. “You have a minute?”

Kawika crossed over to the Coast Guard ship, listening to the recounting of the story of the mysterious hidden gold. “I heard nothing of it,” he said.

“No salvage operations?” Steve asked, looking down at his foot. It was black and blue, swollen to almost twice its normal size.

“Not in Kapu territory,” Kawika said. “I’ll put out feelers. See what I find.”

“You can help search the island for it,” Danny said. “You know the island as well as anyone does.”

“There a finder’s fee?” Kawika asked the captain.

“Depends on where it originated. If it is salvaged gold, it’s possible it will all be yours.”

“I’ll send my boys out right now,” Kawika said, returning to his own boat.

“Oh babe,” Danny said, looking down at Steve’s foot.

“Yeah,” Steve said.

“How bad?” Danny asked the medic.

“I’m guessing there are several broken bones, Commander, from the amount of swelling and discoloration.”

“That’s what I figured,” Steve said before turning to Danny. “You really took out your three
“guards?”

“Yep,” Danny said. “Pretty sure I didn’t kill them. But none of them will be dancing any time soon.”

“Neither will I,” Steve said.

“No but I don’t have to go home and tell the kids you’re dead,” Danny pointed out happily.

“That’s the best news of all,” Steve agreed. “Do you have a satellite phone?” he asked the captain.

“Certainly, Commander,” the captain said, sending one of his guys to go and get it. He soon returned, handing it to Danny.

“Hey Bud,” Danny said, smiling at the sound of his son’s voice.

“What’re you doing, Danno?” John asked. Emma was in the background, demanding to talk to them too.

“That’s complicated, baby. Daddy got a little hurt so we’re going to take him to get fixed up.”

“Daddy’s hurt?” John said, sounding scared.

“He hurt his foot, Bud. He’s fine otherwise. You and Emma don’t need to worry.”

“Really, Daddy?” John asked.

“Really, really. Is Kono or Charlie right there?”

“Uh huh,” John said, giving over the phone.

“Danny?” Charlie’s worried voice said.

“Hey Charlie. Can you bring the kids to the hospital? Steve broke his foot and the Coast Guard is transporting us there now.”

“The Coast Guard?” Charlie asked.

“It’s a long story. We’ll explain everything when we get there,” Danny promised.

“All right,” Charlie said. He was in the middle of saying something else when he was interrupted.

“Daddy?” Emma said, tears in her voice.

“We’re okay, baby,” Danny said.

“Daddy’s okay?” she asked, still crying.

Danny held the phone to Steve who accepted it. “Hey baby girl.”

“Daddy,” Emma squealed, making Danny laugh. “You’re really okay?”

“I broke my foot but other than that, I’m just fine,” Steve assured her. “We’ll see you at the hospital
in about half an hour.”

“Okay,” she agreed, returning the phone to Charlie.

“We’re leaving now,” Charlie said. Steve could hear him walking, encouraging all of the kids to get into the car.

“Where’s Kono?” Steve asked in curiosity.

“Grocery store. We keep running out of food,” Charlie laughed.

“Sorry about that,” Steve said.

“All the kids have a healthy appetite,” Charlie reminded him. “We’ll see you soon.”

“Right. Thanks,” Steve said, returning the phone to the captain. When he glanced down at the medic, he was holding a huge syringe and an alcohol swab.

“This will help stem the pain,” the medic explained. Before Steve had time to protest or insist he didn’t need a painkiller, it was already being injected into his hugely swollen foot.

“Oh,” Steve said, flinching.

“Don’t be such a baby,” Danny said, kissing his cheek. “You know it will help.”

“Shut up,” Steve said, leaning closer so even more of his weight was being supported by Danny.

Apparently there was a sedative in the injection because that was the last thing he remembered until he woke up in their bed, John and Emma squeezed between them.

“Hey,” Steve said in a groggy voice, making the kids greet him happily and by bouncing on the bed.

“Daddy, daddy,” they said.


“We drew on your cast already,” John announced. “The pink and purple sparkles were Emma’s idea.”

“There’s a big surprise,” Steve laughed, moving aside the sheet to see the white plaster cast that started at his toes and ended just below his knee.

“Does it hurt?” Emma asked, frowning at the cast.

“Not right now,” Steve said. “How long have I been asleep?”

“Not all that long,” Danny said. “We got home from the hospital a little over an hour ago. Diego brought you upstairs. You were too doped up to use the crutches.”

“But I tried?” Steve asked in confusion.

“You did. And you failed. You talked about tutus and walruses. It’s the funniest drugged you’ve
ever been,” Danny laughed.

“So glad my incapacitation is a source of such amusement,” Steve said, making Danny shrug. Any argument that they may have chosen to engage in was short-circuited by Emma showing Steve the picture she had colored and by John talking about surfing with Charlie and Kono that morning.

When the kids had finally wound down enough for Steve to talk to Danny, he asked if there was any news on the mysterious gold.

“It was a salvage operation,” Danny said. “Kawika found it a mile off the beach. He said it was hard climbing because of the volcanic rock. They are pretty sure that the Koreans never actually had it in their possession. They’d just heard that it was brought up and hidden on Kahoolawe. They thought we had dived for it.”

“Huh,” Steve said. “Any word where it was salvaged from?”

“Kawika couldn’t tell. He turned it over to the Coast Guard. If it’s not government gold, it’s his.”

“Payment for rescuing us,” Steve said in confirmation.

“Uncle Kawika rescued you?” John asked, glancing up from his football coloring book.

“Yes he did,” Steve said.

“We’ll color him a picture too,” Emma decided.

“He’ll love that, baby,” Danny said, kissing the kids on their heads. He reached over and kissed Steve as well.

They were all safe and mostly sound, the latest mess ending much happier than he would have believed possible. He was still blaming Steve for it, and he knew with complete certainty that once Steve was feeling up to it, Steve would find new and creative ways to earn Danny’s forgiveness. Not that it wasn’t a foregone conclusion. But Steve’s preferred methods of apology were a win for them both. As it should be.
A Brief History of Steve

Chapter Summary

John is confused and concerned about what Steve did when he was a SEAL.

“Hey Bud,” Danny said from where he was standing in the door to John’s room. John was sitting at his bright blue and red desk, staring out the window behind it. He made no indication that his father had spoken to him but Danny knew John knew he was there even before he spoke. “What’s going on?”

John shrugged one shoulder, continuing to stare sightlessly ahead.

“You know there isn’t anything you can’t talk to me about,” Danny said, crossing over to sit on the edge of John’s bed. Danny suspected whatever was bothering John was more than any usual preteen angst. For all that John was 11 years old he’d never been moody. And if he had something to say, like his blond father, he would rarely hold back. John was being unusually quiet and that worried Danny. “Talk to me, Bud,” Danny said in encouragement.

John didn’t react which was also rare for him. Emma had been known to ignore her fathers, or to sass them, but John rarely did either.

Danny studied John, trying to puzzle out what was so bothering him that he wouldn’t discuss it. He had been quiet in the car on their way home, refusing the customary after-school cookies and milk when they arrived. Emma shrugged when Danny had asked if she knew why John was upset.

“Nope,” she responded. “Can I watch my movie while I eat?”

“All right,” Danny had agreed, carrying her milk into the living room. “I’m going to go up and talk to John-John.”

John still hadn’t acknowledged Danny’s presence, making Danny frown even more in concern. Danny could see that John’s history book was open, John’s left hand splayed over it as though he was trying to make the words and pictures invisible. Danny leaned a little closer, frowning when he saw the images John was trying to hide. He was 99% sure that one of the pictures in John’s book was Steve, in full military gear, much of his face obscured. But Danny would know Steve anywhere, even if he ever had reason to put on a spacesuit and helmet – Danny would still know it was him.

“John,” Danny said, reaching over for the book. John let him take it, turning away from Danny. It didn’t take but one glance for him to confirm that one of the tallest SEAL was in fact Steve. “You know Daddy was in combat,” Danny said.

John hunched in on himself even more. That didn’t stop Danny from seeing the tears that were slowly rolling down John’s face.

“Hey, hey,” Danny said, laying a hand on John’s arm. “What’s all this about?”

“He’s… he was… that’s Daddy,” John said, shaking his head. He didn’t have the words to convey
what he was feeling. Danny didn’t need the words when he could so clearly see the evidence of
John’s tumultuous emotions.

“He’s still your Daddy,” Danny said gently. “We’ve both done things we had no choice in doing,
son. You know that about both of us.”

“But … in the war….did he kill… a lot of people?” John whispered.

“I don’t know,” Danny said honestly. “I’m not sure he knows. It’s not like the movies, where they
notch their belts or whatever it is they do. He was a very good SEAL. Sometimes that meant he did
things we would consider bad. But there was a good reason he did them.”

“They tortured people, Daddy. That’s never okay,” John said softly.

“Under ordinary circumstances, no, it’s not okay. But war is not ordinary circumstances. If anyone
was tortured, it was because they had information that could keep us safe. I don’t know for a fact that
Steve ever tortured anyone.”

“SEALs did,” John said, pointing at his history book. “That’s Daddy, on the page about the
SEALs.”

“Yes, this is Daddy,” Danny agreed. “And these men are also someone’s daddy. But not when this
picture was taken. I hadn’t met him. I don’t know that I would have much liked him. But he’s not
this person any more.”

“He’s not?” John asked, tears still brimming in his eyes.

“Does the man in this picture look like someone who would make Emma a pink tutu and sparkling
tiara because she needed to be a ballerina?”

“No,” John said, looking down at his history book. “How can he be him and Daddy?”

“It’s very complicated,” Danny confirmed. “Grown-ups do things that seem… wrong or bad.
Usually it’s because it’s our job. That doesn’t make us bad because we did them.”

“It doesn’t?” John asked, looked more confused instead of less.

Danny thought it over, trying to put it in terms that John could more easily understand. “You know
how when Daddy and I are at work and we turn on the siren to chase the bad guys?”

“Uh huh,” John said.

“When we have on our sirens, we are going over the speed limit. If we weren’t police, it would be
illegal for us to drive so fast. But we have to go over the speed limit in order to do our jobs.”

“So you break the law but you have the okay,” John said, sounding doubtful.

“Yes,” Danny agreed, tilting his head when he heard the front door open. “That’s Daddy. Can I have
him come up to talk to you?”

John looked up at Danny, his eyes wide, his breathing too fast. He finally nodded, looking doubtful
that he really wanted to agree.
“I’ll come back with him,” Danny said, kissing John’s head before going down the steps to find Steve hugging Emma. He was engrossed in listening to her recount every single minute of her day.

“Hey honey, I’m home,” Steve said over her head. His smile faded at the expression on Danny’s voice. “What’s wrong?”

“John needs to talk to us,” Danny said, taking Emma and putting her down. “Can you watch your movie by yourself for a few more minutes?”

“Okay,” she said sadly, watching her fathers go up the steps without her.

“What’s wrong?” Steve repeated, pulling Danny into their bedroom.

“John’s history book has a picture of you in it. They’re apparently studying the mid-east conflicts. He’s a little freaked that you killed people. How can his Daddy be a killer?”

“Oh,” Steve said, rubbing a hand over his face. “I guess it was inevitable.”

“He asked how many people you’d killed. I said I didn’t know and was pretty sure you didn’t either.”

“What’d he say?”

“There was some talk of torture?” Danny said. “I said we drive too fast for our jobs. That doesn’t mean we’d do it otherwise.”

“Did that help?”

“A little. He’s still upset,” Danny said in apology.

“Oh yeah,” Steve said, taking a deep breath and pulling off his boots. He put his badge in the nightstand, his gun securely locked in the truck. “Think he’ll talk to me?”

“He’s confused more than anything. Daddy can’t kill people,” Danny said in summary.

“Yeah,” Steve agreed, going down the hall to John’s room. “Hey Bud,” Steve said, trying to sound as normal as possible. “May I come in?”

“Uh huh,” John said, staring up at Steve, his expression wary.

“Daddy told me you’re… confused about me being a SEAL,” Steve said, sitting on the bed, Danny next to him.

“This is you,” John said, pointing at the picture in his textbook.

“It is,” Steve agreed. “That was a long time ago. I hadn’t met Daddy then.”

“That’s what Daddy said,” John confirmed.

“I’ll tell you anything you want to know, as long as it isn’t classified,” Steve said, his hand on John’s shoulder.
“Classified?” John repeated, his eyebrows furrowed.

“A secret. There are some things I’m not allowed to discuss. Not with Danno, not with anyone,” Steve explained.

“Did you kill a lot of people?” John asked breathlessly, his blue eyes huge.

“I don’t know, Bud,” Steve said honestly. “When you fight in a war, your job is to stop the enemy. Sometimes that means killing them. Sometimes it’s telling them to give up their guns and putting them under arrest.”

“You arrested ’em?” John asked.

“Sometimes we did. If they surrendered to us, we’d take them to jail.”

“What would happen to them?” John asked.

“Some were sent home when the area was secured. Some joined the local army. Some fled to another country.”

“My teacher said sometimes SEALs tortured people,” John said, looking down at the book with Steve’s picture taking up most of the page.

“There were enemy soldiers who were tortured,” Steve had to admit. There was no way he could lie to his son.

“Did you do it?” John asked very quietly, refusing to meet Steve’s eyes.

“No, Bud. I never tortured anyone,” Steve said honestly. “My job was to capture them, not interrogate them.”

“Or you killed them,” John said.

“Yes, sometimes I had no choice but to kill the enemy soldiers. They were trying to kill us so we were left with very little choice. I knew SEALs who were tortured by the enemy,” Steve said. He didn’t know if that was going to make things better or worse for John but he thought it was important that John knew both sides of that story.

“Were you?” John asked, looking scared of getting the answer.

“Once,” Steve said in an even tone. “I was rescued by my team.”

“Oh,” John said, considering this information. “Were you scared?”

“I think anyone in that situation would be,” Steve said. “I had nightmares about it for months afterwards.”

“Sometimes he still does,” Danny added.

“Really?” John said. “You dream about the war?”
“I do,” Steve said. “Not as much as I used to before I came home to Hawaii.”

John nodded at that, looking at his history book. “Why are you in here?”

“It’s a stock photo, Bud. The Pentagon has thousands of them. They send them out to publishers who ask. It’s just a coincidence that this is me,” Steve told him.

“You have on a lot of clothes and stuff. Weren’t you hot?” John asked.

Steve laughed at that. “Yes, it was very hot there. We had to drink gallons of water because we sweat so much.”

“Do you kill people now?” John asked, looking at both his fathers.

“When we have no choice,” Danny said. “If we weren’t willing to defend ourselves, we would be the ones who ended up dead.”

“I wouldn’t like that,” John decided.

“Neither would we,” Steve said.

“If something bad happens to you, what happens to me and Emma?” John asked, his most serious expression on his face.

“Chin and Malia are your godparents, Bud. If something happens to me and Daddy, you and Emma will live with Chin and Malia,” Danny said.

John considered that information before nodding. “Okay.”

“Do you feel better now, babe?” Steve asked. “Is there anything else you want to know?”

“What does it feel like to kill somebody?” John asked with a frown. He seemed saddened by the question more than bothered by it.

“It’s very hard,” Steve said. “Even when it’s your job, you wonder if there had been something else you could have done. But if it comes down to killing to stop from being killed, it’s easier to make that decision.”

“It’s hard being a soldier, huh?” John decided.

“It can be very hard. It’s also very important,” Steve said.

“Uh huh,” John agreed. “Our teacher said if it hadn’t been for the American soldiers, they may have attacked America again.”

“That’s what we were trying to prevent,” Steve confirmed. “We never want a repeat of 9/11.”

“Or Pearl Harbor,” Danny added to Steve’s nods.

“Where were you on 9/11?” John asked Steve.

“I was on an aircraft carrier in the Indian Ocean,” Steve said. “After the attacks, we were deployed to
the middle east to join the fight there.”

John considered all that his father had said, a frown forming. “Do you have to go back to fight?”

“No, Bud. I retired from the Navy.”

“You quit?” John asked.

“I served all the years they required. I came home, met Daddy, got married, and had two precious babies,” Steve said.

“Do you understand now, babe?” Danny asked, seeing some lingering confusion on his son’s face. He thought he had some idea of the conflicting emotions that John could barely understand, much less sort out.

“I think?” John said.

“Do you have any more questions for me?” Steve asked.

“No. If I think of one, can I ask then?”

“Of course,” Steve said. “We’re going to go start dinner. Are you coming with?”

John looked out his window before looking up at his fathers. “I’m staying here.”

“All right,” Danny said, taking hold of Steve’s arm to pull him toward the door. “We’ll let you know when dinner’s ready.”

John made no indication that he had heard as Danny kept pulling Steve toward their bedroom.

“What are you doing?” Steve demanded in a whisper.

“He’s figuring it out, babe. He needs the time to think about what we told him. He’ll sort it out,” Danny assured him.

“What if he doesn’t? What if he decides I’m some sort of monster?” Steve said in genuine concern.

“You aren’t. Why would he ever think that? I reminded him that you are the one who made Emma a tutu and tiara. That’s hardly the actions of a killer,” Danny pointed out.

“I never thought the kids would think of me as a killer,” Steve said, leaning against the wall for support.

“It’s confusing, babe, you know that. He’s trying to reconcile his Daddy with the man who is pictured as the prototypical American soldier. You’ve never been anything but Daddy and a policeman to John.”

“He knows what we do as policemen,” Steve said.

“He doesn’t have a textbook that says we kill and torture people,” Danny said. “If he did, he’d be worried about us both.”
“Yeah,” Steve said.

“Daddy,” Emma yelled up the steps. “Daddy.”

“Yes, baby,” Steve called back, leaning over the balcony to see her impatient face staring up at him.

“Come down here,” she ordered.

“Why?” Steve asked, glancing over at Danny who was trying to hide his laughter.

“You said you’d watch with me,” she said. “Movie’s half over already.”

“All right, princess. I’m coming,” Steve said, going down the steps with Danny right behind him.

“What’d John want?” Emma asked when she was snug up against Steve on the couch. Danny said he’d take care of dinner while Emma and Steve killed more brain cells.

“There was a picture in his history book that confused him,” Steve said.

“That one he said’s you?” Emma asked.

“He showed you?” Steve asked in response.

“Uh huh. Don’t look like you to me,” Emma said.

“Doesn’t, not don’t,” Steve corrected automatically. “It is me.”

“’Kay,” Emma said, scooting off the couch.

“Where are you going?” Steve asked as she climbed over his legs and bare feet.

“Thirsty,” she announced, going toward the kitchen. It didn’t take her long to return with a lidded cup and a bottle of water for her father. “Here.”

“Thank you, baby,” Steve said, drinking from the water.

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“Babe,” Danny said when he and Steve were in bed. “You’re perseverating.”

“I can’t help it,” Steve admitted, staring up at the ceiling. “John didn’t eat. When was the last time he refused food?”

“He’s sorting it out,” Danny reminded him. “He’ll find peace with what he learned.”

“He didn’t come down for dinner because I fought in a war,” Steve said in regret, and with no small amount of frustration. Would his past ever stop interfering with his life in new and horrifying ways?

“You’re Daddy. You aren’t a soldier to him. He has to find a way to put those two images together.”

“But I’m not a soldier any longer,” Steve said.
“You’re in his textbook. You’re discussed as an example of the SEALs.”

“Not by name,” Steve pointed out.

“That hardly matters. It’s your picture. That makes the information about you by default. You have to understand why John’s discombobulated by this.”

Steve covered his face with both hands, taking a deep breath. “He’s scared of me. I never wanted that. Never.”

“He isn’t scared of you. He’s scared of an idea of you he barely understands – a soldier who killed people.”

“Yeah,” Steve sighed. “They do not give lessons on this in SEAL school.”

“They should,” Danny said. “They should prepare you for re-entry into civilian life. Unless they expect you all to die.”

“No,” Steve assured him. “They spend too much money training us. They want to make sure they get their return on investment.”

“Nice. So now you’re stocks and bonds.”

“Sure,” Steve said.

“Go to sleep, babe. We’ll work it out tomorrow if he’s still worried. You’ll play in the ocean with your two water babies and he’ll remember you are his hero.”

“That’s you,” Steve said.

“No way. He’s all you. God help me,” Danny said.

“You love all of us. There’s no point in denying it to me,” Steve said, rolling on his side and draping his arm across Danny’s chest.

“I do love all of you,” Danny confirmed.

“All of me? Or all of the Williams-McGarrets?” Steve asked.

“Both,” Danny assured him, sliding up under his arm. “Hey Bud.”

“Hey John-John,” Steve said sitting up. John looked sleepy and…sad where he stood in their doorway. “What’s up?”

“I had a bad dream,” John said. Steve thought he saw John’s security blanket hidden behind his back but he wasn’t entirely sure.

“Do you want to sleep with us?” Steve invited.

“That okay?” John asked, coming closer and looking a little less upset.

“Of course it’s okay,” Steve assured him, reaching over the side of the bed to lift John into it. He was
nearly too heavy to pick up but Steve planned to continue to do it for as long as he could manage. He
deposited John in the space between him and Danny, Danny studying John.

“You want to tell us about your dream?” Danny asked.

John shrugged, pulling out his blanket to hold it close, something he only when he was upset.
“Daddy went away.”

“He went away?” Danny repeated.

“Oh hush. To fight the bad men.”

“I’m right here, Bud,” Steve assured him.

“Daddy’s not going anywhere,” Danny assured him.

“You promise?” John asked, looking up at them with something like pleading on his face.

“Of course we promise,” Steve said. “If I go anywhere, I’ll be taking you and Emma and Daddy
with me. Especially since it will be some place like New Jersey.”

