Summary

Post series finale. After a devastated Chuck is left with an overbearing ultimatum of forgetting his lost love or death; the tables begin to turn as she returns and he is left, hopelessly trying to remember her...
Forgetting Sarah Walker

Chuck VS His Heart

Chapter 1: Forgetting Sarah Walker

The lonely room in which Chuck lay was drowned in silence. Chuck's eyes were continually gazing upon the portrait of his lost love - Sarah Walker. A droning beat repeatedly thumped against his heart as his scruffy face filled with sadness. He continually fiddled with his wedding ring - a calming motion that he had grown accustomed to over the past year. Memory can be a powerful thing. For when it is there, people don't seem to recollect it and are oblivious to its power. Recalling a memory can bring about happiness, laughter, disbelief and also amazement at how much your life has changed. But losing your memory not only alters your life, but the lives of the people that surround you. This was the predicament that Chuck Bartowski currently faced. His love’s memory had been swiped away from him and so had she.

More than a year had passed since Sarah Walker left Chuck by the beach side where they both, at some point in their lives, told the other to trust them. He recalled that day in his head over and over again. The following moment after they shared their final kiss repeatedly made him cringe. He loathed the memory of her departure yet he couldn’t shake it from his mind. She left him – she was gone. He kept telling himself that she would return; that of course she would come back! But a devilish manifestation whispered evil in his ear. The malignant being would profess: “She is a spy, Chuck! She won’t come back. She doesn’t love you like she used to. She has no need to return. Don’t make her a burden on your soul…” This inner conflict caused a burning sensation inside his heart. She was his wife – his wife! It all seemed supernatural to him. Sarah never loved him anymore. Through all the obstacles that they had to hurdle over, this one was by far the most bizarre. It was so clear to him that they were meant to be; yet obstacles always seemed to get in the way. He felt like his life was a TV show; as though the Berlin Wall kept them separate and he never acquired the correct tools to break down the obstacle.

Chuck recalled the day she said her final goodbyes:

The dawning sun began to set as she packed her luggage into her suitcases. Chuck was torn between asking her to stay and allowing her to go, but he knew that she needed to leave. He constantly reminded her that he was there for her if she ever needed him. But Sarah never seemed to respond to that statement. He assumed she just couldn’t find the right words to say. “So where are you going?” he curiously asked.

“I am not sure. The CIA will probably reassign me somewhere undercover…”

“I will probably never see you again, right?” A lump formed in his throat. As Sarah nodded in response to his question, he swallowed.

Once her bags were packed she gazed upon his eyes, remaining silent and distant. Chuck knew why. Sarah wanted more than anything to remember. She just couldn’t! She felt like she was stuck in a state of grievance and animosity. Her top teeth compressed against her bottom lip as she searched for something soothing to say. But nothing seemed to spring to mind. He decided to break the ice.

“So I guess this is goodbye,” he stated. His assuring smile calmed her to an extent, giving her confidence to respond.

“Uh, yeah…”

Silence consumed the room again. Chuck’s face seemed positive, but he was never a very good poker player. She knew that inside he was dying to plead for her not to go! He wanted her to try
and work things out between them but never preached his true feelings. He didn’t want to put pressure on her and she understood why. “Chuck, I’m sorry. I only know how to be a spy…I can’t be the person that you need me to be. If things wer-“

“I know, Sarah,” he interrupted. She bit her lip again. He still smiled reassuringly, regardless of the tornado stirring in his mind. “But can you promise me something,” he continued, extracting his mother’s – Sarah’s – bracelet that he had been carrying around with him. “I once gave this to you…” Her mouth widened as a stunned expression overshadowed her face – the bracelet was beautiful! “I was just wondering if you would like to keep it. Just a reminder that there’s someone in Burbank you can rely on.”

She inspected the bracelet and contemplated rejecting the offer; but a warm sensation overcame her. Looking at the symbolic object brought her comfort and she knew it would serve as a reminder of her safe Haven in Burbank. She raised her eyes to Chuck’s and accepted the family antique. This relaxed him, making his smile appear more sincere. As she placed the bracelet in her pocket, she glanced at Chuck one last time before she walked out his door for good…

Chuck remained gloomy in his room ever since that tragic day. Stacks of bills continued to pile right outside his door. The offer to return to the CIA was still up for grabs and seeing as he was the Intersect; it was highly unlikely that anyone would deny him the opportunity. Among many things stopping him from accepting this offer was the beckoning question - who would be on his team? Casey had run off with Verbanski, Morgan had promised Alex not to re-join the spy world and Sarah - well, Sarah was non-existent. But Beckman wasn’t one to accept the answer ‘no’, even in its polite form as ‘no mam’! She needed Chuck Bartowski and she knew that there was nothing holding him back except for his broken heart. Beckman danced the same routine that she had done before - sabotaging all his job interviews to force him to work for her (not that he applied for many jobs. He was too busy moping around, eating cheese balls in his apartment). Everyone, including Beckman, was worried about him. They knew the separation with Sarah was harsh, but in order for him to survive he needed to earn money to put food on the table.

"Chuck?” called Morgan, as he knocked on Chuck's bedroom door to check in on him. He entered the room, revealing to him Chuck’s depressed state. "Chuck, buddy; you got to get out of this room!” he exclaimed.

"I get out of this room. I go to the bathroom..."
"Buddy, you haven't got a job in months and Alex and I can't keep bailing you out of your financial crisis. It is time to stop indulging in this sorrow, man!"
"You don't understand Morgan. I lost her...again! This time forever." The emotion that Chuck felt was shown through his pleading eyes. Every waking moment he would recollect that day – the day she left. The slight twitch of his lips indicated his need to cry; but he shut his eyes in an attempt to hold back his tears. Morgan decided to ignore his comment since he had heard it time after time over the past agonising year. He had sympathised with Chuck and had been his shoulder to cry on. Heck, even Morgan cried when he heard that Sarah was gone. But the days steadily turned into months and the months soon became a year.

"I spoke to Beckman, Chuck," Morgan replied. "You know she wants you back. And at first I was like 'hey, I know you don't want to get back into the spy world, so you don't have to accept the offer', but now I'm saying you should. This is the best job you are ever going to get. And it’s probably the only one that you can get!"

"I don't need a job, Morgan. I need Sarah!" The bearded friend began to get frustrated. He had been through this before - first with Jill, then with Sarah...now with Sarah again. Every day was the same routine. Chuck would wake up, eat breakfast; maybe watch some TV and then continue to mope around in his room again. Morgan missed Sarah too. There was no denying that. But it was
easier for him to move on – he wasn’t her soul mate! He knew that Chuck was going through a severe state of turmoil but time had progressed and Chuck hadn’t. Morgan fretted over his best friend’s state as it was incredibly unhealthy. The signs clearly pointed in the direction of her never returning. Denial was spewing out of the ‘Pot of Sorrow’ and everyone – except Chuck - had already leaped out of the boiling water.

Over the course of losing her, Morgan and Chuck's entire relationship revolved around Sarah. No more re-watching of 'Star Wars' or the 'Die Hard' trilogy; no more game night and no more just plain hanging out. Everyone was moving on with their lives and it was time Chuck did too. They all missed her immensely but she was never coming back. Chuck was the only one that hadn’t fully accepted that. Though Morgan had been assured that she would never return…

He thought back to a few weeks after Sarah had left. He had received a call from Casey reporting that he had bumped into Sarah in Europe. Upon confronting her, Casey asked where she was going but she spared no details. He then told her how badly Chuck was coping with her departure and asked if she would cheer him up with a visit. But Casey exclaimed to Morgan that her response wasn’t satisfactory. She had stated that she wasn’t ready to speak to Chuck. If she saw him, she would spur false hope in his heart and make him believe that a chance for them to rekindle their love might be possible. She didn’t want to be the anchor on his soul, preventing him from being happy. She felt that she would never fully remember him and as long as she stayed away, Chuck would have a chance to move on.

Though, no one was aware that his depression would continue till long after their confrontation.

So Morgan knew that Sarah was long gone. He felt that Chuck had to at least attempt approaching the real world. Morgan felt that he had to be harsh to his best friend; for if he wasn’t, nothing would change. He knew he had to make a plundering statement that would get Chuck out of bed. So Morgan, finally getting fed up, just snapped...

"No Chuck," he chirped, "You DON'T need Sarah, all right!? Sarah is gone! Forever. You got to move on, man. We are worried about you. It has never been this bad before. We know, we get it, we understand why - she was your wife. But apparently Chuck, she wasn't the one!" Chuck darted his head towards Morgan's, astounded by what he just said.

"Don't you DARE say that," he responded. "Don't you DARE say Sarah wasn't the one! Of cause she was...is. How could you..." He began to get teary, his voice a higher pitch, "How could you say that to me, man? This is Sarah. Sarah. And as hard as it is for everyone to understand, losing her is like losing the world. I lost the world - my world. When she left, so did my whole essence. And buddy, I don't know what to do. I don't know what to live for. Without her my life - it's...empty." Chuck began to sob. His skin had become raw from all the tears that had streamed down his face. He just couldn’t get himself to move on.

With him weeping (like he did every day), Morgan knew that it was time to get his best friend out of the ‘Pot of Sorrow’. And he knew that turning his best friend back into a spy was the only way to do that.

"Get dressed, Chuck. We are going to go see someone very important."

This command caused Chuck to immediately look up. His weepy eyes suddenly broadened with false hope. Was Morgan referencing the same person that had been on his mind the entire time? Was this her – the one that caused him to shed his tears? Was it Sarah? - All these thoughts charged through him as he contemplated whether the missing piece of his puzzle had finally returned.

"Sarah??" he daringly asked.

"No, Beckman!"

Well that dream shattered.
Leaned back and disappointed, Chuck remained seated upon the couch in his living room. Morgan had convinced him to meet Beckman by providing him with an ultimatum – either he talks to Beckman and Morgan will continue to pay his bills; or he doesn’t meet Beckman and then faces financial debt.

"Well, I am proud of you, man. You finally took that extra step and made it out of your room - and not just to go to the bathroom!"

"Morgan, we are in my living room. I didn't even get changed," grumpily responded Chuck.

"Hey, one small step for normal people and one giant leap for you."

A knock on the door soon followed that remark and Morgan went to answer it. The door opened to let General Beckman enter the house. Chuck gave her a look that a teenage boy who just got caught for cheating would give their principal. She glanced at the belongings inside the house and took notice of all the collectables situated there. She then saw Chuck Bartowski seated, looking up at her cheekily. She noticed his robe; the messy pyjamas; his scruffy, bearded face and knew he needed help. "Glad you called, Morgan," she stated. "It looks like he stepped back a few years. Hello Bartowski."

"Hi General," he responded with adamant frustration.

"Someone's in a good mood. You know why I am here, don’t you?"

"You want me to re-join the CIA. Beckman, I don’t want to. I can’t. Not now. Not without Sarah."

"I understand Bartowski. Sarah was a big part of your life. Of all our lives. But she is never coming back." He closed his ears off to the agonising words that passed her lips. He couldn’t – wouldn’t – accept that fact.

"Besides Bartowski, I have an offer for you that you simply cannot refuse."

They curiously looked upon her mischievous face. What was she hiding in her sleeves!? "You recall the faulty intersect glasses that once wiped away Sarah's memories, correct?"

"Vaguely," he quipped.

"Well, recently some of our best agents were authorised to locate Quinn’s secret lair and destroy everything in it. Upon entering, we found more pairs of the faulty intersect glasses hidden."

"So what does that have to do with Chuck, General?" questioned Morgan.

"I know that you are heartbroken, Bartowski. But I have an offer that will solve this dilemma. A few of our best scientists have found, after analysing these glasses, that they are able to add and remove any data to the intersect download. Still, the same effects will occur - you will lose your memories and the only thing you will remember will be that which you downloaded from the Intersect. But here is the catch – if you agree to re-join the CIA, the government is willing to alter the data inside the Intersect glasses. You can install all memories that you don't wish to forget, whilst still acquiring the skills that the Intersect would provide. However, you would forget everything that doesn't get installed into the glasses. This would mean -"

"I know General. I would forget about Sarah…" Chuck’s tone in his reply was curious yet bewildered. Forget Sarah? How could he forget about the woman that he loved so dearly?

"Look Chuck, I know this is a big step to take. Sarah has been a major part of your life – of all our lives. But she is never coming back," she responded.

Beckman had grown accustomed to Sarah. If anything, she regarded her as a friend. If she had the chance, she would ensure that Sarah remained in Burbank with Chuck. Though she knew she was long gone, having already re-joined the CIA and received an undercover job in a foreign location. Being undercover is very lengthy, so Beckman knew that the chances of her returning to Burbank were slim. But besides for the angst, General Beckman had to persuade Chuck to re-join the CIA as her authorities were forcing her to. They wanted him to become a spy again and to forget about Sarah. Chuck had the Intersect, meaning he was a valuable asset to have. They also knew that his previous entanglement with his CIA handler caused the Intersect in his brain to not function appropriately. Without the emotional turmoil that Sarah brought him, he would become the spy
that he had the potential to be. If Beckman refused to persuade Chuck to become a spy and forget about Sarah, not only would her job hang in the balance, but so would Chuck’s life! So Beckman knew she had to do whatever it would take.

“General, I can’t do this. What if she returned? What if her memory started creeping back? If I forgot her and she came back for me then-”

“Chuck, she is will never return!” she butted in. “From what I have heard, she has already been reassigned undercover to a new location. The chances of her visiting or returning to Burbank are a dream away. I am sorry Chuck,” she exclaimed wholeheartedly.

He rested his head against his palms, slowly seeping his hands through his hair as he sighed in exasperation. He continued to torment himself with inner conflict. The devil started whispering doubt into his ear whilst the angel of his soul fought back. What if she remembered? What if she would never remember? What if she needed my help? Why would she want my help? She is a master-spy and I am just plain-old Chuck.

He churned from all the turmoil he experienced. He loved Sarah and knew he always would. But life had been extremely hard over the past year and he felt guilty; as though he was the cause of ruining her and his own life. He felt full of angst and sorrow. Every waking moment was a struggle to move on. Every day was a struggle to carry on living. The pain he experienced shot through him like a bolt of lightning and stung harder than any wasp’s attack would. She is never coming back! Those words were constantly repeated by the people that surrounded him.

“Chuck, if you do this, you would forget all about Sarah. You could become a spy again and still have your life and memories.”

He thought about it – would this serve as his ray of hope? Was this the right thing to do? “No more throwing your life away,” the devil whispered. If he forgot about her, he could move on without the worry of forgetting everything else that he cherished. To Morgan however, this didn't seem like a good idea.

"Uh, Chuck, I don't think you should do this. I mean, what if it doesn't work? Then you are basically screwed, man. And what if your personality changed? Remember how I became a major jerk. Beckman, what if that happened to Chuck?"

"Don't worry about that Grimes. Our scientists have fixed that problem," stated Beckman.

"Buddy, you were becoming a jerk because you were forgetting who you were," Chuck replied.

"That wouldn’t happen to him, Morgan. Chuck, what have you got to lose?"

Morgan stared at him and saw his pain-filled eyes. He could see the conflict raging inside of his best friend. He witnessed how Chuck longed to be happy and knew that possibly without Sarah, Chuck could be. But then again, she was a big part of his life; and not remembering that might affect and change the person that his best friend had become. "Chuck," Morgan grieved, "You will lose Sarah!"

He remained deep in thought. How could he choose to forget Sarah? He would lose her forever. How would that possibly benefit him?

General Beckman saw his resistance. She wasn’t allowed to inform him that by refusing the offer, his life would be on the line. But she knew she had to tell him. He would never do it otherwise.

“This isn’t a negotiation, Bartowski. My authorities have warned me that if you don’t re-join the CIA,” after a slight pause she took a deep sigh and continued, “Well the government wouldn’t want the human Intersect running around…alive.” This stunned him. His eyes bulged in response with shock.

The scale that weighed his choices was on par. ‘Forget Sarah? Forever? Is that better than dying?’ the angel on his shoulder exclaimed. But Chuck’s inner tormentor thought otherwise. ‘Is dying
worth it? Either way, you don’t get her. Wouldn’t that make your death irrelevant? Aren’t you being a little selfish, Chuckles… Everyone will miss you when you die. Sarah doesn’t even know you…’

He eyed his best friend. His glaring stare showed that he treaded with uncertainty. Morgan felt uneasy – he couldn’t very well tell Chuck to not go through with the plan. That would mean that he would die.
Silence filled the room for a split second whilst their beckoning stares led them to the same conclusion. Morgan just wanted his best friend to be happy (…and alive). Through all the droning tears and hopeless cries, it was clear that Chuck wasn’t happy. He knew that he couldn’t live without Sarah; and seeing as she was never coming back, he felt that he had to spend his days bliss in forgotten memories of his long, lost love.

Death or Sarah? Regardless of his choice, he wouldn’t have her and she wouldn’t want him. Chuck’s inner demon had pressed the right buttons – if he died, then he would hurt everyone, including Sarah. It was selfish. He couldn’t not download the faulty Intersect; he had to do this! Chuck’s mind was now set. He felt it was the right thing to do; something that he had to do. He and Beckman shared a nod and he reluctantly exclaimed, "Fine General. Make me forget Sarah."
Besides for the swaying branches of the trees from the night time wind, his beating heart could be heard by the nature that surrounded him. His head continued to glance back, trying to catch a glimpse of the person chasing him. He ran and ran; his life hanging in the balance.