“Kay,” John said. “There’s no bad men in New Jersey.”

“None that I’d be fighting with,” Steve agreed.

“That’s good,” John decided, scooting down in the bed and looking up expectantly at his fathers.
“It’s time for sleeping.”

“Yes it is,” Steve agreed, laying down next to him, Danny on John’s other side. They slept
peacefully in their John-Daddy sandwich until Emma came in wearing her tutu and tiara, announcing
it was morning and she was hungry and her men needed to do something about it. They said she was
right about pancakes being the order of the day. To their relief, John ate more than Steve and Danny
combined. When John and Emma were playing in the backyard, they agreed that the number of
pancakes John packed away was a very good sign and that if John had questions or doubts about
Steve in the future, he’d let them know. They could only hope that what John had learned didn’t
cause him any more sleepless nights. But if it did, they’d make room in their bed for him. Because
that’s what Daddies did, even ones who used to be SEALs.
As Yet Unnamed

Chapter Summary

Steve and Danny explain their ohana, especially how Zach fits in, to Henry Emery as they plan for Steve's inauguration as Governor.

“Hey John,” Emma said as she entered John’s bedroom, weaving her way through all the boxes scattered across the floor. John was sitting at his desk, studying his computer screen.

“‘S up?” he asked, not turning around. Emma couldn’t see what he was looking at but there was no way it was more important than she was. Seriously.

“You can braid my hair like this, right?” she asked, showing him a picture on her iPad. It was of a celebrity he couldn’t readily name with her hair swept up in an intricate, complicated hair style which Emma apparently expected him to duplicate.

“Seriously? Why do you need your hair to look like that?” John asked, studying the picture with a frown.

“Daddy’s inauguration,” she said in a tone that implied he should have known that. After all, their father was going to be sworn in as Governor of Hawaii in two weeks. The important decisions, like hairdos and dresses, could hardly wait until the last minute.

“Did you ask Daddy if he could do it?” John asked, returning her iPad.

“Danno’s too busy trying to stop Steve from having a come-apart.”

“I don’t understand why Daddy’s so nervous about his inauguration,” John said. “He repeats the lines, gives the speech Danno writes, and we have a big ol’ party.”

“Who knows?” Emma said, sitting on John’s bed. “Can you do it?”

“Really?” John said, frowning at her.

“You can do it,” Emma said with a charming smile and an enthusiastic nod. “You’ve always been able to do it for me.”

“Fine. I’ll try but no promises,” John said. “Did you finish your homework for this week?”

“Not yet. I need some help with my algebra. Danno said he’d look at it after supper,” Emma said. Their conversation paused as they looked over at the door to see Zachary wander in.

“Hey,” Emma said. “Did Grace bring you?”

“Chin Ho Kelly did,” Zach said, sitting on the bed next to Emma. “That’s a very becoming
“John said he’d do it for me,” Emma said, looking down at it. “It’s not every day your father is inaugurated as Governor.”

“True that,” John said.

“Are you still needing assistance with your algebra?” Zach asked Emma who nodded. “I will help if you like.”

“That’d be great. Then I’ll be done for this week. You’re still coming Christmas shopping with us tomorrow, right?” she asked him.

“I am. Steve said he won’t have time to go but Danny is taking us,” Zach said. “Are you planning to go, John?”

“Yes,” John agreed. “I don’t know why we didn’t just order all our gifts from the web. So much easier.”

“And more expensive,” Emma reminded him. “Anyway, Danno said he’d take us downtown and let us stay as long as we want. And I can get my dress for the inauguration.”

“Do you have one picked out?” Zach asked her.

“Yeah. You want to see it?” she asked.

“I would,” he agreed.

She went to the correct page on the web, showing Zach the pale blue dress she’d ordered from a local shop. It had a smattering of crystals sewn at the neckline, and sleeves of organza, making them seem transparent. There were crystals encircling the delicate cuffs of the sleeves, making it beautifully understated. “Isn’t it pretty?”

“It is quite lovely,” Zach agreed. “Alicia’s is similar.”

“We wanted them to look kind of alike but not totally,” Emma agreed. “Grace’s is kind of like it too.”

“I have not seen her dress as of yet,” Zach said, watching Emma as she stood.

“Will you help me with my math now? Then I won’t have to worry about it,” she requested. Zach nodded, following her out and into her bedroom which was also filled with boxes in various stages of being packed.

She got out her algebra book and her homework, turning to the correct page when they were settled at her desk. “Danno explained it to me twice. But I still don’t really understand,” she said, pointing at the six problems she had left to finish.

Zach explained the process of solving them, showing her where she was making her initial errors. After twenty minutes, she had done them all, smiling over at him.

“Thank you, Zach. You are a life-saver. I don’t know what any of us would do without you,” she
“You would…do,” Zach replied.

Emma studied him silently for a moment before gathering up her books and supplies to put them neatly aside. “Is something wrong? You seem…distracted.”

Zach considered her question, tilting his head to look at her. He looked very much like Stan when he did that, the same thoughtful expression on his face, his brown eyes narrowed in thought. “May I tell you something in confidence?”

“Of course,” she agreed, keeping her focus on him while making sure he wasn’t becoming self-conscious.

“I have some concerns about the change in Steve’s status,” Zach said slowly, choosing each word with measured care.

“About him being Governor?” Emma prompted as Zach tried to sort through his various, competing thoughts.

“Yes,” Zach agreed. “As I am not his real son, I will no longer have unfettered access to him and to Danny.”

“That’s not true,” Emma assured him. “Steve talked to the head of security. The security agents understand that Steve and Danny have five children.”

“We have no blood tie,” Zach said in regret.

“You know blood doesn’t determine *ohana*,” Emma reminded him. “He has no blood tie to Grace. Do you really think he doesn’t consider her his daughter?”

“She is Danny’s biological daughter,” Zach said.

“So?” Emma said. “They have five children, Zach. Do Rachel and Stan only have three children?”

“No….however, neither of them are about to be in charge of the Hawaiian government.”

“Have you talked to Steve or Danny about this?” Emma asked in sympathy.

“I have not. They have many details which require decisions. My concerns are of no importance.”

“Oh Zach,” Emma said. “That’s totally not true. They love you. That makes your concerns their problem. You need to talk to Daddy about how you feel.”

“Steve or Danny?” Zach asked.

“It doesn’t matter. Either. Both. How about if I go down and ask them to come up?”

“I could not impose.”

“It’s not an imposition. It’s important. You want to wait here?” Emma said, springing up.
“I will wait here,” Zach decided, looking uncertain still.

“‘Kay. Won’t be long,” she promised, going downstairs. It wasn’t hard to find her fathers and Chin Ho in the sunroom, arguing about...something. A menu? Could that be right? “Daddy,” she said as she entered.

“Yeah?” Steve and Danny responded, looking over at her.

“Zach is perseverating,” she said quietly.

“Oh dear,” Danny said. “We figured it was only a matter of time.”

“Can you talk to him?” she requested.

“Will I do? Or does he need Steve?” Danny asked.

“Do you have time, Daddy?” Emma asked Steve.

“Of course,” Steve agreed, standing. “Just make a decision. Let Sebastian know. And I don’t care what color the tablecloths are.”

“Navy,” Emma said, taking Steve’s seat to look at the list of arrangements still awaiting his decision, a list that had annoyed him for the past three weeks. Danny had repeatedly reminded him that the inauguration and the following ball were very important, no matter how much the “minutia” irritated him.

“Zach worried about the changes?” Danny asked her even though he knew the answer.

“Uh huh. He’s afraid he won’t be able to see you...us...Steve whenever he...you know...wants.” She glanced over at Chin who was flipping through a book of...napkin samples? “Hi Uncle Chin.”

He laughed at that, smiling over at her. “You did notice I was here.”

“I didn’t mean to be rude,” she said with a charming smile.


“Yep,” Emma said. “Where’s Auntie Kono? Isn’t she helping with all this?

“She’ll be here in half an hour,” Chin said. “Charlie had a baseball game this morning. As soon as he’s on daddy duty, she’ll be off mommy duty.”

“That’s good,” Emma said, looking at all the lists and open books and pads of paper scattered over the table. “Doesn’t Daddy have ‘people’ to take care of all this?”

“We are his ‘people’,” Danny told her with a sigh.

“Is that so he can avoid Sebastian?” Emma guessed.

“Mostly. Henry Emery will be here very shortly. He helped Sam with his ceremonies and dinners.”

“I like Henry,” Emma agreed.
“We all do,” Chin agreed.

“Go let him in, please,” Danny requested when the doorbell rang.

“He rings the bell?” Emma laughed.

“Some people still do, you know,” Danny told her as she crossed over the living room to open the door.

“Hi,” she said cheerfully when she had the door open for Henry. “Come in, please.”

“Thank you,” Henry said, entering the house as invited. He was wearing a crisp white shirt and dark blue dress slacks, yet managed to look comfortable and relaxed. He was not someone who stood on a tremendous amount of ceremony but never crossed the line. Even though he hadn’t been born in Hawaii, no one considered him a haole even if most days demanded he dressed like one.

“Thank God,” Danny said when Henry arrived in the sunroom. “This is really ridiculous. No one is going to care what color the napkins are.” This was something he would never confess in front of Steve, no matter how much he was also annoyed by the endless decisions they were being required to make.

“They won’t, Detective. But there must be napkins of some color,” Henry pointed out.

“Emma’s right. Let’s use navy,” Chin recommended.

“And cream. Everything can’t be dark blue,” Emma said, leaning against Danny’s chair. “Would any of you like something to drink?”

“I’ll have some ice tea,” Danny requested, leaning closer to Chin to see the samples of navy napkins available.

“Chin?” Emma asked.

“Tea is fine,” he agreed.

“Henry?”

“If it’s no trouble,” Henry requested. “Do you need a hand?”

“Nah. I’m good,” she said, going into the kitchen. It wasn’t long before John came in, a worried expression on his face. “What’s up?” Emma asked as she filled four glasses with ice. She got a fifth glass out for John, filling it with ice as well.

“Zach’s… uhm… not handling it especially well,” John said.

“You can’t be surprised,” she said in sympathy. “Can you get the fruit out of the fridge? They can make decisions faster with something to eat.”

“Sure,” John agreed, taking out the gigantic bowl of fresh fruit that had appeared mysteriously yesterday. He got five bowls out of the cabinet, taking them and the spoons with him to the sunroom.
“We’ll use native flowers,” Chin was saying when John entered.

“That makes the most sense. And with cream tablecloths, they will stand out,” Danny agreed, looking up at John. “I thought you were Steve.”

“Nope. Not as far as I know. He has a few years and a few inches on me yet,” John said, pulling a chair up to the table. “He’s still talking to Zach. I couldn’t help but hear so I came down.”

“Thank you,” Danny said. “Do I need to go up?”

“Nope. Steve will call if he needs you,” John said to Danny’s nods.

“If I’m not being too forward,” Henry said softly. “May I inquire as to their…relationship? It’s very strong and…unusual.”

“Of course you can ask,” Danny assured him. “You’re about to become a part of our extended family. It will help you to understand how our ohana works.”

Henry nodded, accepting a bowl of fruit from John.

“Rachel knew when she was carrying Zach that something was different,” Danny began. “Not necessarily wrong but different from when she was pregnant with Grace or Alicia.”

“She said Zach would kick every time he heard Steve talk,” Chin added. “Otherwise he was very quiet.”

“The doctor assured her the sonogram showed a perfectly normal, healthy boy. She wasn’t worried about Zach’s health as much as something she couldn’t readily name,” Danny added.

“Tell her about the first time Steve saw Zach,” Emma insisted.

“I will if you’ll stop talking with your mouth full,” Danny scolded mildly, wiping a stray drop from her chin.

“Sorry,” she said with a disarming smile when she’d swallowed.

“Animal, just like your father,” Danny mumbled affectionately, shaking his head.

“Daddy,” she protested, leaning away from him and his encroaching napkin.

“Steve and I were in New Jersey with John when Zach was born,” Danny said, picking up his story after Emma’s interruption. “We got back when Zach was ten days old. We would have been back sooner but someone kept running outside into the snow without his coat and caught cold.”

John shrugged innocently at the reminder. He’d been too young to remember evading his fathers’ efforts to make sure he was warmly dressed when he went outside but he was periodically reminded of it.

“Stan called to tell us that Zach had ten fingers and ten toes. The pictures they sent showed that he had Stan’s brown eyes and Rachel’s porcelain complexion. They also showed a baby with a very serious expression. Steve said he looked like Yoda, something we never told Zach, by the way,” he said, giving John and Emma the evil eye for good measure.
“We never repeated it,” John insisted it. “Zach admitted he looked like Yoda when he saw the pictures himself.”

“Sure,” Danny said, remaining skeptical even after all these years. “Zach looked old and wizardly.”

“And very serious,” Chin added. “When Malia and I visited, we were…surprised by his….well.” Chin stopped. “We finally decided it was his inner focus.”

“Inner focus?” Henry repeated.

“All babies are internally focused the few weeks of life. Zach’s focus seemed to be… considering us,” Danny said, with a familiar wave of his hand. “It’s hard to describe if you never witnessed it.”

“That changed the second he saw Steve,” Chin said.

Danny nodded in agreement. “Steve caught John’s cold so it was another week before he felt safe visiting Zach. As soon as Steve leaned over his crib, Zach wiggled and gurgled and sounded like… well… most infants sound when they see one of their parents. No one had elicited that reaction until Steve. Not Rachel, Stan or Alicia. Grace came the closest but Steve got Zach’s first intentional reaction. Rachel looked surprised and envious at the same time. But mostly she was relieved.”

“Zach didn’t smile until he was twelve weeks old,” Chin said when Danny stopped. “And it was Steve who got his first smile.”

“Were the Edwards worried about the delay?” Henry asked.

“A little,” Danny confirmed. “The doctor said eight weeks is a usual benchmark for an infant’s first real smile but it’s not an absolute. Zach ate and slept on a semi-regular schedule. He responded to our voices so the doctor wasn’t especially worried. Rachel was the most concerned, as you’d expect. Alicia and Grace had been much more interactive at that age.” He glanced at Emma and John who were absorbed in studying and quietly discussing the sheets of proposed menus for the Governor’s Ball. They’d heard this story often enough to no longer be interested in listening to it.

“Once Zach was verbal, it was obvious that he is smarter than any of us,” Chin said with a proud smile. “He could barely talk when he started to figure out how the smart table worked. He’d try to pull a chair over to it so he could watch me. We finally got him a safety step stool so he could see the whole table.”

“He reprogrammed my phone when he was four,” Danny said.

“Reprogrammed it?” Henry asked.

“Well, fixed it,” Danny had to admit. “We were investigating some internet con men. I accidentally got caught on their website and they sent a virus to my phone. Every time I tried to make a call, I ended up dialing someone in the Philippines. I got texts from hundreds of people I didn’t know. I was complaining about it at dinner and Zach asked to see. I gave him my phone and fifteen minutes later, it was working like a charm.”

“I couldn’t figure out what they had done,” Chin admitted. “I thought we were going to need to erase Danny’s phone and start over. But Zach…” He shook his head.
Their conversation was interrupted by Kono’s arrival. She brought her sunny smile with her as always, getting alohas from everyone.

“Well, we were explaining to Henry who Zach is,” Danny told Kono as she sat at the table between Emma and Chin.

“It’s important that he knows,” she said with a very serious nod. “Did you tell him about Zach’s first day of school?”

“Not yet,” Danny said, reaching over for the fruit bowl so Kono could help herself. “Let’s see… Grace was 16 on Zach’s first day of school. We tried not to make a big deal of Zach going to kindergarten but in truth it was a huge milestone. He’d been going to half-day daycare to make sure he would be ready for all the interaction of kindergarten. He did pretty well at daycare.”

“It helped that Emma was there,” Kono added.

“And John was there when he first started,” Chin said.

“But kindergarten was going to be different,” Danny said, remembering everyone’s efforts not to over-play it and make Zachary nervous. No one knew quite what was going to happen and had their proverbial fingers crossed, praying for the best.

“What happened?” Henry prompted quietly.

“It didn’t go well,” Danny said in something of an understatement. “Rachel walked him into school, like she had with Alicia and we had with John. She went with him to his classroom and he stopped. Stopped in his tracks in the hallway. Rachel said he nearly broke her fingers, he was holding to her so tightly. She said he was gasping for breathe and his face was as pale as the cream walls of the hall. She coaxed him into finally telling her what was wrong. Turns out, he was terrified by the idea of being left at school without any of his ohana. But he couldn’t articulate it to any of us.”

“Until he nearly broke down in the hallway,” Chin said in sympathy.

“Rachel felt terrible. She thought we’d prepared Zach but we missed some of the signs. She called and we went to the school, with the lights on. The only person Zach would talk to was Steve. Steve talked to him for half an hour, just the two of them. Zach finally promised to go into the classroom if Steve stayed. So he did. Steve spent the entire morning in kindergarten. The other kids thought he was a parent-helper and the teacher didn’t tell them any differently. We’d prepared her for Zach so she didn’t bat an eye at Steve staying. The next day, Steve took Zach to school and walked him to the door. Zach went in like a champion, then telling us everything they’d done when Steve and I picked him up at final bell. After that, he didn’t have any trouble going to school.”

“What had Steve said?” Henry asked in a low tone.

“That it was okay to be scared. Everybody was scared sometimes and getting past it was the most important part of any experience. Somehow knowing that Steve had been scared in his life made it okay for Zach to be worried. If Steve was scared, it had to be normal,” Danny said with a smile.

“If Steve went to the moon, Zach would go with him,” John added.

“He’d find a way,” Kono agreed.
“Hi Zach,” Steve said when he was standing right outside Emma’s bedroom. Zach was still at her desk, twisted to watch the door.

“Steve,” Zachary said with a tiny sigh. “I’m sorry to interrupt your meeting.”

“It’s not a meeting, per se,” Steve assured him. He crossed over to where Zach sat, crouching in front of him. Zach looked worried, but as though he didn’t know how to handle the feeling. It was a common expression to be on his face, one Steve regretted putting there. “Tell me what’s going on.”

“Nothing is happening,” Zach said, his dark brows furrowing beneath the rim of his glasses. “I was considering the changes which are about to occur.”

“That doesn’t qualify as nothing,” Steve told him, resting his hand on Zach’s knee. He could feel Zach’s slight trembling beneath his hand. That meant things were worse than any of them had guessed. “Tell me how I can help settle things in your mind.”

“Once you are governor, once you’ve taken office, you will have security surrounding you,” Zach said carefully considering his words.

“Not 24/7. Not in the residence. There will be security at the doors but it won’t be anything like the President has. The times Sam has come over, was his security detail at the dinner table?” Steve asked.

“No,” Zach said as he considered the scenario Steve described. “He was alone with us.”

“Yes he was. When Danny and I go to his office, there is never security with us.”

“You were Five-0. Security would be redundant,” Zach said.

“The point is that security won’t be restrictive to you or Alicia. Not to Emma, John, or Grace. I won’t be guarded by an entire army who won’t bother to learn the names of my family members.”

“I’m not biologically family,” Zach said, still not convinced that he wouldn’t be denied access to Steve.

“You are family, Zach. As much as Emma or John or Grace. Blood doesn’t make family. Love does,” Steve reminded him. He thought he saw a little thawing of Zach’s concerns. “When you broke your arm and Danny and I had to come to school to get you, did it matter that we weren’t your birth fathers?”

“No,” Zach said.

“When John needed stitches in his lip after that football game, did the hospital refuse to treat him because Stan had taken him there?”

“No,” Zach repeated.

“Because we’re family. I’ll be busy once I’m in office. We all know that. But I won’t be locked away, unavailable to my family. You know we designated one of the bedrooms at the residence as yours. It already has extra power strips for your computers.”
“John showed me last week,” Zach confirmed.

“Then what has made you think you won’t be allowed the same entry into the residence as Emma or John?” Steve asked, studying Zach’s face. He was beginning to relax, processing all that Steve had said in his own way, looking at it from every possible angle.

“I heard Sebastian talking to Leon,” Zach said, measuring each word. “Sebastian said you have only three children.”

“Sebastian is wrong. I talked to Leon. He understands I have five children.”

“Why did Sebastian say that?”

“I don’t know, Buddy. He says a lot of things I don’t understand. Sam told me he doesn’t understand half the things Sebastian says.”

“Is that true?” Zach asked with a forming smile.

“My lips to God’s ears,” Steve said, getting a tiny laugh from Zach.

“Danny has infected your speech.”

“As I am all too aware,” Steve agreed. “Leon has been head of security for Sam for seven years. He knows all about our somewhat unconventional ohana. You have no reason to be concerned that being governor will limit me from my family.”

Zach nodded, studying Steve with a familiar intensity.

“What? What’s still troubling you?” Steve coaxed, waiting for Zach to consider his question.

“Emma and John are returning to school,” Zach said. Even though there was no verbal question mark at the end of the sentence, Steve heard it anyway.

“Yes they are,” Steve said. “The temporary home-schooling is only to accommodate our crazy schedule right now. The school agreed it was easier for them to be here for the time being. They’ll be joining you back at regular school as soon as Christmas break is over.”

Zach nodded, his expression easier.

“Is there anything else you need to know?” Steve asked, still studying Zach. It often took some time for Zach to sort through all of his conflicting thoughts before he was able to verbalize them. Being coaxed to explain generally made it easier for him to do so.

“If I want to see you…or Danny,” Zach said, tilting his head slightly to look at Steve.

“I can’t promise I’ll have time,” Steve confirmed. “But Danny doesn’t have an official job as of last month. And if there is any way I can talk to you when you need me, I will.”

Zach nodded at that. “Are you worried? About becoming Governor?”

Steve gave that question the consideration it was due. “I have some concerns,” Steve admitted. “It’s
natural with such a big change coming to all of us. And Danny has said I can’t punch people into doing what I want them to do.”

Zach had a half smile at that. “You would not punch a law-abiding citizen.”

“I have been tempted,” Steve said with a laugh. “And I may have threatened a few. Mostly Danny stops me.”

“It is a very big job.”

“Yes it is,” Steve agreed. “But I won’t be doing it alone. I have aides like Henry Emery to assist me. Having Kono as Lieutenant Governor will also help a lot. As will the support of my family.”

Zach nodded, looking away from Steve and out the window. “I will miss coming here.”

“We all will,” Steve agreed. “We’re spoiled with having our own slice of ocean. But at least the mansion has a pool.”

“Yes,” Zach agreed.

“Anything else?” Steve asked, needing to make sure.

“I don’t believe so. I will be going shopping with Danny tomorrow.”

“Good. I’m sorry I can’t go. But John and Emma will be there so you’ll get a lot done,” Steve said.

“Yes,” Zach repeated.

“Do you need any money?” Steve offered.

“I have the money mom and dad gave me and Alicia,” Zach said.

“All right. Danny can give you more tomorrow if you need it.”

Zach nodded. “Is Alicia here?”

“No, not yet. John and Emma are downstairs. I think I heard Kono come in,” Steve said, studying Zach carefully. “Do you want Chin to run you home?”

“Not at the moment,” Zach said. “I will come downstairs and join the others.”

“There are a lot of us downstairs,” Steve warned lightly, standing as Zach did.

“If I am overwhelmed, I will go out onto the lanai,” Zach said, following Steve out and downstairs.

“Any fruit left?” Steve asked as he pulled up a chair to the table.

“Hello Kono, Agent Emery,” Zach said as he sat between Steve and John.

“Hello Buddy,” Kono said with her beautiful smile just for him.

“Hi Zach,” Henry said with a smile. “Please call me Henry. That’s what families do.”
Zach nodded once, studying the older man. “Family.”

“Exactly,” Emma agreed cheerfully. “John and I are going for a swim, Zach. You want to come?”

“I will,” Zach agreed, following them into the backyard.

Steve and Danny exchanged a glance, Steve nodding to indicate that things were okay. Maybe not great yet but they were okay. And that was a step in the right direction.
How Do You Family?

Chapter Summary

Grace is due to have her first child in less than a month. She seeks fatherly advice about some of the doubts she is having, learning they are natural.

Chapter Notes

Can you tell how happy I am that my muses have come out of their hiding places? I'm sorry I've been so absent. Hopefully my muses will hang around and we'll produce more stories. (Maybe not so rapidly but more regularly.)

“How do you family?” Steve asked out of the blue three weeks before the date of their wedding.

“What?” Danny asked in return, looking over his shoulder at Steve where he was still sitting at the table, thoughtfully sipping his coffee.

“Family,” Steve repeated slowly and distinctly. “I don’t know how to do it.”

Danny would have laughed if Steve didn’t look so sincerely concerned. “Family isn’t a verb, you know,” Danny said, stalling as he dried his hands and sat next to his big lug.

Steve shrugged, interlacing their fingers. “I never had one, really. I thought I did for a while but that turned out not to be true.”

“You love Grace, Babe. She adores you. That’s what a family is.”

“What if I screw it up? What do I know about being anyone’s father?” Steve asked, not able to meet Danny’s eyes. It was not an easy confession to make, that he had some concerns about being joined into Danny’s family. He was scared he’d make a mistake that even Danny couldn’t forgive.

“You will screw up, Babe. We all do. I did. I do. Rachel does. The secret to parenthood is that it’s a lot of trial and even more error. You aren’t going to let Grace play in the street or eat poisoned berries.”

“Poisoned berries?” Steve repeated, looking up at Danny’s blue eyes. They grounded him in a way that he thought he’d never achieve.

“Poisoned berries,” Danny repeated with great sincerity. “After she was born, I was obsessed with the idea that if I let her out of my sight, she’d eat berries that turned out to be poisonous. How I got hung up on that particular scenario is a mystery. But Rachel finally smacked me every time I brought up the subject.”

Steve had to laugh at his story. It was too bizarre not to be true. “I know which berries are safe to eat.
“Just don’t let her eat any berries and we’ll be fine,” Danny promised, kissing him in assurance. “Now, come help me finish the dishes so we can go have our engagement picture taken.”

-D-0-0-0-0-

“Danno?” Grace called when she was in the family living room of the mansion. She’d talked to him earlier and he said he’d be waiting for her. Maybe he was in his office, she decided, waddling down the hall toward it.

“Hey Monkey,” Steve said as he emerged from Danny’s tiny office. Grace wasn’t sure how he even could fit into the office, as crowded as it was with files and boxes that Danny had to sort through. It had been that way from the day Steve was inaugurated Governor three years earlier.

“Hey Daddy,” Grace said, smiling up at him. “How did you squeeze into Danno’s office?”

“I jumped his desk,” he teased, kissing her forehead when she stood right in front of him. She was glad he was tall enough to lean over her extended belly, certain Danny couldn’t have kissed her. At least not until the baby was born in three or four more weeks.

“You’d have to,” she agreed. “Is Danno here?”

“Not right this minute. Emma forgot her cheerleading shoes so he ran them to school. He told me to tell you he’d be right back,” Steve said, studying her in a way that was familiar to her. She was glad she wasn’t a suspect in a crime because when that expression turned on her, she’d confess to anything, including things she’d never done. “What’s up?”

Bless him for trying. Grace knew he was going for casual but was missing but a nautical mile. Because Steve was all focused energy. “I wanted to talk to Danno,” she began with a sigh.

“I guessed that,” he responded with one of his more patient fatherly smiles. “Will I do?”

She considered his question, deciding he might actually be able to help even more than Danny could. She nodded, accepting his hand to follow him into the sitting room next to his and Danny’s bedroom. It wasn’t as big or as heavily traveled as the larger family room.

“What’s going on?” Steve prompted as she knew he would.

She studied him as he did the same to her. He was still as fiercely handsome as the day she had shyly shook his hand at the football game, the one that ended so disastrously. He looked older and she knew she certainly did. There was an equal amount of grey and black in his hair, the silver making him distinguished. Danny railed against his blond strands going grey but Steve accepted it with grace as he had learned to do with most things he knew were not within his control.

“When you married Danno,” she started, not sure she even wanted to finish. But this question had been troubling her for a couple of months. Amou was trying to help but she couldn’t tell him her deepest fear. You could tell your father but not the father of your child.

“When I married you and Danno,” Steve prompted.
She glanced at his changeable eyes, seeing their green as the color of love, rarely seen outside of interactions with their ohana. “Were you worried about…you know…” She knew he didn’t know and took a deep breath as his forehead furrowed even deeper. “Did you worry about becoming my father?” she finally said in a rush.

She was surprised when he laughed softly at the question. “Danno never told you?”

“Told me what?” she asked, feeling instantly lighter because Steve had laughed. His laughter could lift the house off the ground if they ever found a way to bottle it.

“Three weeks before we got married, I asked Danny how you family,” Steve said, reaching for her hand. She looked at her small hand in his oversized one, still calloused after all this years. They were hands capable of defending a nation and wiping away his children’s tears.

“Really?” she said. But she knew he wouldn’t lie about something so important.

“I was worried I’d screw it up,” Steve confirmed. “That I’d make a mistake Danny couldn’t forgive. We weren’t planning on having any more children and the idea that I might hurt you in some unfathomable way terrified me.”

“What’d he say?” she asked, smiling in return to his.

“That parenting is trial and error. Everyone screws up,” he reminded her.

“You and Danno did a really good job,” she assured him.

“Emma is far too stubborn and John is too self-determined. And he still won’t eat carrots,” Steve said.

“Isn’t stubborn and self-determined the same thing?” she teased, knowing it would make him laugh.

“I suppose it is,” Steve agreed. “I was worried because I didn’t have a regular family to gauge my parenting by. Why are you so worried, Monkey?”

“My ohana isn’t exactly regular,” she pointed out, able to put the love she felt for him in her smile. “Perfect, yes. Regular, no.”

“True,” Steve had to agree. “But we’ll all be here to help you and Amou. You aren’t going into this parenting thing alone. You have your entire ohana to depend on.”

“Yes,” she agreed, hearing all that he was saying.

“Have you told Amou how you feel, about your concerns?” Steve asked in his gentlest ‘how can I help my child the most’ tone.

She shook her head, looking away from him. She didn’t deserve his sympathy. She was having doubts about her ability to be a mother. Didn’t that make her some kind of… mutant?

“Everyone has doubts, Grace-face,” Steve told her, holding more tightly to her hand. “Everyone. Kono still worries that she and Charlie will make a huge mistake. I was sure I was going to break John when he was born. By the time Emma came into our lives, I could feed, diaper and burp Emma
and Zach at the same time I was tying John’s shoes.”

She nodded at that. “I don’t remember you being worried about John. You looked like a pro from the first day.”

He laughed, making her smile. “You may have been convinced I knew what I was doing. But I was terrified. Danny kept assuring me that I wasn’t going to drop him.”

“So I’m not a horrible person for being… unsure?” she had to ask even though his expression gave her the answer.

“It makes you normal. Exceptional in every way but normal to have these doubts,” he promised her.

“I don’t feel so exceptional. I can’t concentrate in court. Judge McCadden had to ask me twice yesterday if I had anything further to say.”

“You know he has to understand,” Steve assured her. “If it weren’t for this case, you’d be on leave already.”

“You and Danny won’t be mad if we lose, right?” she asked.

“Of course we won’t be mad. You’ll have to tell Chin but otherwise you’ll be in the clear,” he teased.

“Maybe I’ll be in labor when the verdict is returned,” she said hopefully, rubbing her belly as the baby kicked. “I’m ready for her to be born.

“I’ve heard the last few weeks are the hardest,” he said, putting his warm hand on her stomach. “We’re very excited to meet our granddaughter even if Danny still clams he’s too young to be a grandfather.”

She laughed, the familiar complaint always funny to her. She knew Steve and Danny were beside themselves with excitement about welcoming another member to their *ohana.

“Are you still arguing about names?” Steve asked.

“Arguing may be too strong,” she said. “I still want to name her Alania but Amou doesn’t want to impose his mother on her.”

“It isn’t an imposition,” Steve said as she knew he would.

“I told Amou that John never felt it was a burden.” She had to shrug. True to the clichés, she’d married someone almost as stubborn as two of her three fathers. Not that Stan couldn’t dig his heels when he’d decided something but he still couldn’t hold a candle to Steve and Danny when it came to being hard-headed.

“Alania Edwards Palakiko is a beautiful name,” Steve said.

“I think so as well,” she said. “Hopefully we’ll make a decision before she’s born. I’d hate to have her birth certificate say ‘Baby Girl Palakiko’.”

“That would be unfortunate. But I’m pretty sure the Governor has the power to make a change if it
“comes to that,” he assured her.

“Probably,” she said. “If I didn’t feel so muddle-headed, I would probably know.”

“You aren’t muddle-headed. You’re pregnant. It takes all your energy to bake a baby.”

“I guess so,” she said.

“You aren’t convinced that your worries are normal,” Steve coaxed. She knew he would but had hoped in this instance that she would be wrong about his determination.

“You and Danno are always so…certain. You know exactly what you are doing,” she said, trying to convey the last of her doubts to him.

“It only looks that way from the outside. Do you know Danno was convinced you were going to die from poisonous berries?”

“Poisonous berries?” she repeated, studying him to see if he was kidding.

“I don’t know how long it lasted. But he told me he obsessed over it.”

“He never told me that,” Grace said, feeling a swell of affection for both her fathers – Danny for his overwhelming love and Steve for his patience with Danny’s need to control everything in his power.

“And look how long it took before he let you learn to surf. I was sure I’d have to sneak over to U of H to teach you.”

“He can be a little over-protective,” she had to admit. When she was younger, it had felt confining. Now that she was about to become a mother, she understood every one of his worries.

“A little?” Steve teased.

“A lot,” she admitted. “Thank goodness for you. For all he says you’re a control freak, he’s the one that could barely let me out of his sight.”

“See,” Steve said, laughing. “We all make mistakes. When I expressed doubts about becoming your father, Danny told me that love makes a family and when it’s in abundant supply, everything else takes care of itself.”

“Right,” she said, feeling more sure of herself. “Love.”

“You need to tell Amou, Babe. Don’t you think he’s feeling some of the same doubts?”

“Probably,” she said. “I don’t want him to think I regret our child.”

“He won’t think that. I can promise he’ll understand,” Steve told her. Even though it wasn’t a promise within his power to keep, she felt his certainty and it calmed the last of her fears.

“Thank you, Daddy. I feel so much better now,” she said sincerely, meeting his caring eyes and seeing even more reassurances there.

“That’s what fathers are for,” he pointed out.
“I know you must be busy,” she said, trying to stand up. But the baby made her movements awkward and she wasn’t able to gain her feet until Steve stood and took her hand.

“I was going down to eat lunch. I don’t have any appointments if you want to stay,” he invited, a hopeful look in his eye. She was accustom to seeing it and it only just occurred to him that he still felt a tiny amount of insecurity about his place in her life. How was that possible? She couldn’t love him any more. Huh.

“I’d love to eat with you,” she said with as a bright smile as she had to offer. “First I need to powder my nose. If would help if she wasn’t playing soccer with my bladder.”

“Mary said John did the same thing,” he said.

He was still waiting for her in the same spot when she emerged from the half bath. “You’re going to need to have this bathroom enlarged,” she said, earning his laugh. “Seriously, Daddy. I barely fit.”

“I’ll look into right after lunch,” he promised, his hand light on her lower back as he walked her out and down into the family dining room. Danny was already there, talking to Lolhol. He turned when they entered, smiling at her.

“Hey Monkey. I thought you weren’t here yet,” he explained, coming to her side to kiss her cheek.

“I’m been here a few minutes talking to Daddy,” she said, smiling over at Steve.

“Why do I have the feeling that isn’t necessarily good news?” Danny asked, his teasing tone clear to Grace.

“We were having a father/daughter talk,” Steve told him before turning to chat with Lolhol.

“Is everything okay?” Danny asked her, much as she knew he would.

“It’s fine, Danno. Did Emma get her shoes?”

“I told her last night to put them in her backpack. But she didn’t do it,” he said, shaking his head with familiar fatherly disapproval.

“Why didn’t Henry or Leon take her shoes to her?” Grace asked as she sat in the chair Danny pulled out for her.

“I wasn’t busy and it gave me an excuse to escape from Governor SEAL for half an hour,” Danny claimed.

“Like you want to escape from him,” Grace said with a laugh. She knew as well as the rest of their ohana that Steve and Danny were happily attached at the hip and wouldn’t have it any other way.”

“Tsunami plans,” Danny complained, giving Steve his patented evil eye. “He wants me to restructure the tsunami emergency plans.”

“You’re a natural, Danno,” Grace said, having the evil eye turned on her. “You know you are.”

“See,” Steve said, looking vaguely smug. “I told you.”
“Don’t turn our eldest daughter against me,” Danny warned. But Grace knew there was no heat behind the words.

“Never, Danno,” Grace assured him, following the familiar script.

“How are you feeling?” Danny asked her, more serious now. He studied her with all-knowing eyes, seeing everything she did and did not want him to know. Just like always.

“Tip top and Bristol fashion,” she said, knowing he’d shake his head in supposed dismay at the naval term. “She’s on schedule to come into this crazy ohana in three and a half weeks.”

“Does Governor SEAL need to talk to Prosecuting Attorney Kaneshiro about giving you leave now?” Danny asked.

“Not yet,” she assured him. “Closing arguments start tomorrow. I can be excused as soon as the jury convenes.”

“All right,” he said. She wasn’t sure he was convinced but Lolhol chose that moment to bring in their lunch, delicious as always.

She told them she had to leave once lunch was over. She would have preferred to stay and bask in the love of her fathers but she had several appointments in the afternoon. The office had excused her for the morning, court being temporarily recessed. Her boss, Keith Kaneshiro, was worried about her over-doing it, not just because he knew her fathers would kill him if anything happened to her or her child.

She promised them that she would take care of herself and told Steve she would talk to Amou. She knew that Steve would tell Danny everything they discussed. If she hadn’t wanted him to, she’d have asked that he keep it between the two of them. But Danny had a right to know. He could never love her less for feeling natural insecurities.

~0~

“I know you’re dying to know,” Steve said that night as they were undressing to get into bed.

“I don’t have the slightest idea what you could be referring to,” Danny claimed, placing his shirt and pants in the hamper with far more attention then they were due.

“Okay,” Steve said. “I won’t tell you what Grace and I talked about.”

“Did she tell you not to?” Danny asked. He would never breach her confidence, as much as the curiosity was eating him up from the inside.

“Maybe. What is it worth to you?” Steve asked as he stretched out on their bed, not a stitch on.

“Oh no, no, no,” Danny protested. “You are not seducing me into convincing you to tell me what you discussed with Grace.”

“What?”
“Shut up,” Danny resorted to, climbing in bed with his goof when he was also naked. “Tell me and I’ll make it worth your while.”

“I thought you just told me not to talk dirty before talking about Grace.”

“I did no such thing,” Danny said.

“It was a liberal interpretation of what you were trying to say,” Steve said, leaning against the headboard next to Danny who was trying to look stern.

“Shut up and tell me,” Danny demanded.

“I can’t do both,” Steve pointed out because he knew it would annoy Danny. Danny sighed, giving him another, worse version of the evil eye.

“Grace wanted to know how to family,” Steve said, relenting and telling him the truth.

“Oh,” Danny said, looking worried.

“She was mostly scared that it made her unfit to be a mother that she has concerns.”

“They are natural,” Danny said.

“She knows that now,” Steve said, reaching for Danny’s hand to entwine their fingers.

“That’s what you meant by ‘tell Amou’, ” Danny said.

“Uh huh. You have to know he has some of the same doubts. Although I doubt he’s obsessed with poison berries,” Steve laughed.

“Please, please in the name of all that is holy, tell me you did not tell Grace about the berries,” Danny said.

“I could tell you that,” Steve teased, watching the emotions that crossed Danny’s face before it settled on perturbed. “She thought it was adorable.”

“I told you to never repeat it,” Danny said.

“I don’t recall any such order. And it helped her to know we were both pretty clueless with our first children.”

“Yeah,” Danny said. “I forgive you only because it helped Grace.”

“I knew you would,” Steve said. “Can I kiss you now or is it still too soon?”

“You are such an animal,” Danny claimed, kissing any retort out of his mouth. Because they had figured out long ago how to family. It was all about love.
Faux Wool and Other Mysteries of the Universe

Chapter Summary

A chapter of Steve and Danny being married and what that entails, what with the various and sundry children they call theirs. No real plot to speak of, as is so often the case.

Chapter Notes

This chapter was inspired by and dedicated to kaige68 because She Is My Queen.

“Hey Babe. What are you doing?” Danny asked Steve as he entered his office.

Steve barely glanced away from the computer screen which he was studying with all the intensity he could muster, which was quite a bit as Danny knew all too well.

“Babe?” Danny said, leaning against the arm of the chair he’d always thought was a little pretentious, even if it did reside in the Governor’s office. But really. It could house a family of four right by itself. Add the desk in and you could shelter most of the residents of Oahu. “Did someone threaten to steal all of Hawaii’s guns and explosive devices?”

“What?” Steve said, finally tearing his eyes from the screen. “What are you going on about?”

“I asked what you are doing. It’s nearly 7:00. We expected you at the residence half an hour ago.”

“Oh,” Steve said with a start of guilt. “Did you feed the kids?”

“There are no kids to feed,” Danny said.

“None?” Steve asked with an air of confusion.

“None. Emma is at Dancy’s. John is coming home tomorrow instead of tonight,” Danny reminded him.

“Zach?”

“At home because Alicia has the night off,” Danny said. “Are you going to come upstairs and eat or should I have Henry bring something down for you?”

“No, no,” Steve said with a shake of his head. “I’m coming.”

“What is so fascinating about this site?” Danny asked, leaning closer to see the computer more clearly.
“Emma needs a new coat before we go to Jersey. I asked her to find one she likes so we can order it for her. She sent me this link,” Steve said pointing at the page.

“Okay,” Danny said slowly, wondering why winter coats were suddenly so fascinating to Steve.

“She likes this dark blue one,” Steve continued, pointing at a stylish blue coat that Danny thought would be simply adorable on Emma.

“It’s nice,” Danny said. “If she likes it, why haven’t you already ordered it for her?”

“It says it’s made of faux wool,” Steve said, pointing at the description of the coat beneath the photos.

“Faux wool?” Danny repeated, looking closer. “What the hell is faux wool?”

“I don’t know,” Steve said. “I understand faux fur. But wool?”

“Does that mean acrylic? Polyester? And why not use real wool? Sheep aren’t harmed when they are sheared.”

“Right?” Steve said. “Does PETA oppose shearing sheep now? Is that a new thing?”

“Not that I know of,” Danny said. “But I guess anything is possible with them. Nothing they do surprises me after their ‘animal companion’ campaign.”

“Yeah. I guess pet is way too demeaning,” Steve said.

“The other consideration is if faux wool will be as warm as non-faux wool.”

“I don’t see how it could be,” Steve said. “But if this is the coat she wants, we’ll order it. We’ll only be in New Jersey a few days.”