Her hands remained gripped tightly around her gun. Her silver bracelet lay cold against her wrist, swaying from side to side with every step she would take. The darting of her eyes indicated she sought for any sign that could indicate his whereabouts.

Sarah Walker had returned to the CIA seeing as being a spy was the only thing she knew how to do. She had been assigned a new mission in London – to take Andrew Baines into CIA custody. Baines Corporation were selling products on the Black Market and one of the products being sold was none other than a pair of Intersect glasses. This Intersect was different than the recent ones that she had come into contact with. It wasn't faulty - it had no malfunctions. In fact this one was even better than before! Not only was it able to give you so called 'superpowers' of being able to do anything - whether it was one on one combat or the ability to speak a foreign language; but it was also able to make you become anybody that you wanted to be. You could turn into the next Chuck Norris! In Sarah's case, becoming Chuck Norris was definitely not on her bucket list. But becoming who she used to be - living the life that she used to live - that definitely was on all of her lists.

After the devastating departure of Sarah from Chuck’s life, she had returned to the CIA. She recalled that moment on the beach when her and Chuck shared their final kiss and she couldn’t help but feel guilty – and alone. She didn’t remember him! The kiss never seemed to magically work! Chuck told her that he would be there for her if she ever needed him. But she had to leave – she couldn’t be a constant burden on his soul. If she had remained in Burbank, it would have given Chuck false hope! Every day would be a constant struggle as he would try and help regain her memories whenever a chance arose. But Sarah knew she couldn’t remember. This meant that her staying would only crush his spirit and she didn’t want to be the cause of that. So when Sarah found out about the Intersect – the good one – she found her chance. She didn’t want to remain alone; especially after she realised that a home was waiting for her in Burbank. It became obvious to her that she had to acquire the Intersect glasses so that her life could fall back into place.

The moment Sarah got word of this Intersect, different emotions consumed her wholly. Fear - for if this super machine fell into the hands of someone deadly, the world could be in serious danger. But she also felt relieved; happy and hopeful! If she could get her hands on the Intersect then she could do what Chuck and Ellie had planned to do before. Their idea to remove the initial data and replace it with memories of Sarah's life could be made possible. Not to mention this Intersect provided her with the opportunity to regain the life that she once possessed. All she had to do was get Ellie to reprogram the system. Chuck had told her that Ellie had a knack for those sort of things. It was Sarah's only chance.

He continued to run; once again glancing behind him. He saw nothing; no one. The only sound that he heard was his beating heart and the sound of the wind brushing against the trees. Little did he know that Sarah was hot on his trail! There was no way that she was going to risk losing this opportunity.

He stopped for a while to catch his breath. His heart began to slow down a little as he felt reassured that he was safe. Andrew Baines was a wealthy man who had got into some shady business.
Selling products on the Black Market was good for the wealth of his company but not necessarily good for his career if word got out. Recently he had become a hard ass - he often allowed people to loan products as long as they paid monthly (kind of how a bank would work). But many of these people, being criminals themselves, stopped paying. So Andrew did what any respectable businessman would do - He shot them! "You can't pay, you can't live' seemed to be his motto. The CIA assigned Sarah Walker to catch Mr Baines and in turn, take down the company by arresting him. But Sarah Walker had her own sub-mission in mind - find the Intersect glasses.

A stick cracked. Baines jolted his head up. Someone was close; he could hear it. Footsteps began to get louder. He wasn't sure in which direction to run. His heart began to thump harder, like a beating drum sounding the end of his life! He felt trapped, unsure of what to do.

Sarah clutched her gun tighter. She knew he was close, he had to be. With a sudden glance, she saw him. He saw her! For a split second he was stuck in fear as she swiftly lifted her gun towards him. And then, he ran! He didn't know where to, he just continued to dart away. "Stop!!" She shouted as he continued to flee. He wouldn't stop and neither would she. The distance between them increased with each step he took, making it harder for Sarah to reach him. The disconcerting chase led to one inevitable solution – she had to shoot! BANG. With one shot he fall in agony to the ground; his leg wounded from the bullet. That was bound to slow him down.

She caught up with him. He cupped the wounded area with his hands as his eyes watered from the pain. Standing over him with her gun pointed at his face; she appeared like a beckoning warrior about to take the kill shot. The word 'ow' was repeatedly murmured by the wounded man. "Where are the Intersect glasses?" She questioned him. Her stern and domineering voice alone was enough to make a grown man cry. "What are you talking about!?" He screeched; his main concern being whether he was going to bleed to death.

"I can shoot you again if you don't co-operate! The intersect glasses - the glasses that you are selling on the black market. WHERE are they??" She continued to tighten her hand round her gun as though she had an itchy finger and hadn't shot somebody in days. Baines leered at the gun in her hand, feeling as though he wouldn't make it out of this sticky predicament. The silence from the lack of response from him caused her to repeat the question, only in a more threatening tone.

"WHERE are the INTERSECT GLASSES?" She shouted, starting to sound a lot more like the scary spy that all stories reported her to be.

"I sold them. They are gone," he finally responded. But Sarah hadn't given up hope yet.

"Who? Who did you sell them to?"

He sneered in reply, with every letter pronounced separately, "The C.I.A..."

Morgan and Chuck sat together in Castle, waiting for Beckman's arrival. The information that made up Chuck's memory had already been inserted into the glasses, and it was now Beckman's responsibility to provide him with the shades.

Their conversation quieted down as Chuck observed the underground base. Looking at it, he recalled all the missions that the trio (and Morgan) had experienced together. It reminded him of how many good memories his spy team shared, how many obstacles they faced and got through, and the obstacles they never got through! As he continued to observe, he wandered if he would even remember Castle after this Intersect download. He assumed that he would - after all, it was part of the data that he inserted into the Intersect. But if this plan fell apart then would he remember anything? Would he turn out like a blank page, unknowing his existence and unaware of who he or who anyone was!?

"Have you told Ellie?" asked Morgan, interrupting Chuck's train of thought.

"Uh, no. Not yet. And I don't think I want to. I mean, it's not like I am forgetting them," he muttered. "Besides I could always tell them at a later stage."

"Uh right. You could tell them about forgetting the girl after you have already forgotten her...good plan Chuck!" A look of confusion clouded his face. Morgan had a point. But Chuck really didn't
want to tell Ellie. He thought about telling Captain Awesome; but then recalled Devon’s innate instinct to freeze up whenever he had to tell a lie. He knew that Devon would eventually spill the beans to his sister and he couldn't let that happen. Upon speaking to Ellie, she would convince him not to do it and he couldn’t very well tell her why he had to do this – that would just act as a burden which he didn’t want to impose on her – it would only make her worry! He understood that Ellie would be happier with him being alive than him being with Sarah, regardless of how painful losing her was.

Even if the download worked, Chuck would still remember getting the Intersect for the first time. He would still remember Casey and all the eventful missions that they went on. All he did was just take Sarah out of the picture; like she never existed in his life in the first place. He knew that she probably wouldn’t return to Burbank, so he assumed that he would never have to fret that she would be hurt, seeing as she would ‘never find out’.

"Well...Ellie doesn't have to know...you know," Chuck muttered.

"Chuck that plan is stupid. Picture this: Ellie calls to check up on her little brother. You say hi; you guys have a lovely chat. You ask her what it’s like being a doctor in Chicago and blah, blah, blah. Then she asks the question that you know Ellie is going to ask! 'So Chuck, how are you coping with losing Sarah?' And your response: 'Uh sis, who's Sarah?' End scene!! Ellie is going to find out sometime, man and if you don't tell-

Beckman's entrance into Castle halted their conversation. "Morning gentlemen," she greeted. In her hands she held a box that they assumed contained the faulty Intersect - the one that had all the information Chuck installed into it - all information excluding any documents of Sarah. As Beckman placed the box on the table and took out the glasses, Chuck began to second guess himself. What if this wouldn't work? What if he forgot everything and not just Sarah? What if forgetting Sarah wasn’t going to help him? What if she returned?

As Beckman held the glasses in her hands with her eyes set on his, she asked him if he was sure he wanted to go through with this. He took a deep breath, sighed in uncertainty, and exclaimed, "Yes".
Chapter 3: Double Agent

Chuck's heart started to pound. Beckman handed the Intersect glasses over for him to put on. As he held them in his hands, he flashbacked to all the amazing memories that he and Sarah shared. He remembered their first kiss: the moment he closed his eyes, feeling death creep around the corner. In a single moment of truth, Sarah cupped her hands around his neck and pulled him in as they passionately embraced, revealing their true feelings for one another! Chuck remembered giving his mom's bracelet to her on Christmas Eve before she tragically shot an unarmed man in the hopes of protecting him. He recalled memories of them running away together...again...and again! Him telling her that he loved her and her finally saying it back. Chuck flash backed to when Sarah went all the way to Thailand to try and save him. He felt nostalgic when he remembered proposing and when they got married; him going to the ends of the earth - all the way to the Russians for help – just so he could save her life.

Countless good memories passed through his mind, telling him not to upload this Intersect. But then flashes of unfortunate times between the duo rapidly overwrote his happy thoughts - When she told him that they couldn't be together...again...and again! He remembered how he felt when she dated Shaw; the vulnerable feelings he encountered when Shaw kidnapped her and nearly killed her! Chuck also recalled when she left to go undercover into Volkoff industries with his mom. Lastly, he remembered the most painful of all - her losing her memory. He relived the most tragic day in his life through his thoughts, recalling the day she held a gun to his face; the day he professed his undying love for her whilst she responded by saying, "I guess I did my job too well." He remembered how he felt and continued to feel, the day she came to him and told him that she just didn't feel it - that she didn't love him anymore. The angst from that memory scorned through his heart and without another second waiting, he slid on the glasses!

Just then, like lightning, he experienced what he had experienced countless times before - the flashes of pictures from the Intersect. Each split second held images of the people in his life - his sister; Devon; his niece, Clara; Morgan; Alex; Casey; Jeffster; Big Mike - everyone (except Sarah) that he had ever known. It also contained images of everything relevant to him that he had ever seen before. And encrypted inside these images were the skills and intelligence information that an ordinary intersect would provide. Yet, without knowing, one of the images that he saw for a split second contained something that the government wished he hadn’t seen. In one of the pictures that were revealed to him, he witnessed something that related to that of Sarah Walker - his mom's bracelet!

The images stopped. The Intersect had been downloaded. He had done the damage and it was too late to go back now. "Alright Chuck," said Beckman, "Now to speed up the process at which your memory will disappear, I will show you a few flash cards. When you look at the cards, a piece of your memory will fade away. Each flash card is designed to eradicate a part of your memory strategically, preventing you from forgetting anything that we possibly don't want you to forget. Do you understand?" she explained.

"Yeah - Look at the cards, forget stuff. Sounds simple enough," he replied. Chuck remained very disheartened. This was it – Sarah was about to leave his life for good. It was as though the tables were turned. If only she remembered the past years – she would feel what he felt after losing her! Of course he would hate for her to experience that pain; but a little part of him wanted that to be the predicament; because if she remembered those five years, then none of this would have to occur. They could re-join the CIA (together) without being forced into it. Life would be simple if she was just there with him. Gosh! He really missed her.

Beckman picked up the pack of cards that lay faced down on the table. "Are you ready Mr
Bartowski?" she asked. He slowly nodded in response. Now more than ever, he was sure that he had to go through with this. He had already been through the download process. She lifted up the first flash card and his face created the same constipated expression that he would always pull whenever he flashed. First memory gone! She lifted up another. As he flashed, so did the memory flash out of his mind. For just a moment, the losing memory shifted past like a moving picture; and in the next second that moment had been forgotten. Next flash card - this time he saw his ex-wife, Sarah Walker, flash out of his mind for good!

…

Cuffed and battered, Andrew Baines remained in Sarah's custody as she was on her way to her CIA base to hand him in. He persistently asked her questions, like a nagging kindergartener who just won't shut up. "So why do you want the Intersect glasses so badly, Miss Walker?" the annoying child whined. She continued to ignore him. Her head remained steadily forward. A stern, frustrated expression lay among her face as she stopped herself from punching him. "Are you some sort of double agent? Working for the CIA; taking me into custody and then secretly stealing the Intersect from the very organisation that you work for? ...Sneaky!" This forced her to finally reply. If she didn’t, he could say something negative to her General, causing her to get into trouble.

"I'm not a double agent and my matters are none of your business!"
"Ooh... Are you always this feisty??" he beckoned on. She couldn't take it anymore. Enough was enough. He had crossed the line. She turned around, looked him in the eye, smiled, and then punched him right in the nose! The bracelet round her wrist whiplashed Baines as an after effect of her vile punch. He cupped his nose as it bled. Nevertheless, this attempt to shut him up wasn't a very successful one. He continued to drone on. "You know...I could help you out,” he said. His head was pulled back in an attempt to prevent more blood from pouring out. "I could help you get those Intersect glasses if you like..."

"No thanks. I don't think I need any help from you!"
"But then how will you know where to get them, where they are, who I sold them to?" She never responded and ignored him. But that too never shut him up. The only way to possibly keep him quiet would be to sew his lips together! But she wasn't authorised to do that, so going through with that procedure was highly unlikely. "Fine," he continued, "don't use my help. It's not like the person I sold it to would download the Intersect on their own. I mean if they did, that would leave it useless to you, would it not? ..." This drew her to a standstill. If the owner secretly downloaded it, then Sarah had no chance of retrieving back her old life with Chuck. Her ultimate goal would be eradicated. She began to fiddle with her bracelet – Chuck’s mother’s bracelet! She would always tinker with it whenever she was nervous or anxious. Forgotten by Sarah was the bracelet’s symbolic essence. Yet it had a calming effect on her. She wasn’t sure why but it always seemed to comfort and relax her whenever she would feel tense.

"Would they do that?" she questioned.
"They might. When I sell my products to my clients, I don't ask why they are buying it..." His sly attitude was leaving her untrusting of whatever he said. But the possibility was still likely and she couldn't let that happen. Baines pulled out a tissue from his pocket and proceeded to wipe his wounded nose. Sarah’s intelligent mind continued to analyse the situation - If he really did sell the glasses to the CIA and that spy bought it with the intention of downloading it themselves, then the person he sold it to must have been some sort of double agent.

"Who did you sell them to?" she asked, her body getting antsy with anxiety.
"Uh-uh, that's not how this works!" he smirked, with his eyebrow being raised at the sense of control. "You give me what I want and I will give you what you want." Sarah was unsure of how to proceed in this predicament. If she gave him what he wanted, that would mean that she would have to go against the agency. The CIA would find out and then perceive her to be rogue, forcing her to go on the run. That would mean no chance of regaining her old life back. But if she never gave him what he wanted that would lead her to the same dead end. She was stumped.

"What do you want?" She jittered.
"Oh, what any US citizen wants-"
"You're British..."
"Freedom," he ignored her. She knew he was going to say that. "You set me free and I will give you all the information that you desire. Do we have a deal?" She had to find a way around the situation that would not lead her to the same dead end. Her words would have to be chosen wisely. "Okay we have a deal. But on my terms! First you tell me everything that I need to know and only then will I set you free." She knew he wouldn't agree to it. Agreeing to that deal would leave him vulnerable. But it was her only shot.

"No, that is stupid. No deal!" How predictable!
"Listen, this information that you supposedly are able to provide me with isn't that important to me!" She gambled, hoping Baines wouldn’t spot her 'tells'. "...You don't have to tell me what you know. But I am giving you an opportunity of freedom that you wouldn't have had in the first place!"

"This is information that you are willing to set a convicted man free for? Hmm, really sounds unimportant. But fine...I trust you," he stated suspiciously. She never responded. She just wanted to get the glasses and move on with her life by returning to her old one. To her, getting this life back meant receiving the comfort she always longed for and once had. She wasn't going to let that slip away again. So she anxiously waited for him to tell her - waited for him to give her what she needed to hear. "The person I sold it to was a woman called Zondra. She never revealed her surname. Does that help?" Sarah's heart stopped. She knew exactly who Zondra was! She fiddled with her bracelet once again. The last thing she remembered about Zondra was that she was a traitor to the CAT squad that she and Sarah used to be a part of. She wasn't on good terms with her last time she checked. The faulty Intersect that Sarah once downloaded made her forget that all prior issues with Zondra had been sorted out later in her life. This meant that the run in with Zondra, according to Sarah, was going to get ugly.

"Zondra? What a surprise!" She sarcastically remarked.
"Ooh, do you two know each other?"
"Very well..."

Chuck awoke from a long, peaceful dream. His eyes opened slowly as though they had to adjust to the real world. He rubbed his hand against his newly shaven face and repeatedly blinked his eyes in an attempt to wake himself up. He lay there gazing upon his ceiling, whilst a smile covered his face. After yawning a couple of times, he got the courage to get his legs out of bed. The sun shone through his window curtains. As he got up to open them, he looked outside to admire the beautiful day that surrounded him. Upon stretching, he made his way to the kitchen to pour himself cereal. He just couldn't seem to shake the smile off his face. There was a knock on the door. "Come in," he responded, assuming it to be Morgan. To no surprise, Morgan walked through.