“Thanksgiving back home. Never thought I’d see the day I’d convince you,” Danny said, smiling up at Steve when he finally left his gargantuan chair.

Steve shrugged, returning the smile. “John playing against Rutgers might have a little to do with it.”

“Just a little,” Danny claimed, holding his finger and thumb less than an inch apart. “Did you order her coat?”

“I will tomorrow. I want to double check with her, that she knows it’s not wool in the traditional sense.”

“Text her,” Danny recommended as they went up the back stairs to the residence. “She may not come home until Wednesday.”

“Oh?” Steve said, taking out his phone to send the recommended message.

“She and Dancy are working on their senior project. Although why you thought letting them try to count the humpbacks was a good idea I’ll never know. They haven’t started migrating yet.”
“They will soon. It will be good for them to try. Especially since Dancy wants to major in marine biology,” Steve said.

“And you just happen to have an entire governmental agency dedicated to sea life in all its divergences.”

“Yep,” Steve agreed happily as he and Danny entered the dining room. Henry was already sitting at the table, talking with Lolhol. Both men stood as Steve and Danny entered, Lolhol going into the kitchen. “Sorry I’m late.”

“Not a problem, sir,” Henry assured him. “Gave me time to double check with Lolhol about the food for the Halloween party.”

Steve groaned softly at the reminder. Danny frowned at his reaction.

“We have discussed this at some length so I don’t know why you’re pretending you have any choice,” Danny reminded him sternly. “It’s a tradition. And the money goes to local charities that depend on the revenue.”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah,” Steve said, trying to sound less resigned and more enthusiastic. It wasn’t that he objected to the Halloween party per se. It was having to dress up and open the mansion to the guests and playing host and… Okay, he did object to the party but readily acknowledged he had no choice in the matter. “Is the food ordered?”

“It is,” Henry assured him. “The event planners will be here Friday at noon. That will give them enough time to transform the mansion into an appropriately creepy lair by Saturday evening.”

“The children of the staff and the school kids will come trick or treating Saturday at 1:00,” Danny reminded him. “Are you dressing up?”

“I guess I should,” Steve said reluctantly. “You are, aren’t you?”

“Yes,” Danny confirmed, Henry also nodding. “We have our costumes. You need to try yours on to make sure the Captain America costume fits correctly but not too well.”

“Right,” Steve sighed. “Did you try on your Iron Man?”

“Yep. Fits perfectly,” Danny said.

“Is Captain Grover going to come as Nick Fury?” Henry asked. As for Henry, he’d readily agreed to be Phil Coulson, the transformation not too much of a stretch.

“He said he was. Kono has her Black Widow costume already. Charlie is thrilled to be Thor. I think he drew the line at the blond wig though,” Danny said.

“Emma is happy with her Peggy Carter costume. She especially likes the fedora,” Henry added. “John reminded us to take plenty of pictures since he’ll be in California.”

“You can be sure we will,” Danny said with a laugh. “Grace said Amou is super excited about being Loki. I think it’s the cape and horns.”

“Are you sure Grace won’t be Hawkeye?” Steve asked with a small frown.
“No,” Danny said. “She said she was fine being Maria Hill. Doesn’t find her boring at all.”

“Okay then,” Steve said. “No Hulk, huh?”

“Zach may come as Bruce Banner but he isn’t sure yet.”

“Of course,” Steve agreed. “And Alicia?”

“She has rehearsal,” Henry said. “She said she was going to try and come for the party but isn’t sure she’ll make it. If she can, she has permission to wear one of the older tutus in the collection.”

“That will be lovely,” Steve said with a nod before smiling up at Lolhol who returned with a tray loaded with bowls and platters. “We have enough candy for the school kids?”

“I ordered it six weeks ago,” the cook assured him. “I got plenty. Been under lock and key since it arrived.”

“That’s reassuring,” Danny said. “Also explains Kamekona’s more frequent visits.”

“We have prizes for best costumes?” Steve asked.

“We do,” Lolhol said, surveying the table to make sure everything was in place. “Anything else you need?”

“Eat with us,” Danny said, waving at the many empty chairs that were usually full of family and friends.

“For a few,” Lolhol said, sitting next to Henry. “I talked to Kono about the costume prizes. We found some nice trophies at a little shop downtown. They are donating them as a community service.”

“And we can accept them?” Steve asked Henry as he passed him the chicken.

“It’s not a problem,” Henry assured him.

“What do you know about faux wool?” Danny asked Henry with a laugh.

“Faux wool?” Henry repeated, looking as confused as Lolhol did. “There is such a thing?”

“Emma needs a new coat. The one she likes is faux wool,” Steve explained.

“It can’t be as warm as regular wool,” Lolhol observed.

“That’s what we were thinking,” Danny said. “Do you have a wool coat?” he asked Henry.

“I do,” Henry assured him. “I took it to the dry cleaners last week when I took yours and the Governor’s.”

“Don’t we have people for that?” Danny asked.

“I am your people,” Henry said with a laugh.
“Right,” Danny agreed. “Did Steve tell you that Patricia gave her two weeks notice today?”

Henry looked from Danny to Steve. “Your secretary, Patricia, is leaving?”

“You didn’t know?” Steve asked, his fork halfway to his mouth.

“Know?” Henry repeated.

“She’s pregnant,” Danny said. “How did you not know? We thought you knew everything.”

“I didn’t know about Patricia,” Henry admitted.

“I told her we’d accommodate the baby. But she and Jesse talked about it and decided that Patricia will stay home full time,” Steve said in regret.

“Oh,” Henry said. “Well. Do you have someone in mind to replace her?”

“No,” Steve sighed. “Do you?”

“I’ll consider it,” Henry said thoughtfully.

“She said she’d wait until we’ve found a new secretary,” Steve said. “I really wish she’d stay on at least part time.”

“I can understand that, sir,” Henry said.

“I can understand why she wants to stay home,” Danny added. “How will you find anyone who can put up with Governor SEAL the way she does?”

Henry laughed, careful not to look over at Steve. “It will be a challenge,” he claimed. “Do you want the job?”

“Thank you, no,” Danny said, raising both hands to ward off the craziness. “I already have him full time.”

“True that,” Lolhol said.

“Do you know that I’m right here?” Steve interjected.

“Yep,” Danny said with a wink at him. “Keeps you humble.”

“That’s what I have you for,” Steve reminded him.

“Right, right,” Danny said.

They chatted about other topics which were not terribly important, Steve taking out his phone at one point to check the text. “Faux wool?” he read aloud.

“So she didn’t know,” Danny said, accepting a cup of coffee from Lolhol.

“What does that even mean?” Steve continued.
“Is that you or Emma?” Danny asked.

“Emma,” Steve said, answering the phone when it rang. “Hey baby… no, we don’t know…no, shearing the sheep doesn’t harm them… all right. You and Dancy find a real wool coat and we’ll order it… is Dancy coming with?” Steve asked both Emma and Danny.

Danny raised his eyebrows at Henry who shrugged.

“All right, baby. We’ll see you when you finally decide to come home,” Steve said as he disconnected.

“Dancy is coming?” Danny asked when Steve had his phone back in the pocket of his dress trousers.

“Apparently,” Steve said.

“Do her parents know?” Henry asked sensibly.

“I’m sure they do,” Danny said. “I’ll call her mom tomorrow when they are at school. Are we buying her a coat too?”

“Apparently,” Steve repeated, wiping his mouth with his napkin before putting it on the table. “Thank you, Lolhol. Delicious as always.”

“Thank you, Governor,” the cook said. He and Henry stood as Steve left his chair.

“Are you coming?” Steve asked, pausing by Danny’s chair.

“To New Jersey?” Danny asked.

“I’m assuming you’re coming to your parents’ house. I meant upstairs,” Steve said with a sly smile.

“Ahh…” Danny said. “You need me to do your ‘paperwork’.”

“Something like that,” Steve said with a wink. “Good night, Henry. See you tomorrow.”

“Your first meeting is with Commissioner Goodell at 0900,” Henry said.

“Right. I’ll be in the office at 0800,” Steve assured him.

“Very good, sir,” Henry said, watching the other two men leave the dining room before turning back to Lolhol.

“What?” the large cook asked when he saw Henry studying him.

“Did you know about Patricia? I don’t know how I missed the fact she’s leaving.”

“Not like you aren’t buried in paperwork and negotiations for the Governor 8 days a week,” Lolhol reminded him.

“I know. I ….well, it hardly matters. You need me for anything tonight?” Henry asked.
“I don’t,” Lolhol assured him. “Take my advice and go home. It’s the first night you’ve been able to 
quit before 9:00 in two weeks.”

“I suppose you’re right,” Henry agreed. “I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Right,” Lolhol confirmed, disappearing into the kitchen.

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“You want to try on your Captain America costume?” Danny asked when they were alone in their 
spacious bedroom.

“Not really,” Steve said, removing the cufflinks from his dress shirt.

“You need to make sure it fits. And that it’s not too tight,” Danny coaxed.

“Do you really want me to try it on or do you just want me to get undressed?” Steve asked with a 
familiar leer.

“Maybe some of each,” Danny said as Steve approached, easing between Danny’s spread knees. 
Danny reached for Steve’s belt, opening it to reach for the fastening of his pants. “You could always 
try it on… after.”

“After Halloween?” Steve asked, being intentionally obtuse. “Wouldn’t that defeat the purpose?”

“Stop being stupid,” Danny requested mildly, unbuttoning Steve’s shirt and kissing the skin that was 
slowly exposed by his questing fingers.

“You don’t mind me stupid,” Steve said in certainty.

“Hmmm…” Danny hummed against Steve’s warm brown skin. “How are you still so tanned when 
you barely have time to go to the beach?”

“Good genes,” Steve claimed, leaning down to kiss Danny’s head. “Could you please finish what 
you’ve started?”

“You are so impatient,” Danny scolded mildly, slowly lowering Steve’s trousers. With a groan from 
them both, he pulled them back up when a knock sounded on the door. “Who…what the hell?”

“Horrible timing,” Steve agreed, adjusting himself in hopes that his obvious need would be slightly 
less obvious. “Coming.” He crossed to the door, opening it as a second knock sounded on the 
outside. “John? What’s wrong?”

Danny straightened his own slightly less disheveled clothes as John entered the bedroom all the way.

“I’m okay,” John said, looking from Steve to Danny and back. “I have horrible timing.”

“It’s fine,” Danny said, studying their son. “What’s happened?”

John sighed and sat on the edge of their bed, looking up at his fathers. “Karla dumped me.”

“Oh,” Steve said, sitting next to John. “What did she say?”
John waved a hand in a way that was very reminiscent of his shorter father. “I think her jealousy finally won out.”

“I’m sorry, Bud,” Danny said, studying John. He looked tired but not especially upset which Danny took as a good sign. He and Steve had agreed, out of earshot of all the children, that Karla was no good for John but that didn’t mean that they wanted John to have his heart broken. Apparently that hadn’t happened.

John shrugged with one shoulder. “I know you didn’t really like her.”

Steve and Danny exchanged quick looks, not bothering to deny John’s statement. “She doesn’t seem to want the same things you do,” Danny finally said, hoping not to sound too guilty that John had figured out the truth about their feelings toward Karla.

“I’m pretty sure she only dated me because of… you know… football,” John said.

“Then she’s done you a favor, hasn’t she?” Steve suggested mildly.

“Except now I don’t have a date for homecoming. Ironic, huh? Quarterback of the team going to the dance stag,” John sighed.

“It’s strange timing on her part,” Danny observed. “I thought she lived to be seen on your arm.”

John shrugged. “You two had groupies. You know how it can be.”

“We didn’t date any of them,” Danny said with a laugh.

“You were too busy dating each other,” John said, having heard all about his fathers’ exploits before they were married.

“Or pretending we didn’t intend to,” Steve had to agree. “You know Alicia will go with you if you want.”

“I considered it. But doesn’t she have performances all weekend?” John asked.

“Not next weekend,” Danny said. “The current show runs through Friday. Then they start rehearsals on Monday.”

John sighed. “I don’t know. Looking like you’re dating your step-sister could be worse than not having a date at all.”

“It’s up to you,” Steve assured him. “But if you take Alicia, you’ll win the dance contest.”

“There isn’t a dance contest,” John laughed. “But thanks for the encouragement.”

“I surprised Karla didn’t wait until after homecoming to break it off,” Steve said, considering her timing. “Is she up to something?”

“Probably,” John said. “Elon Keller told me she’s hoping to go to the homecoming dance with Siler Brown.”
“Siler Brown?” Danny repeated. “What does she see in him?”

“His father’s money,” John said.

“Because the fact that your father is Governor doesn’t count,” Danny scoffed.

“Neither of you are planning to buy me a Porsche. Are you?” John asked in mock surprise.

“Not this week,” Steve said. “We are spending all of our disposable income on Halloween candy and faux wool coats.”

“Faux wool?” John said.

“Yeah,” Steve agreed. “It’s a long story.”

“I’ll take your word for it,” John said, standing to stretch his long arms over his lean body. “I know I interrupted. I’m going to hit the hay if you want to resume your….”

“Paperwork,” Danny said, filling in the blank John left.

“That’s what you’re calling it now?” John laughed.

“Let’s go watch a movie,” Steve suggested. “It’s too early for bed. And the paperwork will wait.”

“If you’re sure,” John said, laughing again at the expression on his fathers’ faces. “I’ll go down and make popcorn.”

“I’m going to change. What are you doing?” Steve asked Danny.

“Picking the movie,” Danny said, leaving the bedroom with John who continued downstairs as Danny stopped in the family room. Even though he’d been looking forward to the paperwork, he had to admit that a movie with his husband and son ran a very close second in his choice of leisure activities.
The People versus Atkins

Chapter Summary

The commander of Pearl-Hickam makes a request of Governor SEAL which turns out very differently than the Captain anticipated. Never underestimate Governor Steve Williams-McGarrett.

Chapter Notes

This chapter is in honor of McDannoIsaNagron on her birthday!

Happy Birthday BB!!! Hope you enjoy it!

It was just after 6:30 a.m. when Steve got to his office. He’d learned during the two years (two years, two weeks, and three days) that he’d been governor that arriving in his office before his staff would give him a solid two hours to himself. Well, not exactly two hours. The kids would stop by before leaving for school with Danny. Those fifteen minutes were some of the best of most of his days.

Danny grumbled practically every morning when Steve tried to sneak out of bed. Steve would remind him that there was no reason for him to get up but Danny usually ignored him, accompanying Steve to the dining room for at least a cup of coffee. Some mornings, depending on what had gone on the night before, Danny would go back to bed. Other mornings he’d go to his tiny office in the residence and… Steve wasn’t entirely sure what Danny did in his cramped space. Hardly mattered. The citizens of Hawaii loved the First Gentleman almost more than they loved their Governor. That thought made Steve smile, as it so often did.

He’d been working his way steadily through the reports that seemed to pile up no matter how much he tried to avoid their incursion onto his desk when a knock interrupted him reading a justification from Chin Ho Kelly on his request that Steve purchase Five-0 an armored truck. He’d never had an armored truck when he was in charge. He didn’t know how he felt about authorizing one for Chin.

“Governor,” his secretary Patricia Norton said when she had the door open.

“Is it 8:30 already?” he asked by way of greeting, glancing at his watch and wondering if the kids had left without saying good morning.

“Not yet, sir,” she said, coming closer to his desk. She was wearing a green pencil skirt with a lighter green long sleeved silk shirt. The color was complimentary to her chocolate skin and black curly hair. He’d inherited her when Sam had left office and thanked the heavens every day for her efficiency, her knowledge, and most of all, her patience. “I had a few things that I didn’t quite get finished yesterday,” she said, shaking her head once. “And I apologize for interrupting, but Captain Stanley Keeve would like to meet with you.”

“Captain Keeve?” Steve said, wondering why the commander of Pearl Harbor-Hickam was asking
for a meeting. They had met last week as per the briefing schedule they had set up when Keeve took command three months earlier. “Did he say when?”

“No,” Patricia said, returning to the door to open it a little wider, revealing Captain Keeve standing on the other side of it.

“Captain,” Steve said, standing at attention as the older man entered his office.

“Governor,” Keeve responded.

“Thank you, Patricia,” Steve said, waiting as Patricia closed the door behind her. “Would you like some coffee, sir?” Steve asked, gesturing to the single serve coffee maker tucked behind a file cabinet, within easy reach but not overly obvious to visitors.

“Thank you, no,” the Captain said. “I appreciate your taking the time to see me without an appointment.”

“Of course, sir,” Steve said, sitting back in his chair. “Have a seat.”

The Captain nodded and sat in the indicated chair, putting his hat beneath it. “I’m here to discuss a highly sensitive, and strictly classified, matter.”

“Yes sir,” Steve said, waiting as the Captain carefully chose his next words.

“Naval Command would like to request that you pardon Lieutenant Atkins,” the Captain said, laying the request out with no preliminaries.

“Lieutenant Atkins, sir?” Steve said, not sure he was following.

“Lieutenant Farley Atkins,” Keeve clarified.

“Atkins,” Steve said with a frown. Now he knew who the Captain was referring to, and it immediately raised his hackles. “The Farley Atkins Five-0 arrested for trafficking priceless native arts.”

“Yes,” Keeve agreed.

“And Naval Command wants me to pardon the same man my husband and I arrested four years ago, the one in Halawa where he belongs,” Steve said, feeling an angry spark in the pit of his stomach. Atkins had violated a dozen heiaus that they knew about, had stolen native arts made by the earliest indigenous people, and nearly destroyed the Puu Loa Petroglyphs. That’s where Steve and Danny had finally caught him, hammer and chisel stowed and ready in his backpack.

“In fact, he doesn’t belong in Halawa,” the Captain said, his tone reconciliatory more than challenging even if his words were contradictory.

“I think there are at least a dozen kahunas who would vehemently disagree with that, as do I,” Steve said. He could feel the color rising in his cheeks along with his anger. But his background and training required he hide his emotions. It wasn’t easy. “We not only caught him red-handed, we had evidence that was irrefutable. The prosecuting attorney had no trouble convincing a jury that Atkins had stolen the artifacts and desecrated the sanctuaries.”
“He was on assignment at the time of those actions,” the Captain stated calmly.

“On assignment,” Steve repeated, staring at the older man.

“He was undercover, investigating the actual thieves. They have been apprehended which makes it safe for Atkins to be pardoned.”

“With all due respect, Captain,” Steve said with a hard edge. “If he were undercover, I fail to see why it wasn’t disclosed before his trial. He should have been exonerated before he was sent to prison.”

“We could not risk the actual thieves discovering that he had been investigating them. It would have driven them further underground. Now that they are incarcerated, Atkins can be released.”

“That does not explain away the evidence we collected that irrefutably proved his guilt,” Steve pointed out, hoping he was hiding his growing anger.

“He had to look guilty to convince the cartel that he had gone rogue. He couldn’t simply play poker with them to find out what they were doing.”

“I understand how undercover operations work, sir,” Steve said. “It is still suspect to me that more than four years have passed since his arrest and this is only now being brought up.”

“As I said, Governor, we could not alert the cartel that Atkins was a plant. Not until they were apprehended which has now been accomplished.”

“Where? Where were the cartel members arrested? Were the missing artifacts recovered? Are they being returned to their rightful owners?” Steve asked in a staccato voice.

“That is classified, Commander,” the Captain replied sternly.

“I am disinclined to grant a pardon to a convicted smuggler whom I arrested,” Steve retorted. “Especially when I have no evidence to support your request.”

“I can provide exonerating evidence, if those are your conditions.”

“I am not providing conditions. I am requesting clarification. And if the cartel is behind bars, why not have his conviction overturned by the courts? You don’t need me to pardon him,” Steve said firmly.

“As I stated from the beginning, this matter is sensitive and classified,” the Captain said.

“I cannot provide a pardon with no explanation. The press will demand a reason, as will the public and the kahunas,” Steve said with finality.

“You cannot discuss classified information with unauthorized personnel,” the Captain said, his anger beginning to rise.

“What do you expect me to tell the press? My ohana? ‘It’s classified’ will become as problematic as no explanation at all. I won’t lie to my husband or my children.”

“Your family will certainly understand your inability to discuss this matter,” the Captain said.
“Ohana is not only family, Captain. It includes Captain Chin Ho Kelly, Lieutenant Governor Kalakaua, and everyone currently a member of Five-0.”

“You cannot discuss it with anyone,” the Captain said as though that settled the matter.

“The Hawaiians people will be outraged and will consider it an abuse of power. And frankly, I won’t blame them.

“I have it on good authority that you have no plans to run for reelection so we can dismiss any concerns that might arise from the electorate,” the Captain said.

Steve stared at the other man. Who the hell did he think he was talking to? Steve was not some sailor fresh from the Academy. He didn’t report to the Captain. He’d show him the respect he was due but not when he crossed the line. “I can’t speak to those rumors concerning my reelection,” Steve said sternly. “However, even if I were not going to run, I would never show such complete and utter disrespect for the people of my state. Atkins violated our most sacred grounds, desecrated our memorials, and attempted to transport priceless artifacts in order to put them up for sale on the black-market. There is no proof that he did so on the orders of the Navy. To pardon him would make me no better than him.”

“It is within your prerogative as Governor to grant pardons with no explanation,” Keeve said.

“As I am well aware,” Steve said. “That law is not germane to this discussion.”

“It is nearly Christmas,” Keeve continued as though Steve hadn’t spoken. “The press won’t notice the pardon. The legislators have all left for their homes. Your pardon will go practically unnoticed.”

“I don’t care if I’m the only one who is aware of it,” Steve responded. “I will not grant a pardon to someone who attacked everything that Hawaiians hold sacred.”

“He did so under orders.”

“Then appeal to the President. Or take it to the courts.”

“A presidential pardon will garner far too much attention. A gubernatorial pardon is much less likely to be noticed.”

“You are asking me to lie to my family and my state,” Steve said, no longer hiding all of his anger.

“Obfuscation for the sake of national security.”

“National security,” Steve repeated slowly. “At what point did Atkins actions take on the mantel of national security?”

“That is classified,” the Captain said.

Steve stood, looking down at the Captain. “I cannot grant your request. Patricia will see you out.”

Keeve stared up at Steve, not moving. Steve rounded his desk and opened his door with more force than strictly necessary. “Captain.”

“Daddy,” Emma’s unmistakably cheerful voice called from the vicinity of Patricia’s desk.
“Hey baby,” Steve said, leaving his office to hug his daughter. He momentarily caught Danny’s eye, looking away almost immediately. “You ready for your last day before Christmas break?”

“Totally. Danno got me stockings for everybody in my class,” she said, showing him the bag she was holding. “They have chocolate in them.”

“Good idea,” Steve said with a nod. He glanced over his shoulder as Keeve emerged, pausing at the doorway. “Emma, John, this is Captain Keeve. This is my daughter Emma, and my son John. And you’ve met my husband Danny.”

The Captain nodded at the family before putting on his hat and leaving without a word.

“Did you punch in him the face?” John asked when the Captain had gone down the broad stairway outside Patricia’s office.

“I considered it,” Steve said before he could stop himself. “You better go before you’re late.”

“We wouldn’t want Danno to get detention,” John laughed, racing Emma out and to the stairs.

“No running,” Danny shouted after them. “I’ll be back in 15 minutes then you can tell me why you have aneurysm face.”

“Bring malasadas,” Steve said, kissing Danny before watching him leave. He turned his focus on Patricia who was studying him with eyes wise beyond her years. “You heard?”

“Some of it,” she said. “What are you going to do?”

“There’s not a lot I can do. It’s classified,” Steve said with a shake of his head. “We investigated him for six months. How could we have not noticed he was undercover?”

“Are you convinced he was?” Patricia asked.

“Not entirely, no,” Steve admitted. “But why would Keeve lie to me?”

“I could call Betty-Jean. She respects the Captain but doesn’t much care for him,” Patricia said, referring to the Captain’s administrative assistant.

“No,” Steve said. “I don’t want to risk getting her into trouble. Ordinarily I’d call Chin but…”

“Classified,” Patricia said.

“Precisely,” Steve agreed. “You still leaving me alone after today?”

She laughed at him, shaking her head. “It’s five days until Christmas. The government is effectively shut down as of 5:00 o’clock. And you have Danny and Henry if you need anything.”

“They aren’t you,” he said, trying for pitiful. All it got him was a laugh. “Ask Henry to come to my office.”

“Certainly, sir,” she agreed, reaching for her phone.
Steve returned to his office, to stew about his conversation with Keeve. The man was arrogant and had some brass balls. Did he think Steve would automatically do as he was asked because he had once been in the Navy? Did Keeve think obeying the command of a superior officer was still ingrained? And if Atkins was really undercover as Keeve claimed, why wasn’t Five-0 notified? More importantly, why was the Navy investigating crimes against Hawaii? What kind of sense did that make?

“Sir,” Henry said when he had entered Steve’s office without Steve realizing it.

“Do you want some coffee?” Steve asked absently, getting up to make himself a cup.

“Yes please,” Henry agreed, standing next to him as the maker worked its magic. “Patricia said Captain Keeve had come without an appointment.”

“The arrogance of that man grows every time I meet with him,” Steve growled, handing Henry the cup of coffee. “He came to ask…demand that I pardon Lieutenant Farley Atkins.”

“Atkins?” Henry asked, sitting in the chair he normally occupied in front of Steve’s desk, waiting as Steve sat in the chair next to him.

“Naturally this discussion never occurred as his request is classified.”

“Naturally,” Henry agreed.

“Farley Atkins was convicted of desecrating at least a dozen heiaus, stealing native arts to sell on the black-market, and nearly destroying the Puu Loa Petroglyphs. Danny and I arrested him ourselves. He was sent to Halawa, which is where he belongs. But now Keeve wants me to grant him a pardon,” Steve said not bothering to hide his dismay.

“A pardon?” Henry said.

“Keeve claims Atkins was undercover at the time of his arrest. The members of the cartel he was investigating have been arrested so releasing Atkins would not compromise the investigation.”

“Why was the Navy investigating this cartel?” Henry asked, reflecting Steve’s question. “Why didn’t the Navy alert Five-0 to their suspicions?”

“If I hadn’t nearly lost my temper with Keeve, I might have asked those questions,” Steve admitted. “He used the classified shield to answer as few of my questions as possible. If I were to grant the pardon, no reason could be given.”

“He is trying to put you in an untenable situation,” Henry summed up.

“Precisely. I said I wouldn’t do it – disrespect both the Hawaiian people and those of us who arrested him.”

“What was his response?”

“He said he’d heard I wasn’t planning to run for reelection which meant I could ignore any potential blow-back from the electorate,” Steve said with a scoff. “We haven’t begun to discuss whether or not I’ll run. He was grasping at straws.”
“Your respect for the people of this state is not predicated on your reelection chances,” Henry said, angry on Steve’s behalf.

“Which is what I told him,” Steve confirmed. “I need you to make some very discreet inquiries. So discreet that Chin won’t find out about them.”

“Certainly sir,” Henry agreed. “Did Captain Keeve mention the cartel Atkins was supposedly investigating?”

“No,” Steve said. “If there were a cartel behind Atkins’ actions, what were the chances Five-0 wouldn’t have known?”

“Zero,” Henry confirmed.

“Precisely,” Steve said, standing to go behind his desk and accepting the stack of files Henry had brought with him. “What’s on the official agenda for today?”

Henry briefed him on the contents of the folders, reviewing the times and places where Steve was expected to appear. He was about to remind Steve that being unhappy about the official visits was unacceptable when Danny came in. “Oh good,” Henry said, standing. “I’ll let you explain that going to Honolulu’s Christmas parade tomorrow isn’t optional.”

“I know where you live,” Danny called as Henry escaped Steve’s office. “Okay, Governor SEAL. Other than Christmas parades, what’s got your knickers in a twist?”

Steve scowled but explained about Keeve’s visit, emphasizing the classified stamp the Captain had put on it.

“Well,” Danny said when Steve was finished. “Isn’t he one arrogant son of a bitch?”

“Affirmative,” Steve said, leaning closer to Danny on the love seat they were sharing. “I hate being Governor. I still blame you.”

“A – you don’t hate being Governor. You love it. And B – you love me even more so you can blame me for all kinds of things and it won’t change that.”

“I suppose,” Steve grumped, not in the least bit convincing.

“What are you going to do?”

“Henry is making very discreet inquiries,” Steve said. “Patricia offered to call Betty-Jean but I don’t want either of them in trouble, especially Betty-Jean.”

“Are you going to tell Chin?” Danny asked, lacing his fingers between Steve’s larger ones.

“No. I can’t even discuss it with you, or Henry,” Steve reminded him.


“I don’t know,” Steve said. “That might be a question for Secretary Mabus.”
“If this is so classified, can you call the Secretary of the Navy and ask him?”

“If we hadn’t served together, I might hesitate. But some favors can still be called in.”

“Ahhh…” Danny said. “You saved his life?”

“That’s classified,” Steve said, making Danny laugh. “What time is it in Washington?”

“It’s 2:15,” Danny said, watching Steve go to his desk. “Seriously? You can just pick up the phone and call him?”

Steve raised one eyebrow before punching in a series of numbers. “Yes, this is Governor Williams-McGarrett. Is Secretary Mabus available?” He waited before winking at Danny. “Yes sir, it is me,” Steve said with a laugh in his voice. “Sunny and beautiful as always. I hear you are getting a foot of snow… Oh, only nine inches. Well, that will make all the difference… No, it isn’t a social call. You always were a quick one,” Steve said. He explained the reason for his call, listening when he was done. “Captain Keeve insisted Atkins was acting on the behest of the Navy… No, he didn’t share why Five-0 wasn’t informed… I’m not inclined to grant the pardon, sir. It would be turning my back on my state…. Yes, I understand…. Of course this conversation never took place…. Thanks. Mele Kalikimaka.” Steve hung up with a sigh, returning to the love seat to sit next to Danny.

“What’d he say?” Danny naturally asked.

“It hasn’t crossed his desk. That doesn’t mean there’s anything unscrupulous about the request.”

“Still,” Danny said. “It smells fishy, like you do when you finish one of your epic swims.”

“I’d like to take an epic swim right now,” Steve said.

Danny was not at all moved by his complaint. “I’m sure you would but your desk and its demands would still be here when you finally emerged.”

“Shut up,” Steve requested, making Danny laugh.

“So,” Kono said as she waltzed into Steve’s office through the open door. “Chin would like to know why someone in the Governor’s mansion is trying to back-door Five-0’s servers.”

“I’m sure I don’t know anything about it,” Steve claimed.

“And why isn’t Chin asking the Governor?” Danny chimed in.

“Because it’s nearly Christmas. And he’s being Governor Grumpy,” Kono said, a hand on her hip as she studied two of her favorite people in the world.

Steve stared up at her, trying for stern.

“That look hasn’t had any impact on me in the 20 years I’ve known and loved you,” Kono said with a laugh. “What makes you think it will work this time?”

“Because I’m your boss,” Steve tried.

“Uh huh,” Kono said.
Steve sighed and took out his cell phone, waiting through only half a ring. “I don’t know anything about someone trying to access the servers.”

“Lying does not become you,” Chin said with the calm only he could achieve.

“Well,” Steve said, considering it. “If you pretend you don’t notice, I’ll sign the requisition for an armored truck.”

“Isn’t that bribery?” Chin laughed.

“I prefer to call it high level negotiations,” Steve responded.

“I see.”

“Why does Chin need an armored truck?” Danny asked with a trace of a frown.

“Classified,” Steve decided, making Danny punch him in the arm. “You’ll erase the electronic trail when whoever is in there gets out?”

“For the armored truck and a new speed boat,” Chin counter-offered.

“Fine,” Steve sighed. “I never treated Sam like this.”

“Yes you did,” Chin, Kono, and Danny all said at the same time.

“I can have you all fired,” Steve threatened.

“You can’t fire me,” Danny reminded him smugly.

“Ugh,” Steve said, disconnecting with Chin. “Can you kindly get out of my office so I can get some work done?”

“Well,” Kono said, turning to leave and holding her hand out to Danny. “We know when we’re not wanted.”

“Dismissed. Like a dog,” Danny said sadly, leaving with Kono and closing the door on Steve’s laugh.

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“Captain Keeve called me,” Steve told Danny that night when they were in bed, the first time they’d seen each other since Steve had thrown him out of his office.

“Yeah?” Danny said, lowering the book he’d been reading to study Steve instead.

“Good thing it was on the phone. Otherwise I’d have been incinerated.”

“Didn’t go well, I take it.”

“Secretary Mabus made some inquires which got back to Keeve,” Steve said. “Which I knew because Mabus called me with what he’d found out.”
“And,” Danny said, waiting for more.

“Captain Keeve failed to inform me that Atkins is his son-in-law,” Steve said in satisfaction.

“That certainly changes things,” Danny said.

“Henry discovered that there was a cartel trying to sell the artifacts but there was no mention of a Naval investigation into their activities. He called a friend at the FBI who checked their files. According to the cartel members imprisoned in Leavenworth, Atkins was neck deep in their efforts.”

“Keeve lied to you,” Danny said, surprised.

“When he told me it was classified, he believed it would stop any investigations on my part.”

“He clearly didn’t know who he was dealing with,” Danny said. “And did you say Leavenworth?”

“The other members of the so-called cartel were also Navy,” Steve said. “One was a quartermaster which made slipping the artifacts on board a no-brainer.”

“What is Mabus going to do about Keeve?” Danny asked.

“Remove him from his post,” Steve said, trying not to gloat. “His command of Pearl-Hickam will come to a quick and inglorious end.”

“Sucks to be him,” Danny said. “Keeve really thought he’d get away with it?”

“Again, he told me it was classified. Once a sailor, always a sailor,” Steve said with a shrug.

“Except when the sailor becomes governor,” Danny said.

“And is asked to validate the actions of a scumbag like Atkins.”

“Good for you,” Danny said. “I’m glad you won’t have to deal with Keeve any longer. He hates me.”

“He doesn’t even know you,” Steve said.

“Those two aren’t mutually exclusive,” Danny pointed out. “And he’s rude to the kids.”

“That’s not acceptable,” Steve said.

“My guess is that two men being married is anathema to him,” Danny said. “Way old school.”

“Too bad for him,” Steve said. “What time is the parade tomorrow?”

“It starts at 10 a.m. We have to be at Ala Moana at 8:00 so Emma and John can check in.”

“Check in?” Steve repeated. “They aren’t going to be in the reviewing stand with us?”

“Babe,” Danny sighed. “They are marching in the parade. Emma with the cheerleaders, John with the football team.”
“I don’t know anything about this,” Steve said.

“I told you. The kids told you. It’s been planned since September. The same time when you refused to be grand marshal.”

“I was grand marshal last year,” Steve reminded him. “Chin will make a great marshal.”

“And our children will be in the parade,” Danny said with a put-upon tone. “Tell me you didn’t really forget.”

Steve shrugged innocently. “Will the rest of the kids be with us?”

“Yes, Alicia, Zachary, and Grace will be in the reviewing stand. Rachel will be there but Stan is out of town.”

“Kono and Charlie?”

“With us,” Danny confirmed. “You should know. You signed their invitations.”

“You probably forged my signature.”

“Maybe,” Danny shrugged. “All the presents for the kids have been received. Henry and I are finishing with the wrapping tomorrow. You are not allowed to help.”

“They are my kids too,” Steve pouted.

“We can’t always have exact square corners, you control freak. It will take us half the time without your ‘help’ than it will with it.”

“Fine,” Steve conceded. “I’ll take the kids to lunch after the parade while you and Henry finish the wrapping.”

“Excellent plan. So excellent I already made reservations for twelve at the Bamboo Hut. Just make sure you bring us lunch when you come home.”

“Did you give them your credit card number so I won’t have to pay for it?” Steve asked with an ingratiating smile.

“You are paying for it, you goof. I don’t have a paying job.”

“Oh right, right,” Steve said, leaning closer to kiss him. “You are completely dependent on me.”

“You wish,” Danny said, returning his kiss. After that, there was no doubt that they were utterly dependent on each other. Not that they would have it any other way.
The First Fight

Chapter Summary

No marriage is perfect, not even the Williams-McGarrett one.

A short chapter about their first real fight. That’s about it.

Their first real fight was about, of all things, shoes. They’d been married for eight months and were getting ready for Kono and Charlie’s wedding rehearsal and dinner. They had agreed to stand for Kono, and for Charlie, but mostly Kono. She wasn’t interested in having bridesmaids as much as she wanted her ohana present and standing with her. The guys were happy to oblige, until The Fight.

Danny had made sure their tuxedos were cleaned and pressed. Steve was responsible for shirts, bow ties, and cufflinks. Steve thought that with Danny being in charge of the tuxedos, that made Danny also in charge of their dress shoes. It wasn’t until they were nearly ready to leave for the rehearsal dinner that Steve discovered that his dress shoes had not been polished since the last time he had worn them.

“Rehearsal starts in fifteen minutes,” Danny said to Steve who was sitting on the edge of their bed, ready to go in his black suit except for his bare feet. “We don’t have time for this.”

Steve didn’t look up at him as he spit on his right shoe. “I can’t wear scuffed shoes.”

“No one, and I mean no one, is going to pay the slightest attention to your shoes,” Danny told him firmly.

“Why didn’t you polish them?” Steve asked, frowning even more fiercely down at the offending footwear.

“Because they are your shoes. And because this is the rehearsal. If you want to polish them for the wedding, that’s fine. But we need to go.”

“You were in charge of our tuxs. You should have polished our shoes,” Steve said in an even, almost too calm voice.

“They are shoes, Steven,” Danny said, nearly shouting.

“If they aren’t polished, they may as well be slippahs,” Steve said.

“We are now officially late,” Danny said, checking the time on his phone for the tenth time in the last few minutes.

“We wouldn’t be if you’d polished our shoes,” Steve said, studying his right shoe before picking up the left to give it the same attention.

“Steve,” Danny said, trying to remain calm in the face of his husband’s stubborn determination. “We need to go.”
“Then go. I’ll be right behind you,” Steve said, spitting on his shoe.

“Fine. I’ll go and tell Kono your shoes are far more important to you than she is,” Danny said, turning to leave their bedroom.

“You know that’s not true. And she’ll know it too,” Steve called back.

“It’s how it looks,” Danny said, going down the steps and out the front door. If he closed it a little too firmly, he wasn’t going to apologize.

He made himself drive at a reasonable rate to the hotel where the wedding was being held. The relatively slow rate of travel gave him time to consider why he’d reacted the way he had to Steve’s stubbornness. It wasn’t like it was unusual for Steve to get an idea in his head and be unable to relinquish it. And Danny knew that Steve polished his shoes because it was ingrained in him that no uniform, no suit was complete without properly turned-out shoes. What really annoyed Danny was that Steve had blamed him for the state of their dress shoes. Shoes hadn’t been part of their discussion and if Steve had expected Danny to polish them, he should have communicated that fact. Why did shoes and tuxedos fall in the same category?

Steve flinched when he heard the front door slam. He regretted that Danny was angry but then, so was he. And he knew it wasn’t entirely about the shoes. Steve couldn’t make himself wear scuffed shoes even though he knew taking care of them would make him late. But even more than that, Steve was disappointed in Danny’s lack of attention to detail. Danny would never act this way on the job. He’d make sure every T was crossed and I was dotted. That same exactness didn’t always come home with him. As much as Steve knew marriage was about compromise, there were parts of being in a committed relationship that had taken him by surprise. He loved Danny. That was not in question. But did that mean he had to be happy about every single thing Danny did? He doubted it. And if he was honest, he knew there were things he did that slowly drove Danny crazy. The shoes were just the latest not the only example.

Satisfied with the polishing job he’d done, Steve put on his shoes and took a deep breath. He sent Kono a fast text of apology, not surprised to receive No problem brah as a response. Island time she added with a smiley face.

Steve zeroed in on Danny as soon as he arrived in the expanse of green behind the hotel. He was talking to Max who was planning to photograph the rehearsal and the wedding.

“Danno,” Steve said, putting a light hand on Danny’s back. Danny looked up at Steve, hurt in his blue eyes. “I’m sorry.”

Danny nodded, taking Steve’s hand and leading him closer to the beach where there were fewer people milling around. “I’m sorry too. But I really didn’t know you expected me to polish your shoes.”

“I know,” Steve said, breathing deeply. “I thought of it as your job but never told you.”

Danny shrugged one shoulder, looking back at the wedding party that was still trying to find their appropriate places. The entire rehearsal was running on island time, Kono nowhere to be seen. “It’s not just about the shoes.”

“That’s not too huge,” Danny quipped.

“It’s not really huge. It’s… well,” Steve said, stuffing his hands in his pockets when words wouldn’t come.

“We need to talk about it,” Danny said knowingly.

“Yes, but I don’t want to stay mad through the rehearsal.”

“No, you goof. We need to talk about our expectations and realities at home. You expect me to do something but I don’t know until I haven’t done it. Or you think I shouldn’t be doing something I’m doing but don’t know it annoys you. Telling me will save a lot of time and heartache.”

“That makes it sound like you work for me, not that you’re married to me,” Steve said.

“I do work for you,” Danny said with a smile. “That’s part of the problem. At work, we are in total synch. We both know our roles, what is expected. At home, we’re still finding our way. I’ve moved into your house and changed things you took for granted.”

“Our house,” Steve said.

“It is now. But for the majority of your life, it was yours. If shoes fall in the category of tuxedoes, you only have to tell me. And if you really want the towels on the top shelf of the linen closet, we can move them. I simply have trouble stacking them when they get too high.”

“I know that,” Steve said with a warm smile. “They can stay on the third shelf. I really don’t care.”

“Except every time you put them away, they are on the top shelf again.”

“Habit,” Steve said. “Doesn’t imply you do it wrong.”

“But there are things that get under your skin. You don’t tell me then we have a fight about your shoes,” Danny pointed out.

“You’re right. I know I must drive you nuts too,” Steve said.

“Only a little. And putting up with your idiosyncrasies is well worth the reward,” Danny assured him.

“But we’ll talk it all out when we get home?” Steve asked, leaning down enough out kiss him lightly.

“Sure,” Danny agreed. “After we finish much more important activities.”

“I like the way you think, Detective.”

“I know you do, Commander,” Danny said with a wink before they turned to join the other members of the wedding party who were slowly assuming their places.
San Francisco 49ers Go To The Super Bowl

Chapter Summary

John leads the 49ers to the Super Bowl. There are a lot of logistics involved in getting everyone to Florida. Steve is on the job!

“What are you doing?” Danny asked in an endearingly sleepy voice as he turned part-way over to see Steve sitting up against the headboard.

“Arranging flights to Miami,” Steve said as though it should be perfectly obvious.

“It’s…” Danny reached over for his phone, squinting to see it said 5:45. “Not even 6 in the morning. We got home from San Francisco at 12:30. Did you sleep at all?”

Steve shrugged one bare shoulder, smiling down at Danny. “It’s not every day your son gets to the Super Bowl.”