"Chuck, seriously; it's unsafe to leave your front door unlocked. You know how many burglars could come in your home at night and steal your beautiful gaming collection!?"
"Morning Morgan," Chuckled Chuck. Morgan walked up to him and noticed the broad smile on his face.

"You seem happy today," smiled Morgan. "Why?" his tone comically turning more serious.
"Well what is there to be unhappy about? I am a superspy working for the CIA; my family and friends are all safe and out of harm’s way! And not to mention I will be reassigned my new team soon. Life is good – you have got to start seeing the bright side of life, my friend!" Morgan immediately realised that the Intersect download worked. But he had to make sure - "Star Wars Trivia: Darth Vader - Luke Skywalker's...." he asked, holding onto the last note of his sentence!

"Dad! Duh! Morgan, I think everyone knows that."
"Plot twist: Princess Leia turns out to be Luke's-"
"Sister! Buddy, what is up with the Star Wars Trivia?" These responses made the bearded fellow feel reassured. Chuck still remembered what he had inserted into the Intersect. He couldn't believe it actually worked. Maybe downloading it was an angel in disguise. There was so much
improvement already – he was finally getting himself out of bed!
He shrugged in response to his friend’s question. Chuck remained smiling, even whilst a confused
gaze clouded his face. The phone began to ring. "Hello," he greeted.
"Who is it?" asked Morgan.
"Ellie. She's phoning in from Chicago!" Morgan's happy face immediately turned serious. Uh oh.
"Ellie? Uh...Let me speak to her!" He jolted towards the phone and grabbed it out of Chuck's hand,
cause Chuck's cereal (which he was clutching) to spill. "Ellie, hi, how are you?" Morgan
charmingly said; casually acting like nothing weird just happened. Chuck gave him a scrutinizing
look of 'what the hell was that?' which Morgan chose to ignore. He then went to clean up the
'accidental' spill that lay among the floor.
"Morgan? Hi, I am good. Can I please speak to my brother?" asked Ellie.
"Why? Why can't we just talk? We haven't talked in ages!!! ... So what's up?" He carried on, trying
hard to not sound suspicious or come off weird (yet he was failing miserably). He knew that if Ellie
and her brother spoke, then she would find out that Chuck chose to forget about Sarah. It was
unpredictable how Ellie would respond. But Morgan knew that she would be outraged that they
went through with this plan and never informed her. He knew that somewhere down the line, they
would have to converse - he just didn't want it to be today. Today, Chuck was happy – an emotion
that he hadn’t felt in a long time. He didn't want to change that.
"Morgan, is something going on? What are you up to?" she curiously asked.
"Ah, nothing much and you?" he replied, ignoring her curious tone.
"Put my brother on the phone. I want to speak to him."
"Such harsh words coming from such a sweet mouth, Ellie! Since when am I not good enough to
speak to? No 'how are you Morgan'? No 'how is life with Alex, Morgan'? No 'so happy for you,
Morgan!! Tsk, tsk; and you call yourself my sister."
"I have never called you that, Morgan! Now put my brother on the phone." Her tone began to get
really short tempered. He sensed that her patience was running thin. Chuck, who was nearly
finished cleaning up the mess on the floor, wanted to talk to her. And once the mess was gone, he
would. Grimes knew that he had to end the conversation soon.
"Uh, I cannot do that, Ellie. You see, your brother is busy right now-"
"Wrong number? Morgan, I am not," he said, with the spill having been cleaned up. "Give me the phone. Let
me talk to Ellie."
"Ellie, you are going to have to call back-" Chuck started tackling him for the phone, realising that
he wasn’t going to release it. "-Chuck is suffering from a...spastic colon! So sorry; call later. Buh-
bye!!" And with that, he hung up the phone.
"Buddy, what was that?? Why don't you want me talking to Ellie?" This query stumped him.
Thinking on his feet wasn't really his strong point.
"Ellie?" Morgan asked, acting confused. "Oh, nah Chuck, that wasn't Ellie. No, that was a wrong
number!" he lied...badly.
"Wrong number? Morgan, I spoke to her on the phone. If you are going to lie to me, you are going
to have to do better than that." He was right and Morgan knew it. So he came up with a some-what
better lie -
"I just really wanted to speak to her...alone! Plus, I was really starting to worry about your spastic
colon..."
"What spastic colon?"
"Yours...you were complaining about it the other day!" He was really beginning to suck nonsense
out of his thumb. None of what he said made any sense, but Chuck had a look upon his face which
indicated that he might start to believe him. Sometimes he was gullible like that. But his memory
had recently been altered with, so it was easy for him to get confused between what really
happened and what never did.
"Oh yeah, that's right. Spastic colon!" With that, Morgan was freed from his lies. He released a
sigh of relief. But he knew that somewhere down the line, things were going to fall apart.
…
Baines studied Sarah's face, reading her expressions. Apparently, as Baines could tell, she and Zondra never really got along. "Do you know where I can find her?" she asked.

"Yes I do."

"Could you tell me where she is?"

Well, I could tell you more information, but then I want-" He stopped in his sentence the moment Sarah raised her gun to his face.

"I am not giving you anything else. You tell me what I need to know and I will set you free. That was the deal, remember! And so far you haven't told me everything that I need to know." It was clear to Baines that Sarah wasn't messing around. She was adamant about finding these glasses and he wanted to know why.

"Why do you want your hands on this Intersect, Walker? You don't really seem like the type that would go against orders and download it for yourself." She was aware that Baines knew she wasn't just going to let him go. That is why he kept changing the conversation. But with him knowing that he wasn't gaining freedom, she understood that he wouldn't share the rest of the information that she so desperately needed. She continued to ignore his comment entirely.

"Where can I find Zondra, Baines?" she asked aggressively.

"Look, I could tell you. But how would that help me? It wouldn't." His sly attitude started to creep up again.

"The deal was-"

"Forget the deal, Walker!!!" he yelled, "We both know you aren't going to set me free so forget it! Take me to prison, or kill me now. I know to you, those are your only options! But between my choices - I choose silence." His sly behaviour wasn't working on Sarah and he had resorted to yelling. She began to get desperate. So what she resorted to was playing nice!

"Baines, I can't set you free. If I do, I will have to go on the run for disobeying orders. And if that happens, then the whole reason for letting you go falls away. No matter what, you are going to jail. So what have you got to lose in telling me where I can find Zondra!?" There was no reply from him as he thought about what she said. She felt a little guilty. Yet her rock solid spy personality kept reminding her that he is a criminal, that he can't go free. She kept telling herself that she can't sympathise for him. Even though, she decided to make him some sort of offer. "I could shorten your prison sentence, or I don't know - help you out in some way!? But only as long as you help me." Her voice was gentler when she spoke. Yet the gun still pointed towards his face continued to make her appear menacing.

"Last I heard, she was in Langley. That's what my sources tell me. If you take me to Washington Headquarters instead of your spy base for arrest, then you will find her there." She smiled at him, thankful for his co-operation. He didn't have to help yet he did.

"Thank you," she said.
Chapter 4: Confrontation

A couple weeks had passed since Chuck downloaded the Intersect. His life seemed to be going uphill. It appeared as though the only thing keeping him down was his emotional tie with Sarah. Now that he had untied the knot by forgetting her existence, his life seemed to blossom into something amazing - something hopeful. He sat like a giddy school girl down in Castle, waiting for Beckman’s arrival to announce his new team. Chuck assumed that Morgan and Casey were unavailable so he couldn't care less who Beckman picked to form his new team - as long as they were good at kicking ass! Morgan was currently with Alex leaving Chuck lonesome in Castle, anxiously waiting upon his spy team's arrival. Bored from excitement, he surveyed the dungeon where many criminals he and his old spy team had slayed over the years. He glanced at the gun section where Casey loved to hang out. He recalled all the missions (that he could remember) and how much he missed working with Morgan and Casey and going on missions together. Alas, he knew that it was time to move on with his spy life and he was ready to do just that.

As he sat, wondering why it was taking Beckman so long, a peculiar though struck his mind - He had been here, going on missions for 5 years and through the course of that time (as far as he could remember) had dated three girls: Lou, the sandwich maker; Jill, his ex-girlfriend and first love and Hannah - the computer technician. But there was something that he just couldn't wrap his mind around - what caused all of these relationships to blow over? He just couldn't recall the reasons. He knew that with Jill, obviously it wouldn't work out for she was Fulcrum - an enemy, rogue spy organisation. But with Lou and Hannah, Chuck couldn't shake the creepy feeling of not recalling why those relationships ended so abruptly. They were nice, beautiful girls and he knew that he wouldn't just dump them for any lame reason. But he soon let that mishap fade when he realised that for the past two years he hadn't dated anybody! Not a single incident with a woman, not a single relationship! Had he suddenly become extremely unappealing to woman? Did his stench begin to smell more noticeable? He sat there, drenched in thought, sniffing his armpits just to be certain that he didn't smell. He found it quite odd - he knew he was a charming bloke and he wasn't that bad looking!

Little did he know that he had then acquired the most unappealing item to any lovely young lady - a wife!

At that thought, Castle's door opened and general Beckman made her way through. "Morning Becky!" Chuck comically greeted. He smiled dearly at her, proud of himself for giving her a nickname. Beckman on the other hand, did not look pleased! "General, I am extremely excited to meet my new team! When do they arrive?"

"Calm down, Chuck! They are already here. I just haven't called them in yet!"

"Why not? What is the problem?" Chuck asked, puzzled. The general stared at him, with a look of uncertainty among her face. As she spoke she released a poetic sigh. "I need to know if this name rings a bell," she asked him. He listened intensely. She couldn’t go through with assigning him a new team if the plan to forget ‘you-know-who’ shattered apart. "Does the name Sarah mean anything to you, Bartowski?" The questioning look upon her face showed her desire for his answer to be 'no'. He remained confused.

"No General. Why? Should it?" responded Chuck. It was clear now that Sarah was entirely out of his memory and his life. A small grin followed Beckman's uncertain expression. She was in the clear – her job and Chuck’s life were no longer on the line.

"No Chuck. It shouldn't." she responded.

Beckman had certainly missed Agent Walker as she was a huge part of her spy team. But Sarah forgot about everything – everyone! Losing her was a great loss that no new agent could replace. But Beckman had no choice but to move on.
With her hand to her ear and her watch to her face, General Beckman reported to let Chuck Bartowski's team into Castle. His once confused emotion changed to that of a gleeful character. He suddenly got extremely excited as he was about to meet his new team. He faced the door, waiting upon their arrival. Beckman's face remained pleased. She now knew that the Intersect plan worked and Chuck had completely forgotten about the person that he once considered to be 'the one'. His life and her job were no longer in jeopardy!

To Chuck's amazement, a long lost friend suddenly arrived! His excitement doubled as he became overjoyed with delight! "CASEY?" Chuck screamed. The bulky, hard ass had returned to re-join Chuck's new spy team.

"Yeah, yeah!" Casey responded, hiding the fact that he was overjoyed too. They hugged and greeted - in the manly way of course.

"What happened to Verbanski?" asked Chuck. "You didn't get her pregnant did you?"

"What? NO!" Quickly responded the robust fellow; "She is here in Burbank with me, running Verbanski Corp. again." He then grunted, "Hmph, come here with pregnant!"

"So where is the rest of my team, General?" Chuck excitedly asked. He acted like a child on their birthday, anxiously waiting to open their presents. Hopefully, the difference between the child and Chuck is that he wouldn't cry if he didn't receive any more gifts!

"She's coming," General exclaimed. This response startled Casey slightly. He walked up to Beckman to have a quick, private chat. She had told Casey the news of Chuck forgetting about Sarah, so he wasn't unaware. He understood the predicament. But when Beckman exclaimed, 'She's coming," he began to get a little overjoyed. He longed for Sarah to walk through those doors. Everything would work out perfectly! He didn’t see the harm, but he thought it would be impossible. That’s why he was confused when Beckman referenced ‘she’.

"General, is Agent Walker coming through that door?" he questioned. She shook her head.

"No," she whispered. “Unfortunately, Sarah isn’t able to return to Team Bartowski.”

"Why did Chuck have to forget her anyway?" he grunted.

"Well, without Sarah there is no one who will affect the functioning of the Intersect. That’s why my superiors wanted Chuck to forget all about her!"

Just as Beckman muttered those heartfelt words to Casey, the newest member of Chuck's spy team entered Castle. Chuck took one look at her, feeling guilty about ogling! Her legs were long and slender. Her style was pleasantly tomboyish in a feminine kind of way. Her brown hair curled into beautiful locks with its length touching just below her bosom. Her face was pure yet at the same time screamed 'Danger!' A naughty smile covered her delicate face as she gazed upon Chuck's eyes whilst he gazed upon hers. His smile turned into a half-witted, awkward expression as his mouth filled with saliva from nerves. He gulped as he raised his hand to shyly wave at her. She smiled as she made her way down the steps of Castle. She walked up to Chuck and extended her arm for a handshake. He glanced at her hands, lost in the thought of them being so ‘perfect’ that he forget she wanted to greet him. Awkwardly after a second of silence, he shyly introduced himself. "Hi. I'm Chuck - Charles Bartowski."

"Hello Charles. I'm Kayla Hart. Guess I am part of your new spy team!"

"Good," he sheepishly replied. Casey and Beckman gave each other a look of sudden shock and fear - please don't say these two are going to get together!

"Uh oh," they simultaneously exclaimed!

Sarah was in Langley, after dropping Baines off at the CIA headquarters situated in Washington. She remained there in the hopes of finding Zondra. Sarah asked a couple of agents that were currently at the CIA headquarters if they could identify her and if they knew where her current whereabouts were. Many, being hard ass spies, ignored her questions. But eventually she received a few replies. "Zondra? Yeah I have seen her around here a couple times. Last I checked she was at a benefit party at the White House. I think she is there as a bodyguard," was the response from one of the spies. Sarah nodded, said her thanks, and went on her way to confront Zondra.

The benefit party was extremely private - anyone who wasn't on the list wasn't able to attend. So
Sarah did what any noble, skilled spy would do - she broke in...(Without making a scene of course)!
The dress that Sarah wore to the White House was quite luxurious. It was tight-fitting as it rested closely against her body. She wore a black number with stunning high heels that accentuated all her features. She was dressed the part, appearing credible in her ‘role’!
She blended in, acted natural, behaved in the way most trained spies would when undercover. An old man even came up to her and asked her to dance with him. She was weary at first, but since she hadn't spotted Zondra yet, she thought that being on the dance floor might help identify her location. She agreed to dance with the charming old bloke and gave him a welcoming smile. The short, elderly man was old-fashioned, deciding to dance the waltz with Sarah. No forbidden dance was around in his day! But Sarah was equipped for any dance routine due to her spy training. Her head remained up, never facing down upon the head of the short, elderly bloke. Her eyes surveyed the room in which they waltzed, searching for any sign of Zondra. She knew that Zondra was here as some sort of bodyguard; which would mean that she would be beside someone important - someone that needed protecting. The president? Yet the president was not currently in the ballroom. She hadn’t spotted him yet and she was sure that his face (being the most recognisable of all here) would be the first she saw. Her thoughts darted through, trying to analyse the situation clearly - if the president hadn't arrived yet, then that meant that his arrival would only take place when he was about to announce something - as in say a speech. If he did have a speech prepared, then like most presidents when they are addressing a crowd, would be left vulnerable for any enemy assassinations (hence bodyguards). Knowing that, Zondra would only appear once the president did, most probably standing beside him. This posed as an issue for Sarah, seeing as she couldn't quietly pull her aside to have a little chat. She needed to come up with a plan - and fast!
"You are a very beautiful, young lady!" The elderly man chimed. His smile broadened with every glance that he and Sarah shared. She smiled back at him, recognising his sweet and gentle soul.
"Where are you from?" the man continued, "I haven't seen you before - and I wouldn't forget a pretty face, my dear."
She looked back upon the old chap, not really paying attention to anything he said. He was distracting her train of thought. "Uh, Burbank," she replied. He just nodded merrily. Sarah once again scouted the ballroom, just encase her previous assumption was wrong. But she wasn't. The music ceased as the song ended and the crowd suddenly stopped dancing. They all faced the podium and began to clap. She was slightly unsure of what was going on, but she had an idea - the president was about to make his entrance.
Just like clockwork, he entered the room. His hand was held high in the air, greeting the audience that surrounded him. Her eyes darted from corner to corner, keeping a close eye on the president as she assumed Zondra would be by his side. To her amazement - she was wrong. Zondra wasn't there. Doubt slowly started to creep in Sarah's mind - was she not assigned here as a bodyguard? Did she even attend the benefit party? But Sarah still kept her hopes up - she wasn't going to give up that easily.
The president started to speak. He began with a greeting to the public, cracking a few jokes occasionally. She paid no attention to what was being said, having only one thing on her mind - find Zondra. Besides for the sound of the president's voice, the rest of the room was dead silent. Not a peep could be heard as they all listened intensely to what Mr President had to say. She started to get impatient - although she was very good at not showing it. With a jolted glimpse - she spotted her. She saw Zondra's face in the corner of the room, dressed some-what like a bodyguard. She inconspicuously made her way through the crowd to the corner where Zondra stood. "Uh sorry, no access passed here," stated a large, bulky man (presumably a bodyguard). He prevented her from moving forward.
"I just need to-"
"No access. Remain in the ballroom area, please," he continued. She couldn't make a scene so she knew she had to leave it. Luckily, upon glancing at Zondra one last time, she glanced back! A smile broadened across Zondra's face whilst confusion clouded it. She walked up towards the giant
man that prevented Sarah's access forward and told him that it was okay for him to let her through. Sarah displayed a daring stare towards the large bodyguard; which remained that way when she faced her 'friend'.