“I completely agree. But he’ll still be going to the Super Bowl at a decent hour of the day. Like 9:00…10 o’clock,” Danny pointed out before burying his head deeper into his pillow.

“Go back to sleep,” Steve said, leaning down to kiss him. “I’ll try to type more quietly.”

“Don’t type again until 10,” Danny recommended, knowing it was useless. Steve was awake and nothing short of a blow to the head would coax him back to sleep. And a blow to the head wasn’t always a guarantee of that.

“Do you want me to go downstairs?” Steve asked, studying the list of flights displayed on his computer screen. For an answer, Danny rolled over to face him, curling his left arm tightly around Steve’s bare thigh. “That’s what I thought,” Steve said with a quiet laugh.

Steve knew Danny was just as excited as he was about John leading the San Francisco 49ers to the Super Bowl to face the Baltimore Ravens. The Ravens had been to three of the last five Super Bowls, winning two of them. They were heavily favored, already, to defeat the 49ers – the old guard versus the new guard is the way many sports casters were characterizing the match-up. Never mind that John had led the 49ers to a league best 14-2 record – the Ravens were still the early favorites to win.

Steve and Danny had been in San Francisco just the day before to watch the 49ers defeat the New Orleans Saints to earn their trip to the Super Bowl. In truth, it wasn’t much of a game. John threw a 43 yard touchdown pass on their first possession and the Saints never stood a chance, reflected in the final score of 43 – 10. John hadn’t played the fourth quarter, Danny and Steve thinking that the coach made the right call to protect him for the next, really big game. John had told them he’d have played every minute of the game but he too understood why Coach Sterling had replaced him with his back-up.

Steve was trying to coordinate everyone’s schedule, a herculean task. Their entire ohana had made
tentative arrangements in late November to be available to go to Miami for the Super Bowl the first weekend of February. Now that the 49ers had played their way into going, Steve had to finish his spreadsheet with flight times, departure airports, arrival times, ground transportation, and hotel reservations. They’d managed to pre-book a block of rooms at the same hotel where the 49ers would be staying, the team giving them rare permission to stay there. The team had most of the rooms booked already and had reserved one for Steve and Danny. John had reminded the team officials about the rest of their ohana and they had contacted the hotel to allow Steve to reserve the block for the Williams-McGarrett/Edwards party.

He and Danny were flying to Miami on the Wednesday before the game and returning the next Tuesday. The timing meant that Steve would miss two of his classes at the community college but he had already notified his dean and prepared the students’ out-of-class assignments. Once they got to Florida, they would see John sporadically and could spend the rest of the time sight-seeing. Although Steve thought going to the Miami beaches would be a let down, Danny said he would like to go to the Keys. Steve had reserved a Volvo convertible for their time there, six other cars on stand-by. He wasn’t sure how many they would end up needing, but he thought six plus theirs would be enough.

Grace and Amou were flying over on Thursday. After much discussion, they decided to leave five year old Alania, three year old Kelani, and eighteen month old Nohea with Amou’s parents. They had mixed emotions about being away from the kids but ultimately decided that Kelani and Nohea were simply too young to take to the Super Bowl. They considered only taking Alania but after even more discussion, decided that having a long weekend to themselves would be a rare and wonderful treat. “After all,” Amou had said in reassurance. “We’ll be back on Monday.”

Steve had sent them their flight confirmations, ready to turn his attention to Alicia’s flights. She was in rehearsal in New York but had gotten special permission to be absent Saturday through Monday. She was beside herself with excitement, unable to remember the last time she’d been with her entire ohana. She had insisted to Steve that she was perfectly capable of finding and purchasing her own flights but he’d said that he and Danny were taking care of all of them. Danny had frowned when Steve had originally made this announcement but knew better than to argue. He also knew that if they didn’t buy the tickets, John would gladly have done it. Steve had decided and that was that.

Steve found Alicia fairly convenient flights, apologizing for the need for her to change planes in Atlanta. It seemed stupid to change planes so close to Miami but as she pointed out, he didn’t run the airlines. It would still get her to Miami early afternoon on Saturday. Plus she didn’t have to fly all the way from Hawaii.

He’d made absolutely certain that she hadn’t wanted to bring her boyfriend before buying her tickets.

“He’s not really my boyfriend,” she had repeated. “He’s just a friend.”

“Not according to Facebook,” Steve had replied with a smile.

“Stay off Facebook,” she’d pleaded, making him laugh.

“All right. I won’t Facebook stalk you if you promise not to unfriend me.”

She’d laughed at that, shaking her head as she looked at him from his computer screen, love in her eyes. “Never. When I have a ‘real’ boyfriend, you’ll be one of the first to know.”

“Good,” he’d said with a wink before disconnecting the video call.
With almost no intervention from Steve, Emma had been granted permission to attend the Super Bowl. She was temporarily stationed in Little Creek Virginia, making hers the shortest of all the flights. She’d been granted leave from Friday to Monday, the process somewhat simplified by the fact that she was still recovering from multiple breaks to her right arm. She wasn’t at liberty to say how or where she’d been injured and would be fully recovered in another three weeks. Danny threatened to fly to Virginia to beat the truth out of someone there but Steve had reminded him that Emma was tough and a SEAL and broken limbs sometimes came with the territory.

She was going to wear her uniform to the game since she’d been asked to be part of the salute to the troops. She wasn’t sure how she felt about that aspect of it but after talking to John, decided to do it. Her presence would in no way detract from her brother being one of the quarterbacks. The family had all agreed it would only add to festivities.

“I guess you didn’t need to call in any favors after all,” Danny had remarked when Emma had said she was going to be part of the salute to the troops.

Steve shrugged at that. “I still have plenty in reserve.”

“From when you served or when you were governor?” Danny asked.

“Yes,” Steve said, laughing when Danny smacked him.

The Navy said they would make sure Emma was in Miami on Friday and would get her back to Virginia on Monday. Steve made a note of that on his spreadsheet, sending her the hotel info so she’d have it to give to her COs.

Rachel and Stan were flying to Miami on Friday and returning on Monday. Zach was going to be with them although he was still campaigning in his own way to fly with Steve and Danny. Rachel and Stan had tried to explain that sometimes Steve and Danny needed time just to themselves. Zach finally accepted it, especially since his hotel room would be right next to Steve and Danny’s. Steve said he’d pay for their flights but they had declined.

Henry Emery was flying down Thursday and returning on Monday. He said he’d fly down on Wednesday but Steve and Danny said they could be without him for one day, making them all laugh. He would be bringing his girlfriend, Josey, whom he’d met at the exclusive wine tasting Steve and Danny had given him for Christmas. They still weren’t sure about this Josey but Chin had said she didn’t have any criminal activities in her background and as far as he could tell, was exactly the perky brown headed vintner she presented herself to be. Steve and Danny were very happy to see Henry so happily in love, having almost given up hope he’d ever find his perfect someone. Their primary concern was that married life might interfere with the one thousand and one details that still seemed to fall to Henry to handle. But they certainly had no intention of standing in his way of finding true happiness.

Chin and Malia were going to Florida on Friday and staying the entire next week. Neither of them had ever been to Disney World and decided this was their perfect opportunity. They’d stay with the ohana until Monday then drive to Orlando, enjoying the scenery on the four hour trip.

John’s fiancée Leah Kelekolio had gone with Steve and Danny to San Francisco for the final playoff game that sealed the 49ers trip to the big game. Steve said she could fly to Miami with him and Danny but she couldn’t take that much time off her job. She had already arranged to take off the days before and after Super Bowl weekend, leaving the prosecuting attorney’s office short with her and Grace’s absence. But Honolulu’s prosecuting attorney would never deny two of his best litigators the
chance to attend the game. The fact that he still owed Steve approximately 1500 favors from his time as governor had nothing to do with his decision to allow them leave at the same time. That was his story and no one was going to question him on it.

Steve confirmed Leah’s flights and emailed them to her, noting them on his spreadsheet before smiling down at Danny.

“What you goof?” Danny asked although he was barely awake.

“Our little boy is getting married.”

“First, he’s not so little,” Danny reminded Steve. “And second, I know that he is. But not for another five months and not at the ass-crack of dawn today.”

“Well,” Steve said with shrug. “John said Leah could stay with him in Miami. Think that will scandalize the press?”

“Doubt it,” Danny said. “If they have a problem with it, she can always say she’s staying with Alicia.”

“There is that,” Steve agreed, returning to his spreadsheet and thinking about how lucky they were that Leah Kelekolio was going to join their ohana, adding even more love to the mix. Leah was perfect for John and Steve liked to think John was perfect for Leah.

Leah had considered moving to San Francisco when she’d accepted John’s proposal but they had finally decided that she would stay in Hawaii. John had houses in both of his ‘home-towns’ and she’d move into his beach house once they were married. Maybe she’d eventually quit working to follow him from game to game but he had known of her determination to continue working from their first date.

John and Leah had thanked Grace multiple times for introducing them, even if they had been initially leery about the blind date she’d arranged. That first date had pretty much decided for them both that they had met their one-true-love.

Plans were being made to declare this truth publically in May when they got married in the backyard of Steve and Danny’s house. Leah had said that they could get married in John’s yard but it wasn’t quite as big as his fathers’ yard and they knew they’d be an overflow crowd at their wedding. Danny had expressed some doubt that their yard would accommodate all the people expected to attend but John and Leah had assured him that he would work his miracles and the wedding would be perfect. Danny had passed on their reassurances to Henry who simply shrugged and went back to making a list of things to be done before the wedding day.

The hardest decisions were those made by Kono and Charlie. Taking all the children felt like a logistical nightmare although their ohana had reminded them they wouldn’t be there alone. Still – six kids seemed like a lot to corral.

Kono wasn’t especially concerned about being away as the second year of her first gubernatorial term started. It wasn’t like her absence would shut down the government. There were those who would undoubtedly complain that she was neglecting her state by going to the mainland but everyone in politics had critics.

“We know you want us there if they win,” she said to Steve and Danny at the lunch they shared
before Steve and Danny were set to fly to San Francisco to attend the play-off game.

“And we want to come,” Charlie added, passing the warm bread to Kono who smiled her thanks.

“We know,” Danny said. “And you know if they get to the Super Bowl, John will understand why you can’t be there.”

She nodded, studying her lobster ravioli. She didn’t really like ravioli and wasn’t sure why she’d ordered it. Except her kids all loved it so maybe it was maternal reflex. “We both really want to be there,” she said with wistful tone.

“We know,” Steve said. “Bring the kids if we get to go to the Super Bowl. We’ll all be on kid-duty.”

“I’ll talk to Shan,” she decided, referring to Lt Governor Shan Tsutsui. “I’m sure he’ll think it’s fine for us to go.”

“I’d think so,” Charlie said.

“You could come if Kono can’t,” Danny suggested.

Charlie laughed, shaking his head. “I’m sure you would fly off to Florida if Steve couldn’t go.”

“Absolutely,” Danny lied.

Kono smiled her dimpled smile, laughter lighting her eyes. “What a liar you are.”

Danny shrugged, smiling over at Steve.

Ultimately, Kono and Charlie, with positive reassurances from their ohana, had decided to take the entire Kalakaua-Fong clan to Miami for the game. Kono had agreed to be a featured speaker at the White House sponsored conference on Native American rights the week following the game, which meant they could take the governor’s private plane to the mainland. Danny had tried to hitch a ride with her but when she reminded him that they wouldn’t be going to Florida until the Saturday before the game, he’d agreed a commercial flight with his husband was the better alternative.

Kono, Charlie, the six children, and their live-in nanny would have three rooms in the hotel. It would be something of a tight squeeze but no one would complain, all of their rooms connecting and across the hall from Steve and Danny.

The final item on Steve’s spreadsheet was the actual tickets to the actual Super Bowl game. John was allocated six tickets, as was each member of the teams. Clearly that was way too few for the ohana. John had tried bribing some of his teammates into giving up their tickets but he could only score three more. Nine tickets was still way short of the 22 they needed. It was a tiny mercy that Emma didn’t need a ticket since she was to be a guest of the NFL but they weren’t sure what to do about the shortfall.

“Call Roger Goodell,” Danny suggested as Steve continued to perseverate over the problem. “He owes you 11-hundred favors.”

“There is that,” Steve said, considering it. “I don’t want to risk any smack of impropriety for John.”

“He won’t be accused of fixing the game in John’s favor just because we need tickets,” Danny had
insisted. “Do you want me to call him?”

“Okay,” Steve had agreed finally. “No, wait. He needs to give them to us because we’re the former governor of Hawaii, not because we’re John’s father.”

“I don’t recall being governor of Hawaii,” Danny said, making Steve frown at him as he dialed his phone. “I guess he would be in his office on Saturday this close to the end of the season.”

“Yes, may I speak to Commissioner Goodell, please?” Steve asked. “Steve Williams-McGarrett… yes, former governor of Hawaii… yes, I’ll be glad to wait…. Commissioner.”

“Steve. So good to hear from you,” the Commissioner said when he’d picked up.

“You too, Roger. Great season,” Steve said. “It was good seeing you at the all-star game. I’m sorry we didn’t have time to chat.”

“Me too,” Roger said. “You’ll have to come to New York so we can talk.”

“Love to,” Steve said. “I’m sure you can guess why I’m calling.”

Roger laughed in confirmation. “Not to worry, Governor. I’ve already reserved a box in your name.”

“That isn’t necessary,” Steve said. “We can sit in the stands.”

“It’s frankly easier to give you one of the league boxes than find an entire section just for you,” Roger said.

“I guess that is true,” Steve said. “Can we pay you for the box?”

“Absolutely not,” Roger said. “We always reserve plenty for friends, supporters, the current and former governors of Hawaii.”

“You’ve talked to Kono, I see,” Steve laughed.

“Her office may have called earlier this morning,” Roger said. “Something about not being able to host the all-star game unless tickets were made available to the family of one of the quarterbacks?”

“She has always been especially good at empty threats,” Steve agreed.

“That’s precisely what I said. I thought she was going to inform you that the box was reserved.”

“She’s been tied up with the new legislature session. This time of year is always more crazy than normal.”

“True, true,” Roger said. “I know you don’t miss that part of the job.”

“There aren’t many aspects of the job I do miss,” Steve said.

“I hear that,” Roger said. “I’ll make sure I stop by your box during the game.”

“I look forward to it,” Steve said. “Thanks so much for your help.”
“Glad to do it,” Roger said. “And let’s plan to meet in New York in the spring. There are a couple of ideas I want to run by you.”

“Sounds good,” Steve said. “Have your office give me a call when you have the details.”

“You got it,” Roger said, ringing off after their good-byes.

“What’d he say?” Danny asked when he returned from the kitchen with two glasses of iced tea and a plate of warm from the oven cookies.

Steve told him about the box, and that the commissioner wanted him to come to New York in the spring.

“He’s going to offer you a job, again,” Danny said.

“I’ve told him no three times. Isn’t that enough?” Steve asked, taking another cookie.

Danny shrugged, giving his cheek a chocolaty kiss. “Then we won’t go to New York.”

“If you hadn’t forced me into teaching, I could work for the NFL,” Steve tried. He wasn’t even a little surprised with Danny laughed at him.

“You are such a bull-shitter,” Danny said looking over at the front door when it opened to admit Zach and Leah. “Hello son and soon to be daughter.”

“Danno,” Zach said with a nod. “Steve.”

“Hi ya,” Leah said as she followed Zach in. “Is Henry in the dining room?”

“Henry’s not here,” Danny said. “Is he supposed to be?”

“We’re meeting to talk about the wedding invitations,” Leah said, checking her phone. Her black hair fell in dark waves over her shoulder as she looked down at it, the tiny frown not marring her beautiful face. “At 12:30.”

“Huh,” Danny said, turning to Steve who was talking to Zach. “Did we know Henry was coming to meet with Leah?”

“He’ll be here in five minutes,” Zach said.

“How did you come by that information?” Danny asked him with a laugh.

“He’s stopping for Thai food,” Zach said.

“Oh,” Danny said. “Okay. Did you bring the invitation samples?”

“I have the entire book,” Leah said, indicating the fat binder in her oversize tote. “There must be a thousand different selections.”

“But you’ll know the one you like right away,” Steve assured her. “Danny picked ours out in five minutes.”
“I hope so,” Leah said. “Do you have your list ready?”

“Not yet,” Danny said. “I’m having trouble getting someone to narrow it down to 100 people.”

“I had no idea we knew so many people,” Steve admitted.

“It’s John and Leah’s wedding,” Zach reminded them. “You can’t only invite your friends.”

“They aren’t, sweets,” Leah assured Zach. “I’d like them to keep their list to 50 but I don’t think that’s possible.”

“Doesn’t seem likely,” Steve had to agree. “Unless we don’t invite any of our list. Zach’s right – it’s your wedding.” He looked over at Danny with one eyebrow cocked in question.

“Family only?” Danny said in tentative agreement.

“Ohana only,” Steve said. “That means only a dozen or so invitations.”

“I don’t know,” Leah said, chewing on her lip. “John will be disappointed if you eliminate your entire guest list.”

“We’ll still invite the Obamas,” Danny said. “And between our family and yours, the entire backyard will be filled to overflowing.”

“Plus John’s teammates,” Steve said.

“They will take up a lot of room,” Leah laughed. “All right. I’ll talk to John about it tomorrow.”

“Sounds good,” Steve said with a nod, greeting Henry when he entered with a cardboard box of food. “We’ve decided our invitation list will be Ohana only.”

“That will simplify things,” Henry said, leading them into the dining room. Zach followed Steve into the kitchen, returning with plates and silverware. Steve returned shortly after with beer for everyone except Zach who requested his usual water.

While they were eating, Steve told them about the box the NFL was providing them at the Super Bowl. They all agreed that it would make things a lot simpler, having everyone in one place.

“Did you tell John?” Leah asked them.

“Not yet,” Steve said. “I’ll text him when we’re finished eating.”

“The Commissioner wants Steve to come to New York this spring,” Danny said, laughing at Steve’s expression.

“Tell him no if you don’t want to talk about a job,” Leah told him just as Danny had.

Steve shrugged, nothing further to add to that part of the conversation.

“When will you start looking for your dress?” Zach asked Leah when there was a lull in the conversation.
“Mom and I are going to start looking right after the Super Bowl,” Leah said. “I think the bridesmaids can choose their own style as long as they are made from the same fabric.”

“That makes sense,” Henry said. “Especially since you’ll have so many of them.”

“Is it a lot to have six? My three sisters, Grace, Emma, and Alicia?” Leah asked.

“Are you sure Grace will do it?” Danny asked. “She keeps telling us she’s too old to be a bridesmaid.”

“She has to do it,” Leah said. “I can’t have my sisters without John’s sister.”

“She will,” Steve assured her. “She’d never disappoint John, or you, by refusing.”

“Good,” Leah said. “I am a little worried about Emma’s dress.”

“She’ll send her measurements and have it altered on base in plenty of time,” Steve said.

“And she will be given leave to come home,” Danny said, making it sound like the decision was his. But she rarely took leave, knowing she needed to save what she had for *ohana* occasions. And she didn’t want to have to depend on Steve calling in favors for every day off she was granted.

Steve ignored him, reaching for more food and making sure Zach had enough of his favorite dishes. By the time they were done with lunch, Chin, Malia, Grace, and Amou had joined them. Not that anyone was surprised, since the beach house tended to be a gathering place for their entire extended family.

“Where are our perfect grandchildren?” Danny asked Amou as they were clearing the table.

“Alania is at ballet class,” Amou said.

“Since she worships Alicia,” Danny acknowledged.

“Completely. Kelani is at the mansion at Mele’s birthday party. I wasn’t sure about leaving her but Grace said she needs some independence,” Amou said with a shrug. “I’ll go pick her up in ten minutes. It’s a Disney princess party so I may have trouble getting her to come with me. And Nohea is with my parents. Dad wanted to try painting him although I doubt No will sit still long enough for him to make any sketches.”

“You want me to come with you to pick up Kelani?” Danny offered.

“That might help,” Amou agreed. “Grand-Danno trumps even the princesses.”

“Glad to be of service,” Danny laughed.

“Hey Amou,” Chin called from the backyard.

“Yeah Bossman?” Amou called back.

“Your beautiful wife said you need to go pick up your beautiful daughter.”

“Roger that,” Amou said. “Grand-Danno is going to come with. Help pry her away from princess
heaven.”

“Good luck,” Chin said to Danny, laugh lines etched around his eyes.

“Swing by for Alania,” Grace reminded them before they got out the front door.

“We will,” Danny assured her with a wink as he closed the door.

“What about this one?” Leah asked. “Steve?”

“Huh?” he said, looking up at her. “I’m sorry. I didn’t hear what you said.”

She laughed and placed the book on his lap. “What about this invitation? Do you like it?”

*Oh God. This is one of those fatherly things he always tried to palm off on Danno. Did he really have an opinion on invitations?* He spared a quick glance over at Henry who was trying very hard not to laugh openly at him. He did give Steve a tiny nod before Steve turned his focus on the page Leah had displayed. The invitation looked…fine. It was white with gold lettering and scrolls. Nothing too fussy. “It’s nice,” he finally said, hoping that would suffice.

“I don’t know,” she said, retrieving the book and glancing over at Grace. “Don’t you think something a little fancier?”

Steve was temporarily off the hook when Leah sat back between Grace and Malia, their heads bent over the book.

“Good save,” Chin said quietly to Steve.

“There are still daddy duties I can’t fathom,” Steve admitted.

“I would guess that will always be true,” Chin said.

Henry came to sit next to Chin and agreed with his assessment. “SEAL school doesn’t teach you about wedding etiquette?” Henry laughed.