"Hey Sarah. What are you doing here?" she cheerily asked.

"Is there somewhere we can talk privately?"

Zondra, now appearing even more puzzled, nodded as she led Sarah to a private location where they could 'chat'.

"So what's up?" she asked. "How is married life?"

"Zondra, I am not here to pretend to be your friend. You and I both know that we aren't exactly on good terms. You have something that I need and that is why I am here." She remained stern, non-trusting of her old CAT squad co-worker.

"Sarah, what are you talking about? What have I done this time?"

"Oh you know exactly what you have done. Don't play coy with me. You may have passed the lie detector all those years ago, but that doesn't mean that I have to trust you. Where are the Intersect glasses that you bought from Baines?" She began to get even more impatient. She didn't want to have to get into a fight, but knew that Zondra had been known to settle disagreements with fists, and Sarah was never one to back down from a fight!

"Are you talking about the CAT squad? When you thought I was working as a double agent? Sarah, we resolved that issue long ago! We both know I wasn't the traitor!" Zondra stated, her tone displaying her frustration. "Why are you bringing that up again!? What; did you lose your memory or something?" she ironically joked.

This caused Sarah to halt - she knew she had forgotten 5 years of her life and in those five years anything could have happened. Any issue could have been resolved that Sarah now hadn't known about. Zondra was acting sweet before and non-threatening; unlike how she used be towards her back when she accused her of turning rogue. But she had to be sure.

"Who was the traitor then, huh?" Sarah questioned. Zondra looked even more confused.

"Amy! Don't you remember? Sarah, what is going on?" She hadn't been informed about Sarah's memory loss. This entire conversation sounded like gibberish to her - as though she had stepped back 5 years into the past. "Why are you acting all weird and accusative? I was your bridesmaid for goodness sake! What is with this attitude?"

Bridesmaid? If she was Sarah's bridesmaid something must have changed between them!

"You don't know...?" Sarah referenced the incident where she lost her memory, realising that Zondra hadn't been informed. "A few months back, I supposedly downloaded a faulty Intersect and whenever I would flash, a piece of my memory would disappear," she said, dishearteningly. "A man named Quinn used this to his advantage to get me to work for him. I woke up one morning, not realising where I had been and what I had done for the past five years..."

Zondra paused for a while trying to take it all in. "You're kidding right," she said, assuming Sarah to be messing around.

"No."

Zondra's confused expression changed. She now had a look of worry and disbelief. She didn't know what to say! She was so bewildered and taken aback by the entire story and current circumstance that she was in. Sarah then continued, going back to the matter at hand. "Baines told me that you recently bought Intersect glasses from him on the Black Market. Could you give them to me?"

"Well I would, but I can't. They aren't in my possession, they are with the CIA." If anything, this reply made her feel even more disheartened. She was beginning to give up hope. "Why do you need them, Sarah? Doesn't Chuck already have the Intersect?"

"This isn't about Chuck! Well - it is. But this doesn't involve him."

"Why not? What happened? You guys are married so surel-"

"No, we aren't," Sarah sharply replied. She could see that Zondra was entirely puzzled at this point, so she decided to elaborate. "When I lost my memories, I forgot everything that I knew about Chuck. My entire life that I had built had been taken away from me." A moment of silence enveloped the room as Zondra took a second for that to sink in.
"So why do you need these glasses?"
"Because I want my life back!" They stared at each other. “It’s as simple as that…”
A cheeky smile began to form among Zondra's face. "Well what are you waiting for!? Let's go get that Intersect!"
Chapter 5: Teamwork

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A loud thump could be heard as a piece of the roof of the CIA headquarters landed amongst the floor. Three black ropes were dropped to the ground as Sarah, Zondra and Carina slid down. Their feet gently touched the floor, creating a silent clank from the noise. Immediately after landing they pulled out their guns, being the first thing that spies did in situations like this (just in case). The three of them remained silent – there was no whisper, no spark of conversation. They slowly walked in a sideway motion with one leg following the other. The hallway was quiet. Even the girls' heels made no sound. The inside of the CIA headquarters appeared just like an ordinary building - the walls were an inviting colour and the floors were tiled accordingly. Just like normal buildings, offices lay on either side of the passage. This CIA illusion appeared realistic to the oblivious eye.

The level that Sarah, Zondra and Carina found themselves on was level 18, where all secret gadgets and accessories were kept. Their mission: Find the vault where the Intersect glasses have been kept and steal it.

Ordinarily you would assume that due to them (excluding Carina) being CIA agents; they would have no need to 'break-in' to the CIA headquarters. Why not just swipe a card and gain full access? But regardless of their affiliation with the CIA, they had neither jurisdiction nor authority in level 18. The only way they would gain any legal access into level 18 would be if their Generals' authorised it...legally. To add, seeing as their mission was to 'steal' something that belonged to the CIA, doubtfully any General would give them access to this level.

A guard spotted them. Uh oh. "Hey! You aren't authoris-" Carina pointed her tranquilizer gun in his direction and shot him. They continued to walk on, keeping an eye out for anymore guards. Carina decided to break the ice. "Thanks girls for inviting me with. Always love a rogue mission!" She stated, gun still in hand. Zondra decided to ask Sarah a few questions, curious as to the point of this mission. "Sarah, why are we doing this anyway? How will finding these glasses help you get your life back?" Zondra asked. Spotted - another guard. Sarah shot him with her tranquilizer gun. "I would explain it to you," Sarah said, "but I am still not sure if I entirely trust you."

"Sarah - would Zondra risk imprisonment by going on this mission with us if she wasn't being a loyal friend?"

Sarah thought about it; her eyes appearing so lost and desperate. She wanted to trust Zondra, and to a degree did - Carina did have a point after all. But Sarah was so confused in her current life and with her current circumstance. Everyone was telling her stories about her life that she should know. They were telling her what kind of person she was, what sort of emotions she would feel. Everyone seemed to know Sarah Walker better than she knew herself and it was making her feel extremely vulnerable. She didn't know what to believe - what was true and what wasn't. And more importantly, she didn't know who to believe - who was true and who wasn't! So hearing what Zondra was saying, the story that she told - it all sounded credible. But to Sarah, it has always been easier to see something and believe it than to hear something and know it to be true.

Another guard. All three girls tranquilized him.

"Sarah, you don't have to tell me why you need these glasses. You never were one to be open." Carina butted in, "-Until recently when you were with that geek!"

Zondra continued, "I am just worried about you. Can't a girl be worried about their friend?"

Another guard. Sarah shot him. They were going down like flies, and not a peep was heard from these security protectors. So far, the mission seemed to be going well. Carina sensed tension between Sarah and Zondra, so she changed the subject to alleviate the awkward predicament. "You know what we should do once this mission blows over."

"Let's first complete the mission, Carina," interrupted Sarah. She sensed Sarah's angst, especially
due to her snappy comment.
"Why do you want to get back with Bartowski anyway?" Carina questioned.
"I was happy..." They turned a corner - a group of guards stood before them.
"Ladies, I don't think you are allowed access on this floor," stated one of guards. Sarah, Zondra and Carina counted the men and thought that this might serve as a good opportunity. If they could trap these men in a spell of their womanly charms then perhaps these guards could give them access to the vault. So the trio did what most woman spies would do in these situations - they played sweet.
"Oh! Oops, sorry. We didn't know..." replied Zondra. Her voice was seductive whilst her manner changed to that of a dumb blonde.
"Don't sweat it ladies. No harm done," the man replied, feeling a lot more drawn to these women. "But this level looks like fun! Do you mind if we explore it?" seductively asked Carina, keeping up the stupid cheerleader act.
"Uh, no! Sorry ladies. It’s like I said: no access on this floor. You are more than welcome to explore other floors if you like." Their charm seemed to wear off. The three shared a look, as though they were debating what to do next. Sarah, getting fed up, responded.
"No thanks!" She replied and raised her tranquilizer gun, shooting all the guards in front of them. They then moved forward, stepping over the unconscious bodies.
After a few more turns and a few more incidents with guards, they eventually came to the vault where the Intersect glasses (among many other secret artefacts) were being kept. The three never knew the code to the vault and they never contained a device in their possession that strategically worked out the code for them - hence they were left with only one option: bomb the vault open. Doing this would draw attention to a break-in which would leave them with less than two minutes to obtain the Intersect glasses and then leave the CIA building without being seen.
Zondra placed the bomb upon the vault door, and set the timer to 20 seconds, giving them time to move out of harm’s way. "You sure you want to do this?" she double-checked, placing the bomb against the vault door.
Without hesitation, Sarah replied. "Yes."
"Okay...If you insist!" She set the timer. Her, Sarah and Carina ran back and hid behind a corner to prevent getting hit by the explosion. 5; 4; 3; 2; 1 - This was it. BAM! The vault door exploded. Ash spread everywhere. The trio had cupped their ears to try and minimise the sound of the explosion; also to prevent hearing the inevitable ringing noise that can be heard after something blows apart. This worked to some degree. Their two minutes started now – they dashed inside the vault as they began to search for what they sought. A large amount of CIA equipment lay inside the vault, so the likelihood of them getting out without being caught in less than 2 minutes was slim. Yet fate seemed to be on their side-
"Found it!" shouted Carina. The aftershock of the explosion was evident as the vault door lay in pieces on the floor. The ringing sound that they heard in their ears began to quieten down as the voices of other CIA agents began to sound more evident.
"They are catching up to us! What should we do?" Zondra asked loudly.
"Run!" Sarah replied. With that statement, the women sprinted out to safety. As they ran, a few spies had caught up with them. The trio shot at anyone who they saw as they made their way to their exit. They seemed unstoppable - if an agent got too close, they would tackle the agent and beat them to the ground! They really were talented spies. But eventually things came to a standstill. They were stopped in their tracks when a bunch of CIA spies slowly began to surround them.
"Where to now, Sarah?" Zondra worriedly asked. Sarah surveyed the room, unsure of an exit. Carina however, looked to her left out the window and saw a few dumpsters that lay against the building wall. It was their only hope of getting out of there - they had to jump! Sarah observed the group of spies that slowly approached them. Thankfully, the CIA agents weren't that close yet, so they couldn't ID the women. That's why they had to act fast before the agents were in clear visual range. Carina looked towards Sarah and Zondra and saw their anxious expressions. "Now...we jump!" With that, she leaped out of the 18th floor of the CIA building as she luckily fell into one of the dumpsters that lay below. The other two followed with uncertainty.
They all landed safely, although not in the freshest of places! They glanced up to see if the spies were overlooking them. The trio knew the agents would be after them, so they continued to flee. Eventually once they reached a safe location, they stopped running to catch their breath. "Well, that was fun!" Zondra comically stated. They all smiled at each other, feeling relieved and victorious.

"Thank you," Sarah said, feeling grateful she still knew people that she could trust. Carina took out the intersect glasses in her pocket and gave it to her. They hugged goodbye.

"Good luck agent Walker! Hope you get your old life back!" exclaimed Zondra. Sarah took the glasses with joy. She was one step closer to happiness. There might be hope after all!

"So let me get this straight," Morgan exclaimed, "you are going on a date with the new member from your spy team? So soon? You just met her." Morgan stood bewildered in Chuck's bedroom as Chuck got dressed for his date with Kayla.

"Yeah, we really hit it off! I feel quite lucky – she is gorgeous," Chuck replied, all smitten. "Man, you really get the ladies, don't you!?"

"Well no, Morgan! I mean think about it! For the past two years I haven't dated anybody! I have been a solo machine. I haven't had a single girlfriend!" he exclaimed.

"Yeah but c'mon! That's because of Sar-" Morgan stopped himself just in time. He nearly said her name, forgetting that Chuck never knew her anymore. "Because of who?" he asked.

"Uh, no one! So where are you two love birds going?" Morgan asked, quickly changing the subject.

"El Compadre," he answered, unaware that El Compadre was the same place where he and Sarah went on their first date. "I hear the place serves amazing food so I am excited to see what is on the menu! I don't think I have ever been there before..."

"Oh, you have!" whispered Morgan, but accidentally loud enough for Chuck to have caught a glimpse of what he said.

"I have? When?"

"Hmm...?" he pretended that he never heard what Chuck said. He always had to get himself into these sticky situations.

"You said I have been there before."

"Huh?" replied Morgan, acting confused. "No, I don't recall saying that..." Chuck just gave Morgan a confused look in response. But it wasn't that important to him. His nerves kept him focussed on his date with Kayla.

The vibe of the Mexican Restaurant was very homely. Chuck and Kayla were seated in the same booth that he and Sarah once sat in. He examined his surroundings feeling slight deja vu.

"What's wrong?" she asked.

"It's nothing. Just this place seems oddly familiar!"

"Maybe because you probably have been here before!" She joked.

"Ah - haha! Most probably! Captain Obvious - I like it." Her smile made him feel a little more at ease. "So Kayla Hart, for how long have you wanted to be a spy?" he asked, trying to spark conversation.

"Well ever since I was a little girl actually! I've always loved shooting people and as a kid I used to shoot them for fun whenever someone made me angry. But that was illegal, so I decided to become an agent so that I could kill people and not go to jail for it," she stated sarcastically. Her straight face left Chuck nervous. He wasn't sure whether she was kidding or not. She noticed he was a little petrified, so she decided to put him at ease. "I'm kidding, Chuck," she laughed.

"Funny," he gingerly replied. "That was some story - for a second there, you almost had me!" He was still a little taken aback after hearing what she said and wasn't sure of how exactly to respond. "I guess movies really made me want to become a spy! I love kicking butt and taking names! Although I would prefer to do that using a Lightsaber rather than a gun!"
"As would I," he cheerfully responded. "Loves Star Wars, great sense of humour - where have you been all my life?"
"Kicking butt and taking names!" she joked.

The Carla Shuman Medical Centre in Chicago where Ellie and Devon worked had a very warm and welcoming feel to it. Sarah arrived through the entrance of the hospital hoping to find Ellie. Knowing that she once threatened to kill her, she was uncertain whether Ellie would agree to help her out. But it was worth a shot. She walked up to the front desk and asked if she could see Dr. Eleanor Woodcomb. But there was no need to ask - Ellie had already seen her.

"Sarah?" she astonishingly exclaimed. She never thought she would be seeing Sarah's face again; but here she was; standing right before her eyes! "Sarah, what are you doing here?"
"Ellie, hi," she replied, a little unsure of how to approach the situation. Ellie could see; it was displayed among Sarah’s face that she was uncomfortable. But clearly, Sarah needed help - she needed something. Unannounced to her, Ellie was glad that she was here. It meant that Sarah wasn't completely out of their lives! Her visit meant that there was still a chance that she could re-join the family. And Ellie was all for bringing families back together.

"Do you want to talk some place private?"
Sarah smiled in agreement to that question as she followed Ellie to her office. Upon entering, she glanced around. The office was small, but large enough for Ellie. It had a calming presence which relaxed her. "So what brought you here?"
"Uh, well - first of all, I don't think I got a chance to apologise for...the way I threatened you-"
"Sarah, no apology is necessary. I understand what happened. It wasn't your fault." Sarah just smiled again. Her sentences weren't flowing as easily as Ellie's were due to her discomfort in the situation. But she had come here for a reason! And regardless of the predicament, she needed to get her old life back. "What really made you come to see me, Sarah?"

"Well, recently I have been on a search to find a new Intersect - a good one! Not like the intersect that affected me before." She paused for a moment. Ellie could see that Sarah was trying; that she wasn't back to her manipulative, deadly self again. "...And a couple days ago, I found it!" Sarah was scared to go on explaining. She didn't want to feel vulnerable by placing all her trust in Ellie. After all, to Sarah - she barely knew her. But she was aware that she had to carry on; so she shyly continued, "Ellie, what I am asking-"

"I know what you are asking for, Sarah," she replied. "You want me to do what Chuck and I planned to do before. To upload your memories onto the Intersect and replace its current data. You want your old life back..."
Sarah glared into her eyes, pleading for her to have an answer. She so desperately wanted this to work and wanted Ellie to be willing to try.
"I've tried to go back. But I get these flashbacks of my life in Burbank - and I don't understand what they mean. I constantly feel lost and confused... I don't know where I'm supposed to be or where I belong-"
"Look Sarah, I would do this for you in a heartbeat. As far as I know, Chuck is dying without you in his life. He hasn't moved on at all. I haven't spoken to him in a while since Morgan keeps sabotaging my calls, but Sarah - if I could give you your life back I would."
"What's the problem?" she asked, feeling a little petrified that she might not get a positive response. "Well, I don't know if it would work. I have never done this before. You would be holding onto a possibility and I don't want to give you false hope!"
Sarah lowered her head, feeling at a loss. This caused her to fidget with her bracelet again, as she would do whenever she felt an opportunity slip away. The possibility of this plan working out was slim - but it was still a possibility.
"I'm tired of running," she responded. Ellie glanced at her and noticed her trying eyes. She saw the burning desire inside of her that longed for everything to be alright. Ellie knew she had to try and do this - she had to attempt to help Sarah find her way back home; to find her way back to Chuck. She smiled at Sarah and reached out her hand. Sarah took the Intersect glasses out of her pocket
and gave them to Ellie. "I'll see what I can do," she said.
Chapter 6: New Beginnings

Chuck's heart began to blossom with joy from his new found romance with Kayla. About a week had passed and they had become really close. They weren't shy to inform others that they were dating...well Chuck wasn't!
This new spy team began to thrive, which made Chuck feel like his life was soaring higher and higher! They were just as good as Chuck's team before, if not better! The only piece that was missing was Sarah. General Beckman was entirely pleased with their progress over the short period of time and Chuck seemed to get along well with Kayla, as though she were one of the boys. However, Casey did miss his old partner, Sarah, immensely.
She and Sarah differed in many ways. Sarah, although still good with one on one combat, was more of a 'girl'. Yes, the stereotypical ideal of the man saving the damsel in distress was in reverse in Chuck and Sarah's case; but even still. She longed for the comfort that Chuck gave her. Without Chuck, she always seemed to remain insecure (even before she knew him). This didn't mean that she needed a man in her life. It just meant that without a man like Chuck, Sarah was vulnerable. So she hid her true feelings - she buried her true identity within herself so that no one could get too close to hurt her.
On the other hand, Kayla always felt confident in herself. She never felt the desire for a man's company; for a man to accept her - Kayla knew who she was and never doubted that. So she never had to hide herself or bury her true identity. She was herself no matter who she was with and regardless of what her spy job entailed. On a different note, Kayla was a lot more humorous. She was more comfortable in peculiar predicaments. In an awkward situation, she would be the first to say "Whoa, this is awkward!" She never shied away from anything - never afraid to take anyone on!
Sarah however, slightly differed. Yes, seeing as she was a deadly spy, she wasn't afraid to attack her enemies no matter who they were. But other situations that she would find herself in - circumstances that didn't involve kicking butt - Sarah did tend to shy away. Firstly, not being the comfortable, laughable character, her role remained more serious. Kayla was a fun woman who liked to joke around and have a good time. Sarah enjoyed laughter and good company but was never first to lighten a dark conversation. With everyone, excluding Chuck, she was guarded. Over the past few years in Burbank, that guard began to wither away; but it never truly disappeared. She was the serious anchor that carried the group along a straight line - not the fun bird leading their troops in all different directions to eventually find their resting place. That's not to say she didn't enjoy having a good time or that she never saw the comedy in life! But her personality and lifestyle prompted her to become more of a lonely elephant that longed to find her family.
Chuck and Sarah's relationship spanned over 4 years before they got hitched. This was a clear indication of her difficulty in letting people 'in'. Chuck had always been in love with her - and speculation suggested that the feelings were mutual from the start. But due to Sarah's guard, she never let him know that she liked him until she was certain that Chuck wasn't going to hurt her or let her down. That is why only after 3 years did she tell him that she loved him.
To add, Chuck began as Sarah's asset; and if word got out that they were together, then the agency could ensure that they never saw each other again! As a result, Sarah couldn't be with Chuck for the first two years. But that didn't mean that she would have 'let him in' regardless.
Kayla and Chuck's relationship started out as them being on the same level - spy and spy, not spy and asset. So technically, they could be together from the start as long as the immediate attraction was there. But Kayla was a content soul and if she liked someone, then she couldn't see any reason why they couldn't be together. She wasn't afraid to jump into the deep end in the hopes of catching a big fish - and if anything had been made clear over the past 5 years, it was that Chuck was a big
"Hey Chuck!" Morgan exclaimed, as he and Alex entered into Chuck's home. Chuck was in his kitchen, planning a meal for his date with Kayla.

"Get this - Alex is willing to watch the entire 'Indiana Jones' DVD collection with us! I know right! So we hope you have nothing planned-"

"Actually, sorry buddy," Chuck replied. "I have a date with Kayla tonight!"

Alex looked confused. She had no idea who Chuck’s date was. She knew that Sarah and Chuck weren't currently on the same page, but she had no idea that Chuck was ready to start dating other people. This bewildered her entirely. "Who is Kayla?"

"She is the new member of Chuck’s spy team. Did I forget to tell you that?"

"Kayla? But what about Sarah? Why would they need to replace her?"

…Everything suddenly came to a halt. In Morgan’s mind, the screeching sound of car brakes could be heard. Morgan stood frozen, unsure of what to say or what to do next. Normally in these situations, his mind would overflow with nonsense that he would spurt out in an attempt to remedy the issue. Yet now, currently, his mind was blank. He literally had no idea what to do. Dammit! He knew he should have told Alex about Chuck’s memory loss. But why had he kept her out of the loop? He couldn’t recall – his mind was empty, as though someone had erased his hard drive!

Chuck’s face darted up in confusion. "Who is Sarah?" Morgan gulped down the lump in his throat. His palms began to get clammy as he wiped away the sweat that dripped from his forehead. Chuck’s response just made things a whole lot worse. Alex thought that Chuck was kidding – she assumed he had to be. Obviously he knew who Sarah was!

"That’s funny, Chuck!" She responded as a slight giggle was released in-between her sentence. Chuck’s eyes remained lost. It was clear that he was trying to piece together who this ‘Sarah’ character was. But he wasn’t getting far. Alex recognised his lost expression, making her feel extremely flabbergasted! "You know Sarah – she used to be your wi-"

"-So Chuck, are you making Kayla dinner?" Morgan interrupted. Alex gave him a stern expression. "That was rude, Morgan. Chuck and I were talking," she responded. He refused to look his girlfriend in the eye. He felt so overwhelmed. Why hadn’t he just told her!

"Sorry Alex. I am just surprised that Chuck is cooking!" Finally he looked in her direction. He falsely smiled at her, pretending that everything was fine. Luckily Chuck had moved on from the previous conversation.

"Yes. I am cooking a spectacular meal - she is going to love it!"

"Chuck, you are a terrible cook!" he interjected.

"Hey, I can cook!" Chuck sharply replied. Morgan gave him a look of disbelief - as though his eyes were sarcastically saying, 'Really?'

"Chuck, I know you want to impress this girl and so on, but dude! Is supplying her with burnt charcoal instead of real food really going to win her over?" he remarked. "Here, let me cook for you! I have studied the art of cooking in my prime - with these hands; Kayla won't know what hit her!"

"That sounded wildly inappropriate, Morgan!" Chuck chirped! Alex remained flustered.

"Morgan, can I talk to you privately for a second!?!" she suspiciously asked. She pulled him aside, her face still inspecting the situation. "What is going on? What haven’t you told me?" she sternly whispered.

"I am so sorry, Alex! I will explain it all later to you, I promise. How about tomorrow you, me and your dad sit down-"

"My dad? My dad is in town?!" Uh oh. Dammit! Morgan knew he had a reason why he hadn’t told Alex any of this. But in the current predicament that he faced, the pressure began to build up and he struggled to recreate a legible story on his feet.

“Oh…did I not tell you?" Alex’s jaw began to lower. Why was Morgan keeping all these secrets from her?! He saw that she was hurt and confused. “Again; Alex, I am so, so sorry. I will explain everything later. I can’t right now. Please…don’t be mad!” he pleaded. He attempted to give her the puppy dog eyes, but it failed tremendously.
“Later,” she stated sternly, “you will tell me everything that you know! No secrets, Morgan! Remember!” Her pointing finger made him feel like he was in school again as though he were being scolded at.

“I love you…” he sweetly exclaimed. She just responded with a grunt – just like her dad would. “I'm going to the bathroom,” she stated, “we will talk – later – no excuses,” she repeated; her finger still pointed towards him. As she walked towards the lavatory, he nervously smiled up at Chuck whilst shaking his head in exasperation.

"Women!" he nervously exclaimed. Gulp!

She went to the bathroom and upon opening the door she found Kayla there, climbing through the window. Alex looked completely surprised and scared - She had never met Kayla before so she never recognised her. She automatically assumed that it was a burglar! Alex picked up a vase that was on display in the bathroom, smashed it against the wall to leave it jagged and held it up as she asked, "Who are you?" Kayla turned around as she climbed into the room and was shocked to see this woman here.

"Whoa - I don't know who you are but that's no way to treat a vase! Now how is it meant to carry flowers?" Kayla sarcastically responded. She obviously wasn't afraid of Alex seeing as she was a superspy for the CIA! Alex ignored her remark as she made her appearance more menacing.

"Who are you!?" Alex repeated; her tone more aggressive.

"The name is Kayla. I am here for my date with Chuck. But apparently you beat me to it! Don't worry; I'm not afraid of a little competition."

"What? I'm not with Chuck! I'm dating Morgan!" Alex lowered the vase in her hand, realising that there was no more threat.

"Morgan? Oh yeah, the little bearded fellow. What a catch!" she stated sarcastically.

"Thank you," Alex replied, ignoring the sarcasm. "Why did you climb through the window?"

"I wasn't sure if Chuck had a front door!" she joked, making Alex feel uncomfortable. It was appearing that Kayla wasn't too fond of Alex and had prejudged her. They did meet under weird circumstances. Kayla wasn't that good at making friends - girlfriends that is. She never really got on with other women so she used humour as a mechanism to connect with them. Alex, though, didn’t seem to appreciate the humour.

"You don't have to be so sarcastic! I was just asking - it definitely looked suspicious," she replied. Kayla knew she had to cool it down with the remarks. After all, if she wanted to be in Chuck's life then she had to get along with Chuck's friends!

"Sorry. It's...habit. I climbed through the window because I wanted to surprise Chuck. Also, it looked pretty high. I didn't think I could climb it." Alex stared at Kayla, a little scared of her and a little freak out. This chick was...different. Who climbs through their date's window just because it looks 'like fun'?"

"Okay..." shyly responded Alex.

"So where is Chuck?"

Upon leaving Chuck's bathroom, the girls found their boys in the living room – inserting an Indiana Jones DVD into the DVD player instead of cooking. So much for Morgan's hands hitting Kayla! "Uh, Morgan," Alex said. He and Chuck turned around. Chuck noticed Kayla's presence and waved at her, his face displaying an abundance of delight. The word 'hi' was muttered from his lips. "Look who I found in the bathroom," Alex continued. Chuck got up from his seat to further greet Kayla. As he got up, he noticed the jagged vase still in Alex's hand.

"What's with the vase?" he asked.

"I saw her coming through the bathroom window...un-expectantly..."

“Oh...” He continued to approach her and greeted her with a hug and kiss. This surprised Alex – she was still uneasy seeing Chuck kiss another woman! Morgan felt bewildered too, but he was more shocked by Kayla’s entrance! He found it to be extremely weird.

"Why did you climb through the window?" Morgan asked. "You could have just knocked on the door. I'm sure he would have answered!"
"She thought it would be fun..." Alex responded, still slightly flabbergasted. "That's...normal!" Morgan replied.  
"Hey, buddy - you used to climb through my window all the time! Don't you judge!" stated Chuck, taking Kayla's side.  
"That's great, Chuck! You're dating me!" The room got a little akward, so he decided to move on from the peculiar subject. "So Alex, Chuck and I have decided - we want to watch 'Indiana Jones'!! Do you still want to watch with us?" Morgan asked.  
Still angry with him, she decided that she should. "Fine," she smiled. She could never say no to Morgan's bearded face!  
"Ooh, I love 'Indiana Jones'!" Kayla responded. "Me too! Wow, you really are a keeper!" Chuck exclaimed. Alex and Morgan glanced at them, feeling a little discomfort towards her; especially since they knew Sarah whom they preferred. Morgan just prayed that Kayla would grow on them. Alex just wanted answers.  
As Morgan went to put on 'Indiana Jones', Chuck gazed into Kayla's eyes and couldn't help but feel that she might be 'the one'.  

The doorbell rang and Devon went to answer it. Sarah had gone to visit Ellie and Devon in their new home in Chicago. She had given Ellie the Intersect glasses so that she could replace the Intersect data with Sarah's memories. Ellie guaranteed no success, but Sarah wanted her to try. To Sarah, completing this and getting back all her memories was her saving grace. But even to Ellie, getting Sarah's plan to work would be a miracle! She knew that her little brother was hurting. Chuck loved nothing more than Sarah and Ellie felt that if she could help bring them back together, then all would be right in the world. She imagined what it would be like for Chuck - one second he would be crying and sobbing in his bed, pain stricken from losing her. Then in the very next second there would a knock on the door. Ellie imagined him going to answer it with tears still streaming down his face. And with the sudden opening of his front door - there she would stand. Sarah Walker - the love of his life. Ellie envisioned Sarah's face: Her eyes would sparkle with glee, her mouth would broaden as she smiled with relief and her lips would mutter, "Hello Chuck," the way she would before - before she lost her memory; her voice being so full of love! Ellie then continued to envision Chuck's face: His jaw would slightly drop and his eyes would slowly widen as they filled with water. His weary expression would alter as he began to smile with joy! He wouldn't need to even think about it, he would just know that it was his soul mate – his Sarah - that had returned. So even to Ellie, this chance needed to work, because Chuck needed to be happy again. Devon opened the front door. Ellie had told him about Sarah's return, so seeing her wasn't a complete surprise. "Hello Sarah," he greeted.  
"Hi, Devon."  
"Ellie's just in the back. She's still working on the Intersect transfer. Been working on it forever! I think it's awesome that you are doing this. You and Chuck - back together, man!" Sarah smiled. In her current state, she barely knew Devon; so his casual talk with her made her feel slightly on edge. Ellie was seated in front of her laptop with the Intersect glasses connected to it. She was working out some program. Mugs of coffee lay among the desk where Ellie was seated. Clearly, she had been working on this transfer the entire night. Slight shakes could be seen from her body as she was functioning on low battery. She looked up from the screen to notice Sarah standing before her. "Sarah!" she exclaimed. "I am almost done." Sarah stood behind her as she continually typed on the keyboard.  
"Coffee, anybody?" Devon asked, appearing from the hallway. Ellie immediately responded with "Yes!" She appeared a little too energetic – perhaps being the cause of too much caffeine running through her veins!  
"Uh - yes, thank you," Sarah responded.  
"What I've done is I've extracted the hard drive where all the Intersect data was kept. I then replaced the data with collected information that is relevant in your life. All this gathered
information will serve as 'memories'. It will be encoded into images which you will view, forcing your brain to remember all that you have forgotten. It kind of acts like a refresh button - everything that you ever saw, heard, felt and have forgotten will begin to flashback to you in bulk; restoring your last feelings, thoughts and of course - memories," she explained.

Sarah understood. Her eyes remained desperate. "Will it work?" she asked.
"I really hope so, Sarah."

The couples were enjoying the spectacular viewing pleasure of 'Indiana Jones', when suddenly there was a loud knock on the door. A man's voice shouted, "Hey, knuckleheads - Beckman wants you in Castle ASAP!" It was Casey. The lovely night ahead would have to be postponed - Chuck and Kayla had work to do! They begrudgingly got up from their seats and proceeded to go to the conference meeting with Beckman.

Kayla, Chuck and Casey were seated in Castle when General Beckman came on the screen. "Sorry to interrupt your date Agent Bartowski...and Agent Hart, but we have a new mission for you."
"What is it General?" Kayla asked.
"A couple days ago there was a break-in at the CIA headquarters," Beckman explained. "The burglars stole a valuable possession of the CIA – Black sunglasses!"

Chuck began to shake his head. "Man, it is amazing what some people would do for a couple of shades!"
"Not just any shades, Bartowski!!" the General remarked. "They were Intersect glasses." Kayla looked confused - she hadn't heard about the Intersect before.
"Uh, general - Intersect glasses?" Kayla asked. Usually the discussion of the Intersect would be top secret. But Kayla was now a part of the team. She needed to know.
"Agent Hart, the Intersect is a special device that contains secret government information, and if downloaded, has the ability to turn an ordinary citizen into a superspy! Just ask Agent Bartowski - he's the best example."
"You have this thing?" she asked him.
"Yeah, how else would a dangly guy like Chuck become a spy?" Casey rhetorically joked. His chuckle showed his enjoyment from his remark. Chuck never took the statement to heart – he knew Casey was just messing around with him.

"Wait - But General, we discarded the last Intersect over a year ago. How could the government have another one?" questioned Chuck.

"A man called Andrew Baines from the Baines Corporation in London was selling this Intersect on the Black Market. How he obtained it, we are unaware. The CIA sent a special agent undercover to retrieve the glasses and bring them into CIA custody. This was to prevent any criminals from getting their hands on it. But apparently they did." General Beckman pressed one of her buttons on her fancy desk and a picture of the 'criminals' who stole the glasses came up. Their faces were unrevealed - all that was shown was the body of the last burglar who jumped out of the window - Sarah. Luckily for her, not enough of her body was in the picture, leaving her unrecognisable.

Sarah's hands were holding onto the shattered window's frame to help her leap out of it. "There were three burglars. Here is the picture of one of them jumping out of the window from which they made their escape." A peculiar image caught Chuck's eye – a silver bracelet hanging around Sarah's wrist - His mother's bracelet! He immediately recognised it.

"Wait - what's that around the suspect's wrist?" Chuck asked.
"A...bracelet..." remarked Casey.