“Not when I went. I’ll double check with Em. Do I really need to have an opinion on invitations?” Steve asked softly, glancing at the women.

Chin laughed at him, shaking his head. “Dude.”

“If John were here, she would no doubt ask him,” Zach pointed out.

“There is that,” Steve said. “Grace only asked Danny. Although I have the feeling Rachel kept full veto power.”

“Mom was surprisingly hands-off,” Zach said. “Grace confided that she’d excepted her to be more…insistent.”

“Huh,” Steve said. “I hear you are getting serious about a certain professor of computing.”

Zach wouldn’t meet Steve’s eyes, staring instead into his glass. “She’s really nice.”
“And smart,” Chin said.

“And beautiful,” Henry added.

“And completely smitten with you,” Steve added. “That’s plain to anyone who sees you two together.”

“But I’m not… I don’t know….” Zach trailed off, unsure what else he wanted to say, or how to say it.

“No one has any expectations,” Steve assured him. “Take it in your own time. Felicia isn’t going to pressure you.”

“I know,” Zach said. “I was thinking about inviting her to the Super Bowl but she doesn’t really like football.”

“It’s not entirely about football,” Chin said. “Adele is performing the half-time show and Felicia is a big fan.”

“There is that,” Zach agreed. “Would it be okay if I invite her?”

“Of course you should,” Steve said. “She can share Alicia’s room.”

“Okay. I’ll talk to Mom and Dad just to make sure,” Zach decided.

“Good,” Steve said.

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The next Sunday, the entire Williams-McGarrett/Edwards clan and friends were bedecked in 49ers jerseys and gathered in the luxury box the NFL had so generously provided to them. Emma had just left the field, the pre-game festivities wrapped up. She was very glad to be up in the box, confiding that the field was engulfed in madness. There was still 20 minutes to kick-off, time she was glad to observe from a distance.

The box had plenty of room for all of them, the Kalakaua-Fong children exploring every inch of it. Charlie was standing guard over the food, preventing the kids from taking all of it. The waiter had assured them that he was on stand-by to provide any additional food or drink they might want and that spillage was not a problem. Still, the kids were buzzed by all the excitement. Plus it was well past their Hawaiian bedtime, their brief stay in Florida not giving them a chance to acclimate to the change in time. Kono confided that she fully expected all of them to be sound asleep shortly after kick-off.

Zach was being as attentive and solicitous as he knew how with Felicia. Because she and Zach had known each other for several years, she wasn’t unnerved by his unusual behaviors. She looked at him with patience and affection shining in her eyes, and he seemed to bloom under her attentions.

“Maybe he will have his happily ever after,” Danny whispered to Steve as they watched their interactions.

“He deserves it,” Steve said before smiling broadly at Zach when he sat down next to him, Felicia on Zach’s other side. “You both get enough to eat?”
“Goodness,” Felicia said in amazement. “How many people did they think were coming?”

“We told them 22,” Danny said with a laugh. “Not 222.”

“I think they plan to feed both teams and their entire families,” Felicia said.

“The NFL is very generous to the current and former governors of Hawaii,” Leah observed with a smile for Steve and Kono.

“It isn’t like they need to bribe us,” Kono said, getting up to rescue the crudités from the fingers of her four year old. Charlie was breaking up a fight between their six year old twins, assuring them they were still plenty of cupcakes for them both.

“Did you get to talk to John today?” Grace asked Leah from where she was sitting behind her.

“He called me at 3:00. He sounded excited, not nervous. Didn’t you think so, Steve?”

“Excited,” Steve agreed. “Did you see him down there?” he asked Emma.

“For a hot second,” Emma said. “I got a fist bump from him. And he said we may be able to meet Adele after half time.”

“Really?” Felicia asked breathlessly. “Oh my. That would be….” She waved a hand rather than try to explain her excitement at the possibility.

“The Commissioner said she would be in his box after the show,” Steve said. “He’ll bring her by if there’s time,”

“That would be wonderful,” Rachel said, smiling at the happiness on Felicia’s face.

“So we’re going to use maroon and gold as the colors,” Leah was saying to Alicia. “John said it didn’t need to be a 49ers wedding but we have to have colors anyway, don’t we?”

“It makes sense,” Alicia said. “They are very nice together and will make a beautiful wedding.”

“I’ll send you the fabric manufacturer and color. You’ll be able to have your dress made in New York, right?”

“It won’t be a problem,” Alicia assured her. “One of the ballet costumers does private sewing on the side. She said she’d make my dress.”

“That’s fabulous,” Leah said in delight.

“Do you want me to send you the design?” Alicia asked.

“Can you send it to me?” Emma requested. “I don’t have any idea what I should pick.”

“Sure,” Alicia agreed.

“Do you where you’ll be when you leave Virginia? Will you still be in the states?” Leah asked.
“I don’t know yet,” Emma said, aware that her fathers had begun listening to their conversation. “I probably won’t get my new orders until I’m released by medical.”

“Should I make a few calls?” Steve asked.

“No, Daddy,” Emma said with a sigh. “Please don’t.”

“All right,” Steve said, winking at Danny.

“I’ll get my dress made wherever I end up,” Emma promised Leah.

“I know. I’m not worried,” Leah assured her. “Have you decided?” she asked, turning in her seat to talk with Grace.

“Not yet,” Grace said. “I’m thinking I’ll match my dress to Alania’s. Or hers to mine.”

“That sounds like a good idea,” Leah said. “Henry will order the invitations when we’re back in Hawaii, won’t you?”

“Absolutely,” Henry agreed. “I have Kamekona reserved to cater.”

“I thought he’d come with us to game,” Emma said, glancing around as though to make sure she hadn’t overlooked him.

“He considered it,” Danny said. “But he decided to host several Super Bowl parties with signed 49er jerseys as prizes.”

“A great money making opportunity,” Chin said.

“He said he’d come to the next Super Bowl John plays in,” Malia added.

“Maybe next year,” Danny said, fist-bumping with Steve.

It wasn’t too much longer until the game got under way with much fanfare and celebration. It wasn’t long into the game that it was clear that the 49ers had come not just to play but to win. And win they did. They soundly defeated the Baltimore Ravens by a score of 28 – 10. John was chosen unanimously as MVP, Steve and Danny bursting at the seams in pride of the accomplishments of their “little” boy. They both had tears in their eyes as John accepted the Lombardi trophy on behalf of his entire team, dedicating the win to the 49er fans, and especially to his ohana. (Google reported that ohana was the most searched term for 24 full hours following the completion of the game.)
Now What?

Chapter Summary

Emma is concerned by the results of the presidential election. She turns to Steve for comfort and to have some of her concerns addressed.

Chapter Notes

Please forgive this bit of self-indulgence. The election rattled me in ways I cannot fully express. I respect everyone’s right to vote their conscience, and if you think I got this story wrong, I accept that. But if you disagree with the heart of this story, please don’t throw virtual rotten tomatoes at me. Thanks!

Steve was on the phone when the door that led to their private quarters opened. He expected it to be Danny as he was generally the only person who entered the Governor’s office through that particular door. But instead it was Emma who silently entered. That was doubly surprising since it was 9:20 on a school day. Danny hadn’t told him that Emma was home sick which worried Steve on several levels.

He signaled Emma to enter the rest of the way and sit in one of the chairs facing his desk. He studied her as he pretended to listen to the endless complaints of the Speaker of the House. Emma was wearing worn jeans and a long-sleeved tee-shirt with Kamekona’s face taking up most of the front. She looked…upset but not necessarily ill. He was even more confused when a tear slid down her cheek.

“Mr. Speaker….yes, I do understand the circumstance…yes, I too am concerned… We can discuss this further on Monday… I really have to go… yes, good-bye,” he finally said, putting down the phone and rounding his desk. “What’s wrong, baby girl?”

She barely glanced up at him, twisting her fingers into knots.

“Danny didn’t tell me you’d stayed home,” Steve said, reaching over to take one of her hands, trying to still some the agitation bleeding out through her fingers. “What’s the matter? Are you sick to you stomach? Are you coming down with a cold?”

“No,” she said, sniffing and accepting his handkerchief to wipe at her nose and cheeks. “I’m really worried.”

“You are?” Steve asked gently. He could guess what was bothering her so. The national election results had dismayed them all, none of the family quite able to believe the outcome. “Tell me what has you so upset.”
“I…” She was interrupted when there was a knock on Steve’s door. She started to stand up but Steve stopped her with a hand on her arm.

“Wait right here,” Steve said, going over to the door to open it a crack. “Yes, Henry?”

“Your 9:30 appointment is here, sir,” Henry replied, the confusion evident on his face. Steve almost never opened the door, more generally calling for the visitor to enter.

“Emma is here,” Steve said quietly, not opening the door any further. “Can you stall Secretary Miller?”

“Of course,” Henry replied, turning to leave without additional questions or comment.

“I’m sorry, Daddy. I shouldn’t be bothering you while you’re working,” Emma said, standing from her chair and looking up at her father with tear stained cheeks.

“You aren’t bothering me. And you are far more important that the Secretary of Commerce. Sit and tell me why you are crying,” Steve said, returning to the chair he had been occupying.

“I’m scared about what the election means,” Emma said in a shuddering voice.

“I’m sorry, baby,” Steve acknowledged. “No one expected this result.”

“What happens if they make same sex marriage illegal?” she blurted out. “Will you and Danno not be married any longer? What happens to me and John? Will we be illegitimate?”

“Oh baby,” Steve said, mopping up some of her tears. “Marriage is a states’ right issue. Hawaii has no intention of overturning the law that makes our marriage legal. Even if some of the legislators tried, I’d do everything in my power to prevent it. The US Supreme Court could overturn their decision which declared same sex marriage legal. But it would still be legal in Hawaii because the law has already passed.”

“But couldn’t they outlaw it everywhere?” Emma asked, sniffing.

“They US government can’t make a sweeping ruling about who can marry whom. It’s up to each state.”

“They can’t pass a law making same sex marriage illegal?”

“It’s up to each state,” Steve emphasized. “The only way they can make it illegal is to pass a constitutional amendment outlawing it. You don’t think that would happen, do you?”

“No,” Emma agreed. “But what if they never allow female SEALs? What if they decide women can’t be in combat?”

“There is that possibility,” Steve had to conceded. “But you can still attend Annapolis and serve in the Navy. You won’t be ready for college until after the next presidential election. A lot can change in four years.”

“Are you worried?” she asked, studying him with her wide scared eyes.

Steve hated it when any of his children were upset but for this to be the result of a national election
made him angry, and filled with not just a little trepidation. “I have concerns,” he had to admit. “While they can’t outlaw marriage equality, they can make life harder for those of us in one.”

“How?” she asked.

“They could make it harder for Danny to be on my insurance. They could change the tax laws so we can’t fill jointly,” Steve said.

“What about me and John as deductions? Will John be your son no matter what?”

“Of course he is,” Steve assured him.

“But what if….”

“When John was born, I was listed on his birth certificate, just like Danny is on yours. To make absolutely sure, I adopted John and Danny adopted you. It was redundant but we didn’t want there to ever be the slightest chance that our paternity could be questioned.”

“Oh,” she sighed. “So we can’t be disowned no matter what.”

“No you can’t. You and John are stuck with me and Danno until the bitter end,” Steve promised, squeezing her hand. It felt too small and delicate in his large, calloused one.

“I don’t guess you and Danno would move to Canada?” she asked with a half smile.

“Danny probably would but I’m sort of tied to Hawaii,” he told her.

“True that,” she said.

“Are you worried because you are a female?” he asked as gently as he could.

“Maybe if we were on the mainland, I’d be more worried. But until John graduates high school, I’ll be fine. No one is going to mess with me, not with John right there, and you and Danno former Five-0. Plus they know Uncle Chin is on speed dial. Nobody is going to mess with Uncle Chin.”

“There is that,” Steve agreed. “Does Danno know you are home?”

“Uh huh. I told him I was coming down to see you,” she said.

“Did you tell him why?”

“No. I didn’t want to upset him any more than I did already by not going to school,” she said.

“Tell him how you are feeling, baby. He understands and won’t yell at you, I promise.”

“But he will rant at the injustice of it all,” Emma said to Steve’s nods.

“Of course he will. He’d hardly be our Danno if he didn’t.”

“Yeah,” Emma said. “I talked to Zach earlier. He’s still stunned that somebody who makes fun of the disabled could be elected.”
“I know,” Steve said. “Danny is going to pick him up from school. I’m hoping being with us will help him feel more grounded.”

“I hope so,” Emma said. “I better go so you can get back to governing the state.”

“Are you sure? I’m in no hurry to hear about the rising tide of tourists to our great state.”


“Only so far as it strains the infrastructure. I’m sure Secretary Miller is going to tell me, again, how we need a bigger airport and if only we weren’t on a volcanic island, we could build a subway.”

“Will you come up for lunch?”

“I will,” Steve promised. “I don’t have anything on my calendar for noon.”

“Good,” Emma said, taking a deep breath. “Thank you, daddy. I do feel better now.”

“I’m glad. Tell Danny when you get upstairs, okay?”

She nodded and let herself out through the residence door. She wasn’t even a little surprised when Danny was waiting for her at the top of the stairway.

“Did Governor SEAL make you feel better?” Danny asked, taking her into his arms.

She shrugged, hugging him back. “He said you adopted me and he adopted John.”

“We did,” Danny said. “Not without arguing about it first. He said it wasn’t necessary but I said narrow minds were rampant. I’m doubly glad now we did it.”

“Me too. Daddy said your marriage won’t be made illegal. That helps.”

“It won’t. And if you can’t become a SEAL, you’ll still be able to serve,” Danny reminded her.

“I know. It’s just…”

“Unfair? Unbelievable? Unjustifiable?”


“Oh Lord. Those are not words I want to hear coming from my 13 year old’s mouth,” Danny said, leading her to the couch to sit. “But we are in the fortunate position that we can afford to provide you birth control. It’s those who can’t pay for it that will be hurt the worse.”

“Yeah,” Emma agreed. “I need to do something. I know I’m hardly even an adult, but there must be something I can do to make things a little better for Hawaiians, at least.”

“I’m sure there is,” he said, considering it. “What about the community garden? They are always looking for help.”

“The one that helps feed the homeless?” she asked. “I think I would like that.”
“Good. I’ll call the chief organizer and let her know you want to help,” he said, standing and going with her into his tiny office. “Once you’re older, there will be more ways you can help.”

She nodded, sitting on the one visitor chair in his office. There was barely room for it but he had managed to squeeze it in. John told Emma he thought he’d found the shortest chair possible so Steve’s knees were directly under his chin when he sat in it, but they had never shared those thoughts with either of their fathers.

Once Danny had finished his phone conversation, he told Emma she would be able to volunteer starting the next afternoon. “I have to email my permission then you’ll be all set. It will be as you can do it so it won’t interfere with cheerleading.”

“Thank you,” she said with a nod. “Would you take me to school? I think I’m ready to face it now.”

“Are you sure? Missing one day isn’t going to hurt,” Danny said.

“Shouldn’t you be encouraging me to go, not to stay home?” she asked with a laugh.

“I didn’t get to see much of you this weekend. And Steve is coming up for lunch. A rare treat. Stay and we’ll research other ways you can make a difference. Besides, I’ve already called you out for today.”

“Okay,” she agreed, smiling at her father. “I’m so glad you and Steve are my dads.”

“Me too,” Danny agreed, rounding his desk to kiss her. He had no way of knowing what the future would hold but he did know that he and Steve would do everything in their power to make sure that their children were loved, respected, and the center of their world. He only wished he could make the same promise to all children, not just the five he could try and shelter.
...And It Was Almost Christmas

Chapter Summary

Steve is learning what it means to be Governor of Hawaii. With Christmas right around the corner, his days are full to overflowing.

Chapter Notes

Written for simplyn2deep for 1_million_words Swap of Joy.

Merry Christmas, BB. Hope you enjoy it!!

Why, Steve thought as he sat behind his new desk in the Governor’s office. Why did the Governor of Hawaii have to be inaugurated on the first Monday of December? Did none of the previous governors have children who expected, rightly, that there would be presents under their Christmas tree? Did they not have children who needed their attendance at Christmas pageants, the Christmas parade, the Nutcracker? Even with Danny as back-up, Steve honestly had no idea how they would get everything done in time. Thankfully the decorating of the Governor’s mansion was done by staff. Even the tree in the residence would be procured and decorated by some of the unseen workers who kept the house running. Danny was in the process of learning all their names, a process he would no doubt repeat for Steve. It wasn’t that Steve was opposed to learning the names of every maid, cook, or… all the other hard workers who saw to their needs. But he was still trying to learn what the governor’s job was, what he was expected to do, and the names and positions of all those who were continually vying for his time.

The kids wanted a tree at the beach house but he didn’t think they’d get to put one up. He didn’t know how much time they’d spend there at any rate. Mary was there for a couple of more days but then she would be flying back to California. She didn’t want to put up a tree, not that Steve could blame her. Because of her trip to the islands for his inauguration, she wouldn’t be visiting them for Christmas. Her schedule wouldn’t allow for a second visit, with her law practice busier than she had ever anticipated.

He could hardly believe he’d officially been governor for three and half days. Each of those days had flown by, making him wonder if he’d ever get everything done. Especially with Christmas right around the corner.

Determined not to borrow trouble, he looked down at his desk with a sigh. It was piled high with paperwork of various descriptions. He’d thought there was a lot of paperwork involved in running Five-0, although admittedly Danny handled the lion’s share of that. He supposed he knew all those forms ended up somewhere but he was only now realizing that each and every one of them ended up on the governor’s desk, along with weekly? daily? hourly? reports from every other agency for which he was, as of Monday, ultimately responsible. Could he delegate this paperwork to Danny? He’d gotten really good at forging Steve’s signature. But no. It would bring a world of trouble on both their heads if Danny forged the governor’s signature on anything.
He was about to read the latest dispatch from the Honolulu harbor master when Patricia, the faithful, efficient, all-knowing secretary he’d inherited from Sam Denning, knocked and entered.

“Good morning, Governor,” she said as she had the previous three mornings. If she suspected Steve was in way over his head, she never made any indication. Maybe every governor she’d served had undergone the same learning curve and she was accustomed to pretending the person occupying the office knew precisely what was going on despite the obvious cluelessness.

“Good morning,” Steve said, standing automatically. She smiled a small indulgent smile, her eyes lighting up. “Aren’t you here early?” he asked, indicating that she take the chair facing his desk as he sat back in his.

“Only a little,” she said. “I have your briefings for today.” She handed him a stack of folders, color coded by importance. Red meant right away, pink for as soon as possible, a thick blue folder for Five-0 reports, and on down to plain manila – I said I’d give this to you and now I have. What you do with it is up to you.

There was only one red folder, he was relieved to see. It was from the statewide health department, reporting that two people had died from the flu sweeping the islands, both in the 80s. Sad but not entirely unexpected. They were asking that he alert them if he thought they should call the Center for Disease Control, which they were recommending be done. As tourist season was about to hit one of its yearly highs, he thought that wasn’t a bad idea.

“This flu is something,” Steve said, studying the report about the number of cases being reported.

“Yes sir, it is,” Patricia agreed. “Are you recommending they contact the CDC?

“I think it’s prudent to alert them. The tourists could spread our strain to the mainland and beyond,” he said.

“Do you want to call them or would you prefer I do that?” she asked.

“I’ll call. I need an update on how the hospitals are handling all the cases,” he said, setting the red folder aside for immediate attention. All of the folders made him doubt that his weekend would be free to him and his family. His first Friday was going to go into his first Saturday on the job. He could only hope the kids weren’t overly disappointed and that Danny didn’t rant overly much. No chance there, he knew.

Together they went through the most pressing folders, Patricia taking some of the tasks, Steve handling others, and designating some to Sebastian, hoping those responsibilities would take him out of the office for the entire day. He doubted he’d be so lucky as Sebastian either designated the tasks to someone else or handled them far too quickly for Steve’s comfort.

Steve kept the blue folder, assuring Patricia that he would discuss the “questionable” reports with Chin Ho Kelly. She smiled at his statement, returning her focus to her notepad to disguise some of her amusement.

“Come,” he called when there was a knock on his door. Henry entered with two big cups of coffee, one of which he placed before Steve.

“Thank you,” Steve said before he sipped the nectar of caffeine with a splash of cream.
“Tricia?” Henry asked, offering the second cup.

“No, dear. You have it,” she said. “Anything else, Governor?”

“Not right now. Thank you,” Steve said, standing as she left. He waved to the chair she had vacated, inviting Henry to sit. “How can I help you?”

“I’m waiting to see what I can do for you, sir,” Henry said, sipping his coffee.

“Excellent,” Steve said, picking up a stack of folders. “Can you get these to Sebastian? They are straight-forward and if he has any questions, he can ask Patricia.”

Henry tried to disguise his smile behind his cup but did not entirely succeed. “You can replace him, you know.”

Steve sighed heavily. “It’s not that I haven’t considered it on more than one occasion. But Sam said he’s really good at his job when you get past his attitude.”

“He excels at being Chief of Staff,” Henry agreed.

“Is he unkind to our employees? What he might think of as junior staff?”

“He treats everyone with the same…disdain, sir,” Henry said.

“He treated Sam that way?”

“Yes sir,” Henry agreed.

“Huh,” Steve said, considering it. “Well…I’m glad it’s…” Anything else he could have said was cut off by a knock on the door. “Come,” he called automatically, making a quick check of the schedule Patricia had given him. According to the paper, this would be the house majority leader, here to discuss the upcoming legislative session that would begin in January.