'Why? Do you recognise it?' asked Kayla.
"Yeah...it looks just like the one my mother used to have..." A sudden realisation struck Beckman and Casey - they glanced at each other in shock - what if one of the suspects was Sarah? Sarah! The spy that worked on their team for 5 years! Their friend and companion - Chuck's ex-wife! If it turned out to be her, then this operation might hit too close to home.
"Do you or your mother still have the bracelet?" Casey asked.
"Well no, I haven't seen it in like, forever. And last I checked my mom gave the bracelet to me."
"Bartowski, I am pretty sure that what you are referring to is irrelevant," Beckman remarked, even though she knew all too well that the bracelet was a very good clue. "Now back to business.
Recently Andrew Baines was taken into custody for questioning. We have tried to get information out of him concerning the robbery and the Baines Corporation. Unfortunately, he is very good at keeping his mouth shut. But we believe that his brother might be the sole authoriser of this company. The Baines Corporation are known for getting their hands dirty. With money laundering and selling their self-manufactured products on the Black Market, they don't come off as an angelic company."
"Not to mention that if anyone double crossed them, well...you know...they die," informed Casey. "Thank you for that, colonel. The CIA has asked me to send my best team to London to help take down the Baines Corporation. Andrew Baines' brother, Terrance, will be having a business party in his home tomorrow evening. Bartowski and Hart, I want you two to pose as a married couple at this party. Socialise, make nice - but most importantly make contacts! For the next month you both will reside in London to take down the Baines Corporation from the inside." Chuck smiled energetically. This operation sounded amazing - the opportunity to spend an entire month with Kayla as his 'wife' excited him.
"What about me, General?" Casey asked. Beckman glared into his eyes as concern clouded her face.
"Agent Bartowski and Agent Hart - I would like to speak to the colonel alone please. You both are excused," she stated.
"Yes General."
The two proceeded to leave the conference room.
"You got to admit - this mission sounds like a load of fun," Chuck stated.
"You just can't wait to play my husband, can you?" she remarked, messing with him. He laughed.
"Well that part doesn't sound too bad either," he chuckled. They shared a kiss.
Meanwhile, Beckman continued to speak with Casey privately. "Casey - you and I both know who broke into the CIA. And if we are correct, then this situation is going to get ugly," Beckman elaborated.
"What would you have me do, General?" Casey asked.
"Find Sarah."

..."Done!" Ellie exclaimed, as she completed replacing the intersect data into the glasses. She unattached the shades from her laptop and gave them to Sarah.
Sarah glanced down at the glasses in her hands. She needed this to go off well - this was her only chance at getting her life back. "I really hope this works, Sarah," Ellie said. "If it does, you know what it means, right?"
"I am going to be my old self again."
"Exactly!" She could see that Sarah was a little nervous, so she decided to give her words of encouragement. "This is good, Sarah. Getting your memories back is a good thing, I promise."
"What if it doesn't work, Ellie?"
"What have you got to lose?" She continued to smile at her, trying to give her comfort.
As Sarah looked upon the glasses that she held in her hands, she recalled her current life. How she felt vulnerable and confused; how she continued to feel lost. She needed to know who she was again. She had turned into the same person that she was before she met Chuck. And through all the stories that Sarah had been told about her life with him, she knew that she had come a long way. She had grown out of the person that she was before she moved to Burbank, and now it felt like she had lost her new shoes and was stuck wearing her old ones that no longer fit!
She glanced at Ellie and saw her comforting smile. She wanted to feel comforted by that smile - she wanted to feel safe. But the only way she was going to feel safe was if she downloaded the Intersect. With that passing thought, she lifted up the black shades and with a deep breath, slid on the glasses.
In a sudden - she saw images of her life pass before her eyes: the first time she saw Chuck, her first kiss with him; the moment she met his family. Sarah witnessed all the missions that they went on together; all the moments in her life that were of value - she saw Chuck proposing, her wedding. She saw all the people that she had met over the last five years. And lastly - she saw Quinn stripping her of her memories!

The words 'Intersect downloaded' appeared before her and she took the glasses off. She repeatedly blinked her eyes and shook her head slightly to try and gain consciousness. She looked up to face Ellie who intriguingly gazed upon her. “Did it work?”
“Okay, so let me get this straight! You erased Chuck’s memory of Sarah just because he was too immature to get himself out of bed!?”

Casey and Morgan sat tense among the couch in Alex and Morgan’s lounge. She stood facing her dad and boyfriend; the height difference between them giving her a menacing stature.

“What were you thinking!?” she continued to exclaim.

“Just for the record, I wasn’t a part of the plan!” Casey discreetly butted in.

“Yes, but you went along with it! Guys, what if Sarah came back!?” she fretted, struggling to see the logic behind the idea. she understood – yes, Chuck had been extremely depressed over the past year; but why would he ever want to forget about Sarah – that seemed unrealistic to her.

“No, Alex, you see we had to-“

“-You guys had to…” Casey said, restating his point.

“-remove Chuck’s memory because his life was on the line! The government wanted him to become a spy again and they were worried that due to his emotional state, he wouldn’t function properly as a spy!! If Chuck hadn’t forgotten Sarah then the government would have killed him!” Morgan nervously remarked. Phew! That was a mouthful that he had to say. He slowly inhaled as he tried to catch his breath and calm down his thumping heart. All this pressure was on him lately and he wasn’t skilled at coping with it!

Alex ferociously stared at her boyfriend, trying to analyse what he had said. “Is this true?” she asked her dad. Morgan nodded frenetically.

“Yeah, it’s true,” Casey replied.

“Oh! That’s…harsh! But Morgan; dad – what is going to happen when Sarah returns?” This beckoning question sizzled through the two men as they felt heartbroken in having to respond.

“Alex, see is never coming back! If there were the slightest possibility, then we would never have gone through with the plan!! Never ... Unless Chuck still had to die! But other than that – we would never have even considered it. I didn’t want to go through with it – I told Chuck not to do it!” Morgan retorted.

“Chuck wanted to forget Sarah?”

“What? No! Never! Chuck didn’t want to either. But he had to. He felt he had no choice. He knew he would hurt everyone he loved if he died. Forgetting Sarah would only hurt Sarah – but he figured it could never hurt her if she never returned.”

“But Chuck knew she would return sometime…Surely? …Unless people whispered doubt into his ear...” she accusingly exclaimed. She was indirectly blaming Morgan for Chuck’s memory loss and he knew it. Casey’s lack of voice in this conversation showed his discomfort. He acted like a child who just got into trouble by their parents. Only in this scenario, the parent just got ‘grounded’ by the child!

“Alex…Sarah hasn’t shown her face in over a year! Plus, your dad bumped into her shortly after she left! Tell her, Casey! Tell her what Sarah said!” Morgan anxiously exclaimed. He wanted so desperately to get even the slightest of pressure off his back. He bumped his shoulder against Casey’s to motivate a response.

“Uh…” Casey nervously choked. He glanced at his agro-daughter staring down at him. Her face made him weary. She definitely had his scary side when she got angry! “Sarah said that she was never going to come back. She wanted him to move on...”

“I don’t believe you. Sarah would never leave Chuck. She would always try and find a way back to him!” she stated.

“Then how come she hasn’t, Alex? This is the Sarah before Chuck – not the one that fell in love with him. Things are different. What are the chances of her coming back? The real her; the one we
know,” Morgan asserted. She ignored his question and drifted towards more understandable matters.

“What does Ellie have to say about this?” Morgan tensed up again. The perspiration from his forehead trickled down his face. His mouth began to secrete more saliva as his nerves were shot.

“Well, Ellie – she…Chuck hasn’t…um…”

“Have you not told Ellie? Morgan, why didn’t you tell Ellie!?”

“Chuck didn’t want to!!” he quickly blamed. He wanted to be in the clear. This whole predicament was stressful and Alex wasn’t helping alleviate the stress. He wiped away the sweat from his face as his hands remained clammy. Can’t this torture be over already?

“Morgan, you are going to call Ellie right now. You are going to explain everything to her! And if you don’t…” Morgan got anxious. She wasn’t breaking up with his was she??

“Please don’t say we are through…” he whispered to himself. He loved Alex and definitely didn’t want to lose or upset her.

Alex continued. “-there will be consequences if you don’t!” Phew! Casey chuckled. He loved seeing his daughter dominate his bearded friend. Alex saw her dad smiling and decided it would be best to also pick on him. “And dad, you better help resolve this issue as well.”

“What? What can I do?” he retorted.

“I don’t know, dad! But you better make a plan!”

…

“Listen, lady. We are JEFFSTER! You cannot deny us free waffles on this plane!” Lester demanded. He and Jeff had been traveling across the globe on tour, and they had recently been in Chicago. They were now on their way back to Burbank, California, hoping to visit the lovely Buy More. The flight was short. All passengers had been served food but dessert sold wasn’t for free. Lester refused to pay!

“I am sorry, Sir. But I have no idea who you are,” the air hostess bluntly stated.

“Wow! That’s embarrassing. You don’t know Jeffster!? What a boring life. Now, I demand you give me free food!!” Lester was starting to get out of hand…and whiny. Jeff took notice of the air hostess’ frustration and took pity.

“I am sorry, Mam for my friend’s behaviour. We both just feel a little jetlagged. We had a gig in Chicago a couple hours ago and have been on the go non-stop. How much for the waffles?” he politely asked.

“No, Jeffrey, don’t give into her conniving ways. She is evil! Evil! She is disgracing our right to eat,” Lester interjected. The air hostess ignored Lester and responded to Jeff.

“For you, my dear, it’s for free,” she responded. A smile broadened among Jeff’s bulky face. Lester got excited. He felt he could receive free food too!

“And what about me?” he sweetly asked, his manner representing that of an ecstatic child.

“For you, my dear; that’ll be $10!” He never responded. He pulled his face to make a grumpy expression in an attempt to make the air hostess feel guilty. Yet his plan failed. She put on a lovely smile and walked away.

“Germany would have given us free waffles,” he muttered under his breath.

Jeff was staring out the window, admiring the harmonious view. Lester continued to fidget in his seat, feeling uncomfortable.

“Really Jeffrey; I don’t understand why you never booked us 1st Class tickets! These seats are so cramped!”

“I told you, Lester. I wanted to be closer to the fans.”

“Jeff, how many times have we been through this!? How are the fans ever going to respect us if we buy cheap tickets!!? We need to impress them, not become them!”

Jeff never responded. He just faced down, accepting Lester for his peculiar charms. If he replied, they would have got into another argument regarding this matter. Jeff hated fighting with his best friend, so he just ignored him and continued to stare out the window. Lester continued to fiddle with his seatbelt. He couldn’t get comfortable. He glanced at the passengers that sat around him and took notice of the elderly lady that sat across from him. She was hunched and frail. Her hands
were cupping a book as she had glasses on, allowing her to read. I wonder if she’s a fan!? He then glanced among a young boy. The hair of the kid was spiked, creating the impression that he had just been electrocuted and his hair had paid the price. The dark attire of the boy led Lester to believe that this kid must have been ‘emo’ or ‘gothic’; but he respected the kid regardless. This teenage ‘goth’ had been wearing a black shirt with the word ‘JEFFSTER’ printed among the front. This caused Lester to smirk. It was nice to know that his dream was coming true. He glanced at one last person – a woman. Her blonde locks rested gently against her clothes. She was extremely gorgeous. With boots, blue jeans, a tight top and a peachy-brown jacket, she seemed like the type of woman that could steal the hearts of many men. He didn’t recognise her until she turned her face away from the window.

Sarah Walker? What was she doing on this plane? Alone? Without Chuck? Lester nudge Jeff repeatedly.

“Jeff! Jeffrey! Guess who is on the plane,” he excitedly intrigued. His face was pointed in her direction, but it was unclear who he was referencing. To Jeff, it seemed like he was talking about the gothic teenage boy.

“A fan! See I told you buying these tickets would bring you joy,” Jeff remarked.

“No, Jeffrey, not that gothic boy with a great sense of style. The blonde over there! Look who it is!!” Lester spared her name. He wanted to see the look on Jeff’s face when he recognised who the blonde was.

He glanced at her and immediately knew! “That’s Sarah! But what is she doing on this plane? And without Chuck?”

“I know right, isn’t it creepy. Maybe she is on a secret mission that Chuck can’t know about. Wouldn’t that be exciting! We should go up to her and ask.” Lester was in the process of leaving his seat when his friend stopped him.

“No, Lester. Leave her alone. You don’t know her story. Let’s not interrupt her peace.” This made him look displeased. Jeff always had to ruin the fun ever since his brain was no longer damaged. “Fine!” he unhappily replied, sliding once again back into his seat.

Chuck’s travelling bags began to fill with luggage. He extracted clothes from his closet and folded them gently into his suitcases. He was ecstatic to have an opportunity to go on an exciting undercover mission with his girlfriend. For some reason, he felt as though he hadn’t been on a mission in ages and he finally – once again - was doing what he loved. He went to the small cupboard beside his bed to collect his socks. He opened the top drawer and took out a few with the intention of packing them in his bag; but something caused him to halt – a wedding ring. He never recognised it. The irony was that he thought he had never been married before, so he assumed it couldn’t be his. Ellie’s? Devon’s? Yet the ring drew him in. He felt compelled to put it on. Why did it seem so familiar?

Chuck and Sarah’s relationship had ‘ended’. They were seemingly ‘no longer married’. When Chuck was in his state of bereavement, he refused to accept that their marriage had been ‘over’. A few months after Sarah left, a so-called ‘lawyer’ had stopped by his house claiming that Sarah had filed for a divorce. The ‘lawyer’ had brought him divorce papers to sign. He never truly understood how divorces worked, but he never made the situation complicated. He wanted her to be happy and if this made her content, then he had to accept that! Yet on the inside, his heart literally broke! He sank into depression as he read the terms and agreements. He felt even more grief-stricken when he saw Sarah’s signature next to her name. Little did he know; Sarah wasn’t the one who filed for the divorce. She had never seen the divorce papers before and her signature had been forged! She never wanted him to experience such grief, thus she would never blatantly force him to sign something that would end their marriage. Someone else was behind it all and this mystery person (for some unknown reason), wanted Chuck and Sarah to be apart! This; Chuck failed to know.

The fact remained that they were now divorced. Someone had acted as Sarah’s lawyer, and filed the papers to the government allowing for an easy divorce. Chuck didn’t even need to know about it further. It was agreed that neither party would have to go to court. Sarah’s ‘lawyer’ agreed that
Chuck got everything. It all seemed easy, too easy. As though Sarah was so adamant about removing Chuck from her life that she didn’t want any hassle. But regardless, Chuck and everyone else were aware of the divorce. Sarah wasn’t informed, nothing was filed her way. Her ‘lawyer’ had dealt with it, so seemingly she had dealt with it. But she was in the dark, unaware that her marriage had ended.

During his state of mourning he never allowed his wedding ring to leave his finger. It brought him comfort; reminding him of happier days. Through the agonising year of separation, he tried to wrap his head around the fact that he and Sarah were ‘no longer a couple’. With each day that turned the corner he couldn’t accept that. It seemed too implausible for him to understand. Shortly before his memory had been discarded, he hid the ring in his top drawer, just in case she returned. He believed that possibly the ring could help him remember her – like the flash cards helped forget her. He never truly wanted to let her go – he never could!

As Chuck gazed upon the ring that symbolised unity, he began to experience feelings of warmth and love. This ring evoked emotions inside of him that he felt hadn’t experienced in a very long time. He remained confused. Why had a wedding ring been hidden inside his drawer? He couldn’t recollect where it had come from, yet he so desperately wanted to put it on. He felt drawn to the presence of the ring. It made him feel overjoyed and comforted, and he had no idea why.

He slid the majestic object round his finger.
“I don’t need a balcony, I don’t need a sunset. We have each other and that’s all that matters!”
What was that? Was that a memory?
“Chuck, I’m leaving…”
The flashback continued. His confusion escalated – he didn’t remember this! What was going on?
“What? Where are they taking you!?"
They’re not taking me Chuck, I’m going…”
His stomach began to churn. He suddenly began to feel so emotionally vulnerable. This ‘memory’ made him feel this way!
“Beckman never thought I was a traitor, it was a setup. The perfect opportunity to establish my cover as a double agent…Chuck, we have so much together. We have a real life and a future! But I need to go back to being the old me, just for a little while longer if I plan on surviving this…”
Beckman? She knew Beckman?
Together? He dated her? She was so beautiful; yet so sad. Chuck could feel his heart shatter as his eyes began to water – why did he begin to feel this way? Planning on surviving what? Where was she going?
“Surviving what? Where are you going?”
“I’m going undercover into Volkoff industries. I’m going to take them down from the inside…”
The recollection of this flashback startled him immensely. It seemed so familiar yet new. Had he known her from Volkoff industries? Who was she and why hadn’t he remembered her? And why did she make him feel so emotionally heartbroken? Feelings of nostalgia slipped through the cracks of his lost memory. Who was this stunning woman?
Someone opened his bedroom door! Chuck swiftly slipped the ring off his finger and clenched his hand into a fist, where he grasped the ring tightly. His heart sped up – was it Kayla?
“Hey Chuck.” No! Only Morgan.
“Hey,” Chuck replied. He knew he could ask his best friend about the ring. Perhaps Morgan would know who it belonged to and what his flashback meant. “Morgan, whose ring is this? My name is encrypted on the inside, but this can’t belong to me.” He unclenched his hand to reveal the ring hiding inside his fist. Morgan glanced at it. Ah man, not another dilemma!
“Uh, no…I have no idea! I have never seen that before,” he lied. Chuck glanced down at the ring in his hand. He remained confused and bewildered. Morgan stood nervously. He couldn’t take it anymore…he had to say something – he was about to spill the beans…he couldn’t keep it in any longer-
“Alright, fine Chuck! It’s yours!” Chuck jolted his head up. What? This ring was his? “Mine? Buddy, how is this ring mine?” Chuck’s eyes bulged in shock and anticipation for Morgan’s reply. However, the little bearded fellow remained anxious. He couldn’t tell. There was no way he could tell. The government wouldn’t be very pleased with that! Who knows what could happen if Chuck found out. Morgan – once again – had to think fast. It sucked being Chuck’s best friend, knowing his biggest secret that even Chuck himself never knew! That was hard. He didn’t want to constantly lie but he had to.

“Um…it was a ring you used for a mission once… you had to pretend to be married or something and you kept the ring…” he gulped. Ag! He hated this! If only everything was okay! If only Sarah had never lost her memory then none of this horrible turmoil would occur! Why did life have to be so complicated!??

Chuck still remained startled, unsure of what Morgan said. He never recalled the mission; but he had been on so many over the past few years that it was plausible to have forgotten this one. Is that where he knew her from? He questioned whether Sarah – the mystery woman – was involved in the mission Morgan referenced. Yet he doubted he would forget a face like hers – so pure and intriguing. Though apparently he did! He thought perhaps she acted as his pretend wife or a mistress of some sort. He couldn’t put the pieces together. He was so confused!

There was a knock on the door. Chuck assumed it was Kayla, ready for them to leave to England. “I’ll go answer it,” Morgan offered. Chuck seemed fazed. This whole predicament bewildered him. Why hadn’t he remembered any of it? Why had he felt so drawn to this ring and to this mystery woman? Had he gained feelings for her during the mission? The memory sure made him feel like he did! He decided to let it go for now and placed the ring in his pocket, hiding it from Kayla.

Morgan opened the front door. Low and behold, Kayla was standing in the courtyard beside her luggage. “Front door? Why didn’t you just use the window!?” Morgan joked. She smiled, admiring his sense of humour.

Chuck appeared from behind the door with bags in hand. He seemed happy to see her – and he was – but he remained uneasy.

“You ready to go?” she grinned.

“Sure,” he smiled back.

…

“Casey, have you found Sarah yet?” General Beckman asked. Her face glared down at Casey’s from the screen.

“No, General. Last records depict her being in Chicago. Her current whereabouts remain unknown,” he replied.

“Why would she visit Chicago?”

“I don’t know.”

“Find her, Colonel! Do whatever you can and find her! We have got to warn her that the agency might be after her if they find out what she did!” Beckman panicked. Her tone then proceeded to alter, becoming more heartfelt. “I care about her, Casey. We need to help her!”

“Agreed, General. I care about her too.”

General Beckman switched off. Casey stood in Castle, praying that things would start to look up.

…

The sound of the crowded airport boomed in the ears of Morgan, Chuck and Kayla. Morgan was dropping them off at the airport as they made their way to London.

“A whole month away, Chuck! Sounds exciting,” he stated.

“Yeah. I really missed going on missions you know. I am really excited!” The luggage in Chuck’s hands began to chafe against his skin. The muscles in his back tensed up as his heavy backpack weighed him down. There was so much that he had to pack for a month away! “So what do you plan on doing while I am gone?” Chuck asked his friend.

“I don’t know. Visit Buy Moria perhaps! Luckily I won’t have to pack luggage to visit that place.”

“Isn’t that a Subway franchise now?” Kayla asked.

“Yeah well, it will always be Buy Moria to me!”
“Very wise words my friend,” Chuck exclaimed. They continued to walk peacefully towards the dropping-off area in the airport. Morgan stayed close by his friends’ side. He viewed the giant building in which they stood. The airport had to cater for a large majority of people – and even now, crowded and all, it still appeared spacious. Morgan noticed people entering the airport that had just arrived from a different location. Air hostesses, pilots, passengers – the whole shebang! He noticed how a lot of passengers’ families would patiently wait upon their arrival. He thought it was sweet when the family and passenger would suddenly meet – how their faces would immediately light up and their eyes would fill with joy. It was beautiful how they would poetically charge towards the other, embracing each other with a tight-loving hug! Everything was once again right in their world now that their loved one was home. This made Morgan feel heart warmed. A smile began to broaden among his face. But it was soon replaced with widening eyes and a dropping jaw; as he witnessed Sarah Walker arrive at the airport! She had been a passenger on the plane coming from Chicago and now she was in Burbank. She was in Burbank? WHAT?

Morgan began to feel flustered. He was overjoyed to see her – he had missed her. But predicaments had changed…Chuck didn’t know her anymore!! If Sarah noticed Chuck – what would Sarah do if she saw Chuck? Morgan wasn’t sure. Why was she in Burbank? How would she respond seeing Kayla with her old love? What to do!? What to do!? What to do!!? “Uh…uh guys, let’s not dawdle. Come on now. You don’t want to be late for your flight,” he anxiously stated. His hands pushed Kayla and Chuck forward, trying to get them to speed up their pace.

“Morgan, we are already early. We have time to spare! There is no rush.”

“Time flies, Chuck! Come on. You don’t want to take any chances!” Kayla started to feel annoyed by Morgan’s push. “Morgan, what are you do-”

“Hello guys! Long-time no see, am I right!?” Whose voice was that!? All three faced the speaker. Jeffster?

“Wow, Sarah. You have changed!” Lester remarked, in reference to Kayla. Chuck looked befuddled. Who was this Sarah character that everyone kept mentioning? Kayla though, appeared the most shocked.

“OH MY GOSH! Jeffster!? I am like, your biggest fan!!” she proclaimed. Car brakes shrieked. Chuck forgot about the mention of Sarah’s name as Kayla – a master spy for the CIA – was a fan of…Jeffster?? Say what?? Morgan and Chuck twisted their heads in Kayla’s direction. Looks of amazement clouded their faces. How? WHY…Jeffster!?

Kayla remained eager. Her face lit up with excitement from meeting her idols – the band that she utterly enjoyed.

“Don’t look confused Chuck. We are a global phenomenon. People across the world praise us! We represent the people. And the people – represent us.” Lester’s profound words of ‘wisdom’ made no sense to anyone other than himself. Kayla didn’t care. She remained blown away.

“Can I get your autograph!??” She asked, shaking with elicit joy.

“No,” he bluntly remarked. He then continued to change the subject. “Chuck, you will never guess who we saw on the plane! Sa-” Morgan interjected before Lester mentioned Sarah’s name again. “Sa-ome fan, I suppose! Anywho, it’s time to go! Bye guys. Catch up with you later.” He once again started to push Chuck and Kayla forward.

“Okay, okay – we get it. You want us to leave. We are going now, Morgan!” Chuck retorted. Morgan’s eyes darted to see where Sarah currently was. He couldn’t spot her, but he knew he had seen her and he knew that Jeffster had seen her! This was bad. She was clearly back to speak to Chuck…or not?? Perhaps she was on a mission that resided in Burbank? But Morgan knew that theory was unlikely. EEK!

“Bye buddy! See you in a month,” Chuck said. He dropped his luggage and gave Morgan a hug goodbye. They then left to go on the plane.

“Hey Morgan, do you mind if you could give us a lift? We would love it if you took us to see Buy
More,” Jeff sweetly asked. Morgan turned around, facing the buffoons in front of him. He released a stressed sigh. “Sure,” he responded. “You guys go along in the meantime. I just have to make a call quickly.” Jeff and Lester merrily went along, walking to where Morgan’s mode of transport had been parked. Once Morgan knew that Jeff and Lester were out of ear-shot, he took out his phone and began to phone his girlfriend’s dad.

“Hey Casey; slight glitch,” he worriedly stated. “Guess who’s in town!”

... The large suitcase in her hand glided across the pavement of the courtyard. The bumps on the floor caused the suitcase to occasionally hamper along. Her face remained lit up with joy and delight!! Much like the other passengers on the plane, Sarah felt ecstatic upon meeting her family once again. She hadn’t met them yet, but she knew she would soon. Everything suddenly seemed to come together – everything was right! She had finally returned to Chuck, and she couldn’t wait to see his happy expression when seeing her. As Sarah drew nearer to his – their – front porch, she searched between the flowerbeds beside their front door for the spare key into their house – she remembered where they kept it! She slid the key into the lock and turned the handle. The creaking sound of the door as it opened made it seem like no one had lived there in ages. She felt that was fitting since she hadn’t lived there in ages. She dropped her bags in the living room and glanced at the place where most of her happy memories resided. Ah, home!

“Chuck,” she called out. “Chuck, are you home?” There was no answer. She called out again, but still, silence responded. She assumed that perhaps he was at work or out with Morgan. She never minded – she could just wait for him to return home. Yet, she lacked knowledge of the fact that he wouldn’t return to Burbank until next month!

Her high heels pressed against the floor as she slowly paced around, examining the apartment. She took notice of Chuck’s collectables; his games – oh, how he loved these childhood toys. The kitchen still looked exactly how she remembered it to be. Yet, something was missing in the apartment – besides for Chuck. There were no photos of them together. Had he hid them? She knew he could never destroy them – he wouldn’t want to! But why had he hid them? Had she caused him so much grief that he couldn’t stand to glance at her face in the photos anymore? Or was it because the photos displayed a time when they were happy together; and he hated the fact that they weren’t happy – or together – anymore!? She immensely disliked that fact too! But regardless, it befuddled her. She proceeded to take a photo out of her suitcase – a photo of her and Chuck. She would always carry it around with her, never leaving anywhere without it – even when she failed to remember its relevance. As she held it in her hand, her thumb brushed the surface of the photo. She smiled. Things were good again. She missed these feelings of absolute adoration for him, and now – finally – they returned. It was like she had hibernated for over a year; and now the sun was out, allowing her to live her life again. She just couldn’t wait to see him! She stood impatiently in their living room, wandering where he might be. Buy More? Did he still work there? It was worth a shot! She turned to face the front door, with the intention of leaving to find Chuck; but something stopped her in her tracks...

“Sarah...”
“Sarah…”
The propping around of Sarah’s head forced her to face the sudden speaker. Her stunned eyes displayed warmth and contentment – finally a friendly face! Her gestures and expressions were more welcoming now that her memories had returned. She wasn’t so held back or uncomfortable. She was more assured within herself and her body language displayed that fact.

“Hello, Alex,” she greeted.

Alex was left dumbfounded. She had just been informed that Chuck had forgotten about his long lost love and assumptions portrayed Sarah as never returning. But – alas – here she was. Home.

Alex surveyed the room and eyed her luggage – She was planning on staying? For how long? She never particularly minded the fact that Sarah might possibly remain in Burbank. It just assured her that there was something – or someone – worth staying for.

“What are - are you back for a…visit?” she discreetly asked.

Sarah took notice of her luggage and understood the answer that Alex was fishing for. “Yes; well, back for good!” A subconscious smile sprouted on her face in response to Sarah’s positive reply. She hadn’t received many lately due to the issues revolving Chuck, but Sarah seemed untainted and unaware. This left her uncertain in her response to Sarah – Did she know about Chuck’s memory forfeiture? She didn’t want to accidently spill the beans! She wasn’t too sure of the right way to spill the beans…they were pretty heavy beans to drop upon someone.

Sarah could see that Alex was slightly nerved and she decided to become more conversational to lighten the tension. “So, Alex, how are things going between you and Morgan? I heard you guys moved in together.” This friendly query was noticed by Alex, but it was weird for her – they never really conversed. Yes, they would at the occasional family-do; but other than that they never hung out much. Alex was the first person that Sarah forgot about when her memory faded. That was a clear indicator of their loose bond.

“Life with Morgan is…good. It has been over a year now, so…”

“Oh, right. I see…”

This made Sarah realise how much of their lives she had missed. Over a year had passed since she left Burbank, and their situations had changed. She knew she couldn’t just waltz her way back into their lives without a little adjustment and hoped that that predicament wouldn’t stand with regard to Chuck. Little did she know…

“We really missed you,” Alex comforted. The grin among Sarah’s face extended as she felt protected by that knowledge – they were still willing to accept her back into their lives regardless of the past year. She loved that – she felt heart warmed by that idea.

“Speaking of we, do you perhaps know where everyone else is? Like…Chuck?” she friendly asked. Alex had been uninformed about Chuck’s departure from USA to London. But she did know about Chuck’s bubbling romance with Kayla, and this confused her. She didn’t want to be the one to break the news to Sarah, nor be the one to rock the boat! Thus she refused to tell her.

‘I think Castle, maybe. That’s where my dad was last,’” she replied. Sarah’s eyes sparkled when she heard her old partner’s name. It seemed like forever since she saw him and she missed him dearly –
missed them all dearly. Mentioning Castle meant that Chuck had returned to being a spy. She knew that they never wanted that life anymore, but she assumed that he felt he had to return to the spy world – move backwards instead of forward, as though he couldn’t move forward without her.

“Thank you, Alex,” she smiled. Her welcoming manner still left Alex bewildered. She had been out of their lives for a while, and the way she left her relationships with everyone in Burbank wasn’t what you could term ‘friendly’. But yet, here she was – smiling and conversing.

Sarah felt an abundance of delight in seeing a long lost companion. She felt she needed to be endearing and friendly towards Casey’s daughter as she needed to show her ‘family’ in Burbank that she had changed – that things were ‘back to normal’ again. Her merry emotions seemed to overcompensate for her absence during the last year and that alerted Alex.

Just before she left the house (leaving her luggage behind in her apartment), Alex quickly halted her. “Sarah,” she called out, “…welcome back.”

With those kind words of friendship, she left; her face still sprayed with a vivacious grin.

…

“Buy More – have you changed!” Lester remarked with a surprised tone.

The once electronic store had been combined into an amalgamation of Buy More and Subway. Even their name had been altered. They were no longer Buy More but Sub More! Their slogan – Want to buy more? Then do it the Sub More way!

Morgan, Chuck and Casey had all resigned from Buy More when it had still been termed that. Legally, Chuck and Sarah still ‘owned’ the deed to the store, but they decided to give it to Morgan so he could supervise. He then appointed all rights to his step-father, leaving Big Mike with the responsibility of running the store and hiring new staff. Eventually, Morgan, Chuck, Sarah and Casey ended up having no affiliation with the store, other than the step-father relation that Morgan had with Big Mike. They also, on occasion, would visit Buy More – correction, Sub More – when cravings for more Cheeseballs would gnaw at their stomachs.

Sub More seemed to be quite successful as it continued to thrive in customers. Not only did they mainly sell electronics and other appliances, but now they sold Subway sandwiches too! This combination resulted in a greater demand for products, boosting the popularity of the store. This immense attraction could be seen by the large majority of customers present.

Lester, Jeff and Morgan entered Sub More. Jeffster had come to visit, hoping to rekindle the old love that they shared with this righteous store they once called home. Morgan came because, well, he was their lift…Plus, he couldn’t see the harm in visiting the creepy cousin that he once tried to kick out of the family!

As they made their entrance, a loud bellow was heard by a swarm of self-proclaimed ‘nerds’. “JEFFSTER!!!” they cried out. The ‘stars’ were taken aback by the beckoning screams of the geeky fans. The cattle of nerdists charged towards them, as though they were fleeing from a tsunami attack.

“May I PLEASE have your autograph?”
“Jeffster, we LOVE you!”
“Jeff, you look hot!!”
“Lester, can I touch your hair!!”

The obsessed fans surrounded the ‘popular band’, seemingly taking the role of ‘paparazzi’. Jeffster were left alert and taken aback by the extremely direct and violent confrontation! They had received similar treatment in Germany, but had always been protected by bodyguards. Here they were left alarmed and crowded, without the necessary back-up that they once required. Jeff had
requested no bodyguards on their trip to Burbank, on account that ‘they weren’t really famous in USA.’ But the irony had been clearly understood now. They were famous in USA – all the nerds knew them!!

The smiling faces of the adoring aficionados of ‘Jeffster’ shortly relaxed Lester, adding spices to his plate of ego. He shifted his expression to display his confidence and liking to the situation. Jeff remained slightly shaken.

“Ladies and Gentleman – but mainly ladies; thank you for inspiring us as we know we have inspired you,”

“AMEN!” exclaimed a besotted fan.

“I will preach, brother!!” Lester emotively replied.

Jeff then proceeded to butt in, becoming a lot more comfortable with the smothering of the crowd.

“We would just like to thank you for your on-going support that has warmed our hearts. We would be nothing without you. You guys make up Jeffster!”

“Actually Jeffrey, our names make up Jeffster…” This comment earned Lester an ‘I’m not happy with you’ expression from his band partner, refrigerating the plate of ego that Lester had recently warmed up. “But – never mind…”

Morgan, now stuck in the crowd, decided to break through the barrier of people. He pushed his way out of the swarm, freeing himself from their determined grasps. As he brushed his clothes, grooming himself from the sweaty palms of devoted fans, Big Mike drew nearer to him.

“Hello son,” the large man addressed. Morgan looked up to face his step-father.

“Hey Big Mike!”

“So…the peculiar nerd-herders have returned to Burbank!”

“Yes, they wanted to visit Buy More – Sub More. Sorry; still got to get used to the new name!”