“Speaker Māhoe?” Henry asked.

“That’s what my schedule says,” Steve said, standing as the older man entered. He was only five feet tall and possibly older than Moses. But his eyes sparkled with intelligence and some amusement. “Speaker,” Steve said, extending his hand in greeting.

“Governor. Mr. Emery,” Mr. Māhoe said, shaking his hand as well.

“If you’ll excuse me, I’ll take these out,” Henry said with a nod to the Speaker.

“He treated Sam that way?”

“Yes sir,” Henry agreed.

“A cup of coffee, so long as you promise not to tell my wife,” the Speaker said with a wrinkly wink, sitting on the indicated seat.

“You have my solemn word,” Steve said, sticking out his head to request the coffee from Patricia.
Mr. Māhoe was the first of many state officials who had a slot on Steve’s schedule throughout the day. It was only because Patricia insisted he stop to eat that he had a chance for any lunch. By the time he’d finished eating, his schedule was officially 45 minutes behind.

“I apologize for the delay,” Steve said to Doug Chin, the state Attorney General and his assistant, Russell Suzuki as Patricia showed them in.

“No need, Governor,” Mr. Chin said in a chilly voice. “Your secretary was good enough to let us know you were running behind.”

“Good,” Steve said, sitting back behind his desk, the other two men taking the chairs facing. This was not going to be a happy meeting. Mr. Chin was no fan of Five-0 and less so of Steve. Steve understood, in theory, why the attorney general objected to some of their methods but no one could deny that the state was a safer place because of the work of Five-0. Now that Steve outranked Mr. Chin, maybe he’d hide a little of the contempt he felt for his new boss. “You’ve come to discuss the possibility that the Eternal Sunshine Foundation is less than honest about its charitable mission.”

That earned Steve a tiny nod of respect from Mr. Chin. “We’ve reviewed their reports for the previous three years,” Mr. Chin said, handing Steve a file.

The folder was palest green. He didn’t have that color in his system so at least it wouldn’t get lost in his piles. He opened to the first page, a summary of their findings. “You want to shut them down.”

“That would be the best possible outcome,” Mr. Chin said. “That process can be time consuming and expensive.”

“If they are cheating the citizens of Hawaii, they need to be prevented from harming anyone further,” Steve said.

“We were hoping that, perhaps,” Mr. Suzuki said, clearing his throat, “that Five-0 could take on their own investigation.”

“Oh,” Steve said, surprised by this turn. Mr. Suzuki was more appreciative of the efforts of Five-0 although he had some of the same doubts as his boss. “You believe the activities of the charity are criminal.”

“We are in possession of anonymous information that implies they are not what they proclaim to be,” Mr. Suzuki said.

“You hardly need to come to me with this,” Steve said. “You are welcome to approach Chin Ho Kelly.” Surely they knew that. This was most curious.

“We are hesitant to go to him directly,” Mr. Suzuki admitted with a quick glance at his boss. “We thought that it came from you, it might…”

“Be investigated more expeditiously?” Steve finished for him.

“Five-0 is the governor’s task force,” Mr. Chin said, sounding only slightly agitated by the fact. “As you know all too well, they are not under the jurisdiction of my office.”

Steve almost laughed at him but prevented it at the last minute. “Indeed they are not.”
“And it is outside the usual scope of their…mandate,” Mr. Suzuki added quickly, attempting to prevent a full scale throw down.

“I’ll talk to Chin Ho,” Steve assured them. “All of the key players are in here?”

“They are,” Mr. Suzuki said. “I’ll be available to address any additional questions once you have briefed him.”

“Of course,” Steve said with a nod. “What else can I do for you?”

They discussed several of the investigations that Five-0 had conducted while Steve was a candidate for the governor’s office, a few of them making Mr. Chin’s face pale as he listed the illegal ways in which the task force had solved the crimes.

“But they succeeded,” Steve pointed out more than once.

“We won’t get a conviction,” Mr. Chin insisted.

“The leading players are dead,” Mr. Suzuki said as smoothly as possible.

“And if they were dead at the hands of any other law enforcement agency, there would be a full scale investigation,” Mr. Chin said, a little too loudly.

“This is an old argument,” Steve said evenly. “I have no intention of changing the way in which Five-0 operates. They answer directly to me now – means and immunity will remain in place.”

“Convenient,” Mr. Chin muttered.

“Of course,” Mr. Suzuki said quickly, standing to indicate the discussion was over for him. Mr. Chin followed suit.

“Please make sure that you attend the holiday reception on the 21st,” Steve said, showing them out of his office.

They acknowledged his words and it was all he could do not to slam the door shut behind them. He knew Mr. Chin felt very little for him other than contempt but he hadn’t known the man hated Steve. Well, that worm had turned. He tried very hard not to gloat over the fact.

He had no idea how much of his day had passed when Patricia stuck her head into his office. “Sir, it’s 3:25.”

“Excellent,” he said, standing and stretching. “I’ll be back in 15 minutes.”

“Of course,” she said as he slipped through the door that led up to the residence.

He made it to the dining room just as Danny arrived with Emma, Dancy, John, and Alicia.

“Hello,” he greeted them, accepting hugs and kisses from all those inclined, especially glad to receive both from Danny. “Where’s Zach?” he asked when they were all settled at the table, waiting for one of the cook’s helpers to provide their afternoon/after school snacks.

“Still at school,” Emma said, showing Dancy something on her phone. They giggled quietly, Steve
lifting an eyebrow to Danny.

“He’s working on a program for his advanced computer science class,” Alicia explained. “Mom is picking him up at 4:15.”

“I’m surprised you were able to come see us,” Steve said. Alicia was portraying Clara in the Nutcracker and almost all of her non-school, non-sleep time had been consumed with rehearsal.

“With dress rehearsal tonight, we have to be there at 6:00,” she said. “You’re still coming, right?”

“Of course,” Danny said, thanking Lalla when she arrived with cookies and milk for the kids, coffee for the adults.

“We wouldn’t dare miss it,” Steve said.

“We’re meeting Grace and Amou there,” Danny said. “Unless Five-0 catches a case but I told Chin that that would only happen at the risk of his death, or possible maiming.”

Steve shook his head at that, knowing he was all talk. “Chin and Malia coming?”

“They’ll meet us there as well,” Danny confirmed.

“Are you coming with?” John asked Dancy.

“I can’t tonight,” she said. “I have to go to the church and help Mom decorate.”

“You can come another night, can’t you?” Alicia asked.

“We have tickets for next Friday,” Dancy said. “You’re coming with us, right?” she asked Emma.

“Sure,” Emma agreed. “Your mom will pick me up?”

“Yep,” Dancy said. “I’ll remind her when she comes for me.”

“Kay,” Emma said, turning to watch Henry enter the dining room. “Hey.”

“Emma, Dancy, John, Alicia, Detective,” he said in greeting, going around the table in order.

“You need me?” Steve asked, hoping the answer would be a resounding no.

“I’m afraid so,” Henry said reluctantly. “Dr. Pressler wants to talk to you about the flu.”

Steve nodding, returning his coffee and half eaten cookie to the table. “All right.”

“It’s bad, huh?” John asked.

“I’m afraid so. And getting worse,” Steve said as he stood to go talk to the director of the Department of Health.

“You need to be up here by 7:00 so we can get to the theater in time,” Danny reminded Steve as Henry trailed him out.
“I’ll make sure,” Henry said before closing the door behind them.

“We never see Daddy any more,” Emma said with a frown at the door.

“Things will settle down,” Danny said, keeping his fingers crossed – in case he was completely wrong. “He didn’t keep regular hours before, remember.”

“I know,” Emma said with a sigh. “Come on, Danc, Alicia. You can help me pick out a dress to wear tonight.”

“Cool,” Alicia said as they all left.

“You’re taking a pass on the dress choice?” Danny asked John who was reaching for another cookie. That was number six, not that Danny was exactly counting.

“I can’t imagine anything that would be less interesting,” John said.

“You make a good point,” Danny had to agree. Not that he’d ever tell Emma he felt that way about her wardrobe choices. “How was school?”

“The usual,” John said with a shrug. “I’m glad it’s Friday.”

“Yeah,” Danny agreed. “Maybe we’ll actually get to see Steve this weekend.”

“That would be different,” John said. “When’s Mary flying back?”

“Monday,” Danny said. “She’s coming for lunch tomorrow. I invited her to the Nutcracker but she has plans with some friends.”

John nodded, done with that part of the conversation. As far as he was concerned, Mary was simply Steve’s sister, nothing more. Danny was glad he saw her that way, and wasn’t conflicted about his admittedly unusual parentage.

“Did you see Zach this afternoon?” Danny asked, watching John eat cookie number seven.

“Right after lunch. He’s cool. He said he was almost finished with the project and wanted to get it done before the weekend.”

“All right,” Danny said.

“He’s coming tonight, with Rachel and Stan.”

“Good,” Danny said.

“Are we still going Christmas shopping on Sunday?” John asked.

“We are. Steve is coming if his schedule stays clear,” Danny said.

“Did you know being governor was so…much?”

“I had an idea but it’s even more complicated that I would have ever thought possible,” Danny admitted.
“And he blames you,” John said with a smile reminiscent of both his fathers.

“Completely,” Danny confirmed. “I’m sure he blames me for the flu too.”

“Probably,” John said, taking a last cookie before standing up.

“Where are you off to?” Danny asked, looking up at him.

“I’m going to play some video games.”

“Get in some ‘man’ hours before the ballet,” Danny said with a knowing smile.

“Yep. But if you tell Alicia, I’ll call you a liar to your face,” John threatened, making Danny laugh.

“That is no way to speak to you father,” Danny tried.

“Okay,” John said with a shrug as he left the dining room, followed by his father’s laughter.

~0~

With much cajoling and herding by Danny, the family made it to the theater at 7:20. They were directed to the second row behind the orchestra, that row and the one in front of it roped off for the Governor and his guests. The family filed into the center seats, Leon and Tua on the outside as protection and interference to any who might be more interested in talking to the governor than watching the ballet. It may have been redundant with the head of Five-0 and his second in command also in the row but formalities needed to be followed even in these non-threatening circumstances. It was also protocol that Kono wasn’t in attendance at the ballet. Steve had tried to ignore Sebastian’s insistence that she not attend but Kono had understood the reasoning. Not that anyone thought unknown terrorists would target the auditorium during dress rehearsal of the Nutcracker but best to err on the side of caution. And Steve could avoid having to listen to Sebastian bitch about it for the next month if Kono remained absent. She had promised Alicia that she and Charlie would bring the kids before the ballet had its final performance.

It wasn’t surprising that even without Kono, Charlie and their children, those in Steve and Danny’s party took up the entire row. They were always a crowd unto themselves whenever they were all together. Not that Steve would ever have it any other way.

Zach was sitting to Steve’s left, John to Zach’s other side. They seemed to be discussing the dancers listed in the program, Zach reporting what Alicia had told him about a few of the principal dancers. Danny was to Steve’s right, talking to Emma although Steve couldn’t quite make out what the topic of conversation was. Not that it mattered.

Danny finished his discussion with Emma, turning to look back at the auditorium filled with the families and guests of the dancers. A glance at his watch confirmed that it was 7:40, ten minutes after the ballet should have started.

“I wonder what the hold up is,” Danny said to Steve who looked at his watch in reaction.

“Huh,” Steve said. “They usually start right on time, even for dress rehearsal.”

“I hope everything’s okay,” John said, regretting the words when a look of concern settled on Zach’s
“I’m sure everything’s fine,” Rachel said, hoping to ease Zach’s worry.

“Leon,” Steve called down the row. “Can you find out what’s going on, please?”

“Of course sir,” Leon said, unfolding his six foot four frame and ambling down the aisle. He went out through the door closest to the stage which would lead him to the backstage area. It was five or so minutes later when he returned, entering the front row in order to address the entire family. “The dancer who performs the role of the prince had to bring his son. No one in his family could watch him as they usual do because they all have the flu.”

“That’s unfortunate,” Stan said.

“Can’t the other dancers tend him while he performs?” Rachel asked, trying to sound sympathetic but not entirely succeeding.

“His son is deaf, ma’am. None of the dancers sign,” Leon explained. “The boy isn’t comfortable being left with people who can’t understand him.”

“That is a bad position,” Rachel had to agree.

“I’ll go see him,” Steve said, standing.

“What are you going to do?” Danny asked as he stood with him. “Order them to dance?”

“Of course not. I’m going to tell the prince we’ll watch his son,” Steve said as though it should have been obvious.

“How is that going to help?” Danny asked, following Steve and Leon down the aisle. “He still won’t have anyone who understands him.”

“I’ll understand him,” Steve said.

“What?” Danny asked, stopping Steve beside the door that led to the backstage area. “How will you understand him?”

“I’ll sign to him. And understand when he signs to me,” Steve said.

“You sign?” Danny asked in astonishment. “You know American Sign Language?”

“Didn’t I just say that?” Steve asked, looking down at Danny with a familiar amused expression.

“You sign. You sign and you never told me,” Danny said.

“Yes I sign. It’s never come up or I would have told you,” Steve said.

“I thought I knew everything there was to know about you,” Danny said, sounding beyond surprised. “After all these years. After everything we’ve been through. And only now I find out you can sign.”

“It’s not like it’s classified,” Steve laughed. “I didn’t keep it from you. There was just never any
reason for me to tell you.”

Danny shook his head, reaching up to kiss Steve on his laughing lips. “We’re going to discuss this at some length later.”

“I have no doubt,” Steve laughed, kissing Danny lightly before opening the stage door.

Leon directed them to Madame Fracci who had been the ballet master for longer than Steve and Danny had been alive. Or least that was the rumor.

“Madame, this is Governor Williams-McGarrett,” Leon said, indicating the Governor. “And I think you know Detective Williams-McGarrett.”

She looked up at the men, her piercing gaze all-knowing. “Nice to meet you, Governor. Detective,” she said in her faded but still there accented voice.

How was it, Steve wondered ideally, that he’d never met Madame Fracci up until now? Because he’d been busy chasing down the criminal element while Danny had been the primary parent to their children and secondary parent to the Edwardses? It was a little bit disheartening to realize how much of the children’s lives he had already missed.

“How was it, Steve wondered ideally, that he’d never met Madame Fracci up until now? Because he’d been busy chasing down the criminal element while Danny had been the primary parent to their children and secondary parent to the Edwardses? It was a little bit disheartening to realize how much of the children’s lives he had already missed.

“Nice to meet you as well,” Steve said, accepting her firm handshake even if her hand felt like a flesh covered skeleton.

“I trust you will secure adequate funding for our school,” she said, her eyes penetrating him in ways that made him want to agree to anything she suggested.

“I’ll do my best,” Steve said, hoping that was sufficiently vague.

“Steve. Danny,” Alicia said as she approached, dressed and ready to dance the part of Clara.

Steve was glad Alicia had come along when she did so Madame Fracci couldn’t ask him any additional questions. Instead she turned her glare on Alicia, and Steve was certain the temperature plummeted by 10 degrees.

“Is this how we speak to the Governor and his spouse?” Madame Fracci demanded, her voice low and hard, one elegantly penciled browed arched.

“It is when we are her other parents,” Danny said, knowing all too well how to deal with the Madame. “We’ve been Steve and Danny since before she was born.”

“Indeed,” the Madame said, turning her steely gaze on him. He just smiled at her, not the least fazed by her disapproval of the informality.

“Are you here about Gilbert’s son?” Alicia asked, as equally unworried about Madame’s frosty demeanor.

“Turns out Steve can sign,” Danny said, still amazed at this revelation.

“So we’ll take Gilbert’s son if he’s okay with that,” Steve said.

“Oh,” Alicia said with a relieved smile. “That would be awesome.” She turned to wave at a man
wearing the traditional costume of the prince who was holding a boy of about four. “Gilbert, Steve can sign to Thomas.”

Gilbert approached, looking up at Steve. “You’re Steve Williams-McGarrett.”

“I am,” Steve agreed, smiling at Gilbert and Thomas in turn. He signed ‘my name is Steve’ to the little boy who nodded shyly and signed ‘Thomas.’ “If you don’t have any objections, Danny and I will keep Thomas with us while you perform,” Steve said, his words accompanied by the signs so Thomas would understand.

Gilbert looked down at Thomas who was staring up with wide eyes at Steve. They were eyes filled with awe and… something that Steve couldn’t quite decipher.

“What do you say, Thomas?” Gilbert asked and signed. “He’s Alicia’s step-father.”

That was close enough, a shortcut the families often used rather than trying to explain *sometime parents* to people who didn’t already know.

“He belongs to Alicia?” Thomas signed.

Steve translated for Danny who smiled at the boy. “I do,” Steve agreed. “I’d be happy to have you sit with us while your father dances.”

“Daddy’s a good dancer,” Thomas informed Steve.

“I’ve been told that. I’ve never seen him dance,” Steve said, making Thomas frown.

“Never?” Thomas asked.

“Not yet. I will tonight,” Steve said. “Do you want to sit with us?”

“Okay,” Thomas agreed.

Gilbert kissed Thomas on the head and then transferred him into Steve’s arms. “Thank you,” Gilbert said, love in his eyes as he looked at Thomas.

“Is there anything special we need to know?” Danny asked. “Allergies? Or…?”

“No,” Gilbert said. “He’s a standard issue four year old.”

“Excellent,” Danny said, smiling at Thomas and Steve who were having a private conversation. “We’ll return him at the end of the performance.”

“Don’t be surprised if he falls asleep before intermission,” Gilbert said, smoothing down a wayward tuft of black hair. Thomas shrugged away, still intent on his conversation with Steve.

“Not a problem. We’ve had plenty of children use us as a bed over the years.”

“I can imagine,” Gilbert said, turning to Madame Fracci. “We’re ready now.”

“Indeed,” she said, turning an elegant half circle to address the various dancers standing around. “To your places.”
They scurried off, their shoes making the familiar light thumping noise on the wooden floor as they left.

Leon led Danny, Steve and Thomas back to the auditorium, waiting as they returned to their seats.

“This is our family,” Steve signed to Thomas who was looking at the assembled members with huge eyes.

“All of them?” Thomas asked.

“Some by blood. Some by love,” Steve signed.

“Ohana,” Thomas said, Steve nodding.

“Precisely,” Steve said, turning his attention to the stage when the house lights dimmed.

Madame Fracci appeared to express her appreciation in the audience’s patience and to let everyone know that the performance would begin with no further delay.

Steve signed to Thomas what she was saying, the little boy’s attention more focused on the stage in anticipation of the dancers appearing.

Danny looked over at Steve holding Thomas and signing to him as though it was something he did on an every day basis. If he hadn’t already been utterly and completely in love with the big goof, Steve’s obvious kindness and understanding of Thomas would have charmed him into it. And to learn that Steve could still surprise him…he never expected that.

~0~

The ballet was a total success, going very smoothly once it got underway. Everyone agreed that it seemed more like a true performance than a dress rehearsal. As Gilbert predicted, Thomas had fallen asleep shortly after the Nutcracker turned into the Prince and took Clara to the Land of Snow.

Steve and Danny returned the sleeping Thomas to Gilbert, John and Emma remaining under the watchful eyes of the rest of the ohana. They told Alicia how very impressed they were with her performance, Danny promising to return if he had the time, certain Emma would also want to come back, not just with Dancy and her mother.

“I’ll ask Zach too,” she said, the color still high on her cheeks.

“Of course, love,” Danny said, kissing her head before saying their good-byes and leaving.

When they returned to the mansion, John and Emma went straight up to bed, tired and ready to sleep. Steve made some noise about returning to his office but Danny said absolutely not. He drug Steve upstairs in order to demonstrate how much he was in love with his husband.

“Well,” Steve said when they lay sated and loose limbed. “I had no idea American Sign Language was an aphrodisiac.”

“Only when you use it,” Danny said, one hand lazing up and down Steve’s chest that had only stopped heaving. “Why do you know how to sign?” Danny asked, managing to leverage up on one
elbow to look at Steve.

“One of the instructors at Annapolis was deaf. We had to learn to sign to take his class.”

“Huh,” Danny said, considering it. “I don’t think I would have ever expected that.”

“It was unusual. But it is a useful skill to have. I taught several sailors who had lost their hearing in combat.”

“They would need to know,” Danny said.

“Yep,” Steve said with a yawn. “Do you think Gilbert will ask us to watch Thomas again?”

Danny gave him an indulgent smile at that. “You’d like that, wouldn’t you?”

“Yeah,” Steve said. “Let’s have another baby.”

“Nope,” Danny said with no hesitation.

“No. Just like that?” Steve asked.

“It won’t be long until Grace and Amou have children. I don’t want a child only a few years older than our first grandchild.”

“We wouldn’t be the only grandparents with a child a little older than a grandchild,” Steve said.

“No. I’m not asking Mary to have my baby, and I can say with a great deal of certainty that my sisters will not have yours.”

“We could use a surrogate,” Steve said. He wasn’t sure if he was serious or just trying to see how far he could take it with Danny. Not that he’d object to having another child. But Danny did have valid reasons for being content with the perfect children they already had.

“We could but we’re not,” Danny said. “Go to sleep. You’ll be over this baby fever in the morning.”

“Did you see how cute Thomas was?” Steve tried. “With those gigantic brown eyes and that black hair?”

“Go to sleep,” Danny repeated, reaching over and turning off the light.

“All right,” Steve conceded. “But I’m asking Santa to bring us a baby for Christmas.”

“Good luck with that,” Danny said, kissing him and curling tightly around him before they both drifted off to sleep, dreaming of sugar plums and dancing mice.

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