“It is quite a big adjustment. But that doesn’t mean that this store hasn’t still got Buy More’s heart.”

Morgan nodded in agreement, as he and Big Mike stared upon the German, nerdist band who were giving their autographs to their cult supporters. These stark-raving mad fans asked Jeffster to sign autographs for them in the most peculiar places – they wanted signatures on their rear, on their foreheads, on their chest – a fan even asked Jeffster to sign the air for them so that they could inhale the band name and allow it to rest inside their heart – literally! It seemed that, just like Jeffster themselves; their supporters were…strange.

“Remember our family dinner tomorrow night. You better be there, Morgan! And bring Alex along. Your mother will love to see her again,” Big Mike exclaimed.

“Yeah, I’ll be coming. There is no way I would let my mother down!”

“Actually Jeffrey, our names make up Jeffster…” This comment earned Lester an ‘I’m not happy with you’ expression from his band partner, refrigerating the plate of ego that Lester had recently warmed up. “But – never mind…”

Morgan froze. “Wait; hold on Big Mike! My dad’s back in town?”

“You didn’t know?” Morgan shook his head in shock. “Oh hell no! How could you not know? He has been in Burbank for over a month! Son, he even works in Sub More!” Morgan sharply raised his eyes to Big Mike’s in angst, his pale complexion displaying his anxiety. His eyes began to glance around the store, searching for a man that could resemble his father. “He is the new manager! Needless to say, I’ve been walking on egg shells around here. He and I do not get along!”

With Subway’s influence over the store, a lot of negotiations went into appointing the store manager. That had been Big Mike’s job for a while, until Subway found it slightly biased. About a month ago, he had been forced to appoint the new store manager, and only afterwards, did he realise what a mistake he had made.

Morgan began to get flustered. His head was racing and charging with thoughts. Did he know Morgan lived here? Why hadn’t his dad come to see him? Why had he been so oblivious to the fact that his dad was in town? He knew that the entire Chuck predicament had absorbed his energy and as a result, caused him to not particularly focus on his personal life. So knowledge of his father’s
arrival had not been pertinent to him. But Morgan and his dad never got on well. The male biological parent of Morgan was a selfish bloke who liked to pick on his son by pointing out his flaws. “You are so short that even dwarfs are taller than you,” he would say; “I can’t believe my boy is so dense. Bologna, did you drop him when he was a baby?” These insults built up inside of him as he aged, making him believe in his dad’s insults. When Morgan finally met Chuck, he was able to let go of his anger towards his father. His new, bountiful friendship with Chuck gave him someone he could rely on; someone he could trust and someone who loved him for him. When his dad left, Chuck helped him through the trauma. When Chuck’s parents then left, Morgan returned the favour.

With the knowledge that his dad was in town, Morgan never knew how to respond – whether he should confront his father or ignore him like his dad had been doing. He even tried to convince himself that he never cared. But he couldn’t lie. He longed for answers that only his dad could provide, but didn’t want to have to converse with his father (at least not face to face). He knew that if he and his father spoke, he would continually feel judged and ridiculed. He didn’t want those feelings of vulnerability that he experienced as a child to negatively sweep him off his feet again. “Morgan, are you feeling alright? You look a little bleak, son,” Big Mike asked, disrupting Morgan’s train of thought. He wiped his sweaty forehead, feeling overwhelmed by the imperceptible news!

“Yeah; um, you know - Big Mike I think I am going to go…I will see you tomorrow night, okay?” “I understand. You run along now, go snuggle up to that girl of yours! Don’t forget to tell her about tomorrow night.” Morgan waved; his smile falsely painted across his face, as he quickly tried to inconspicuously dart out of the store.

Big Mike glanced at his step-son, feeling sorry for him. He loved Morgan immensely and he knew that his relationship with his father wasn’t what you could address as ‘loving’. As he sighed in pity, he turned his head, spotting Jeffster by the CD collection. They were rummaging through CDs, on the lookout for something in particular. Big Mike sighed again – this time in frustration.

“What do you boys think you are doing??” he questioned them. They searched more, till they eventually found (at the end of the pile) a Jeffster CD.

“Found it!”

“Are you going to buy that?” Big Mike asked, in reference to the CD, “Because if you are, that would be tacky! And we all know that tacky ain’t the Buy More way. It ain’t the Sub More way either!” They ignored his assailing remark.

“What is our CD doing right at the end of the pile, Big Mike?? We are Jeffster. Our fan base is huge in this store and you have hid our CD in the back!? You even put Justin Bieber before us! Where are the Biebs’ fans here, Mikey? Where are the Biebs’ fans?” Jeffster assertively replied. “I am sorry, boys. I just didn’t think anyone would buy your CD; especially since you named it, ‘Jeffster – Songs from an Indian and Fat Guy.’

“What are you talking about!? Jeffster is the voice of the world! Our music has a habit of touching people!”

“Be careful how you phrase that, Lester Patel…” Jeffrey interjected, “I think Big Mike, what he is trying to say is that our music is important to some people – to the people of this store. Therefore our album should be at the front of the pile and not at the end.”

“What he said! Jeffster is not just music; it is a guideline to life!” Big Mike chuckled; “Yeah; the way not to live!!”

Lester saw the smug look upon Big Mike’s face and desperately wanted to change his opinion. “You think so? Alright,” he began to yell so that the entire store could hear him, “Attention all Jeffster fans! Official Jeffster performance in Buy More—”
“Sub More.”
“-Sub More, tomorrow night!” The crowd cheered, ecstatic to have a chance to witness a live performance from their favourite German/American band. Big Mike, on the other hand, wasn’t too pleased.
“Boys, you can’t authorise a Jeffster performance at Sub More without managerial permission. Now you know that I am all for you boys jamming out your…music, but I ain’t manager here nomore!”
“You know what, Big Mike, you are absolutely right!” Just when the large, African-American thought he had changed Lester’s mind, he began to yell again; “Correction all fans – official Jeffster performance at Big Mike’s tomorrow night!” The outrage could be seen on Big Mike’s face; “Lester Patel!!!”

... 

“Sarah? Sarah is in Burbank?” General Beckman questioned, her tone expressing her astonishment. “Yes, General, Morgan reported to me that she had arrived in Burbank,” Casey replied. “I thought she was on an undercover mission! Why would she return?” “I don’t know, General...”

Casey was in Castle, conversing with General Beckman whose face was displayed on the monitor. Both were amazed by the frightening news of Sarah’s arrival. They were ecstatic in the sense that she had returned, but logic revealed that Chuck never remembered her. They were uncertain whether Sarah would react positively to that news, and they didn’t want to be the ones to break her heart. But they hadn’t seen her in over a year. During that time, she could have found a new love and forgotten about Chuck. They had no clue whether she remembered him or not. But she did – she remembered them all – very, very well!

“Casey, you need to inform her that we know about her break-in. She infiltrated the CIA headquarters! If word got out-“
“Yes, General; no one will ever know. I will make sure of th-“

The side monitor flashed on, revealing the fact that someone was trying to enter Castle. Casey surveyed the face of the ‘intruder’ and was stunned to his core. He stood like a statue – frozen in position by the sudden predicament that he now had to face. The person trying to access Castle never had the password. They frantically tried different combinations, but all seemed to excessively fail. Casey knew he had to let the ‘intruder’ in – of course he had to – it was Sarah!!

Still left bewildered, Sarah understood why she no longer had access into Castle – she hadn’t been part of this team for over a year, and she knew that they had to have changed the combination by now. Regardless, it still frustrated her; making her feel like an outsider.

“Who is it, Colonel?” Beckman bewilderedly questioned. “It-It’s Sarah...” Beckman’s face went cold.

Casey began to panic! Sarah was here? She was here? He had to confront her NOW? He hadn’t mentally prepared for her visit. He greatly missed and longed to see her, but explaining the current situations in Burbank would be hard. It would be difficult for Sarah to absorb and wrap her head around Chuck not remembering her. He knew it would be an uphill battle for her to come to terms with, and that is why he was resistant to telling her. But he had to! And he had to do it now.

She continued to attempt entering Castle. Her frustration began to escalate with each password that she got wrong.

“Casey, you have to let her in!!” Beckman ordered. He began to fidget with his hands, showing his anxiety. Sarah started to get impatient. She thought that perhaps they could open Castle’s door for her; so she called out to them. “Chuck? Casey? Is anyone down there? I can’t get in!” There was no
“Casey!” Beckman exclaimed, “Let her in!!”

Sarah closed her eyes and sighed in disappointment, giving up hope! There was the possibility that they weren’t down in the secret lair. But she also knew that there was still a chance that they were, and just refused to see her. With her saddened eyes, she turned around, about to retreat; when unexpectedly –

The door to Castle lifted. Sarah jolted round; her face jovial with effervescent expression. They were there; they wanted to see her – she was about to see them! All of a sudden, her body filled with amiable delight. She was going to see her ‘family’ – her Burbank family! Thoughts began to rush through her, as her body got antsy with bubbling excitement. This was it – she was finally going to see Chuck again!!

She charged down the steps of Castle, her manner displaying her merry emotions. “Casey!” she excitedly exclaimed, as she saw his robust figure. She missed him and had no objections to hiding her extensive grin.

Casey started to smile when he heard her, his mirthful feelings coming to surface. Yet, even so, he remained confused. Why would she be glad to see him? As far as he knew, she couldn’t remember him. She only really knew him by his reputation. It was only after their few years together in Burbank that their friendship bloomed.

“Hello…Sarah…” he replied. He was torn between confusion and explicit joy. She had returned – Sarah! His old partner – his best partner! Yet he still remained uncertain as to why she was back. Upon their prior meeting, she had informed him that she would – could – never return. What was waiting for her in Burbank that brought her here? She ‘divorced Chuck’; never remembered her friendship with Casey and was no longer assigned to Team Bartowski or Carmichael Industries – so what was so important in Burbank?

Regardless of these conflicting emotions, he still remained jubilant.

“Long time, no see, Casey!” she stated.

“Hello to your too, Sarah!” General Beckman sternly remarked.

Sarah just continued to smile. Her eyes were so expressive, revealing to them her cheerful state. “Hello, General.”

Silence broke the warm atmosphere that overshadowed them. Casey and Beckman were stunned – Sarah was being friendly and they struggled to understand why. They were also puzzled by her arrival, questioning why she had returned. They loved the fact that she had – deep in their hearts they longed for everything to be right again; to rewind back a few years to when life seemed manageable. But currently, life had stumped them. Sarah was back in Burbank for some unknown reason and Chuck was in London…with his new ‘friend’. He hadn’t remembered her and they knew she would need to be debriefed about that. They just couldn’t tell her – no words of wisdom sprung to mind!

The awkward moment of silence consumed the room as both General Beckman and Casey were shooting blanks. Sarah remained joyful, but the tension of the room was felt by everyone – including her. She knew that meeting them again would be slightly uncomfortable so she didn’t make a fuss about it and let it slide under the rug. Yet, she still remained befuddled by Chuck’s absence. Where was he?

General Beckman decided to crack one of the egg shells that they were cautiously tip-toeing over. “Welcome back to Burbank, Sarah,” she sweetly acknowledged.

“Thank you. I’m glad to be back.”

Casey started to settle in the discomfort, becoming more straight-forward. “Not to seem ungrateful, but why are you back, Sarah? Aren’t you meant to be undercover somewhere?”

“Yes, I was.”

“So, then why the visit to Burbank??”

“Well, I had been assigned to take a man called Andrew Baines in for questioning. After that, my
mission was over."

“Wait, Sarah – you were affiliated with the Baines project?” the General interjected.

“Yes.”

Beckman began to make assumptions – perhaps that was why she was in Burbank. The General hadn’t known the full extent of Sarah’s mission. She had been informed that Sarah was undercover in a foreign location, but hadn’t known specifically what she was doing there. With the knowledge that Sarah was involved in taking down Baines Corporation, she started to relax, assuming that the reason for her visit was because the CIA had assigned her to help Beckman’s team take down Baines Corporation. So she wasn’t here to meet Chuck? But that still never explained why she broke into the CIA headquarters. Was she assigned by the CIA to steal the glasses so that the government could blame Baines for the break-in; giving them a plausible reason to try and take down the Corporation?

“Sarah, is that why you are here? To work with us in taking down Baines and his company?” This question flustered her. No, that wasn’t why she had returned. But she wouldn’t reject the offer if it gave her leeway to stay.

“Um…” she stuttered.

Casey started to catch on to Beckman’s theory. He joined in, “Is that why you stole the Intersect that was in CIA custody? You were assigned to?”

What!!? They knew about that? How did they know? What did that mean?

She clenched her jaw as she gulped down the excess saliva that started to form in her mouth. “How – how did you know that was me?” she nervously asked. She spared no lies. Her response blatantly stated that it was in fact her that broke in. But she was also knowledgeable of the fact that if they were planning on arresting her, they would have done so the moment they found out! That reassured her.

“Chuck knew. He recognised your bracelet.”

Sarah’s troubled eyes darted towards the charm bracelet round her wrist. She began to fiddle with it again, resurrecting old feelings of anxiety.

“Why did you steal the Intersect, Agent Walker?” Beckman asked. Sarah lifted her eyes, facing Beckman’s confused yet stern face. She knew she could trust them and she knew she had to tell them. If she was going to do it sometime, now was her opportunity.

“Baines had been selling this intersect on the Black Market…” Her rate of speech decelerated. She seemed calmer due to the constant pausing between her words. “When I was assigned to take Andrew Baines in for questioning, I found out about it… I thought, ‘Now is my chance! Now I can get my old life back…’ I knew that if I got hold of the Intersect glasses; I could replace the data with memories – my memories…of my life. So, when I found Baines, I asked him where they were. And he told me that they were with the CIA…”

The atmosphere in the room became slightly heavier as her story weighed on everyone’s shoulders. She wanted her life back? She wanted to remember everything?

“Is that why you stole it?” Casey asked with concern. Her eyes caught hold of his. She never nodded or responded to his question; yet in her eyes the answer had been revealed. Casey and Beckman understood. They realised that she hadn’t gone rogue – she stole them for a reason! For a very good reason! Nevertheless, she still stole them and that issue needed to be resolved. They just weren’t sure how.

As Sarah continued to fiddle with her pertinent charm bracelet, she started to get confused by the fact that Chuck wasn’t in Castle. Alex told her that they presumably would be, and yet Chuck wasn’t! Where was he?

As she had her revelation, Casey and Beckman started to let the information that Sarah revealed to them sink in… If her plan was successful, then that would mean that she remembered everything - The old Sarah that they knew and loved had returned to Burbank instead of the sassy, deadly spy that left Burbank!! If that was true; if everything had worked out, then Sarah would be back for
good. But if she was back for good…what would that mean for Chuck???

“Wait Sarah – you stole the glasses to replace the Intersect data with your memories…” She nodded in reply. They froze in anticipation; their eyes bulging from the suspense, “Well…did it work??” Beckman curiously asked.

As Sarah’s once confused, gazing eyes started to blaze with abundant contentment; and as her closed lips opened wide to reveal the smile she was hiding beneath, they knew! They knew – Sarah had remembered everything! She had remembered everyone! She was back! She – the real Sarah – was back…for good. But as their excitement started to sprout, weeds began to clog their minds and infest their joy – Uh oh…Chuck…

With that thought, Sarah examined Castle one last time, recognising the love of her live’s absence. “Um, by the way, where is Chuck?”

…

Morgan was seated in his best friend’s living room, phone in hand. Chuck had asked him to ‘housesit’ while he was away, which Morgan happily obliged to. The stirring conversation between them seemed to go on for quite some time. Chuck was in London which meant that their relationship would have to be continued via the phone. “It’s just that Chuck – I mean, you know how it is. With my dad back, everything seems messed up, man. What if he comes to see me? He can’t just randomly choose when and when not to be in my life! It’s just rough, man.”

“I know, buddy. But look on the bright side. I mean, maybe there is a chance that you guys can patch things up. And I know – that is the furthest thing from your mind. He did leave you at a young age and that is unforgiveable! Believe me, I understand. I am just saying that maybe it would be worth it to just talk to him, even for just a little bit. Maybe it could be a blessing in disguise,” Chuck analysed. He was always one to try and bring families back together, re-uniting loose bonds. It must have run in the family, as though it were the Bartowski curse. Only, it never seemed to act like a curse – it always seemed to turn out for the better.

“Yeah, but Chuck, it’s not like with your parents. They left for a reason. They left because they had to; you know – go and save the world and stuff! My dad – he’s different…”

“Morgan, you don’t know that. I only knew after I found my parents that they actually left to protect me, not because they didn’t love me! I know your dad was a bit of a Darth Vader figure, but maybe he left because he had to. You will never know unless you speak to him.”

Morgan paused for a brief moment. What Chuck said made sense; it was just that his dad wasn’t the best father – he wasn’t much of a father! Morgan was afraid – scared of rejection, scared of being picked on and scared that Chuck might be wrong. He was afraid that his dad left – not because he had to – but because he wanted to! Finding out that his dad never loved him frightened him more than anything in the world. “I know Chuck…my dad is just…he’s the – the Black Friday of all shopping stores, you know? The Doomsday of my life!”

Chuck chuckled. “Yeah, buddy! I know. But just promise me you will try!? ”

“Yeah, Chuck. I promise…”

Kayla’s voice could be heard in the background through Morgan’s phone. “Hey Chuck, are you ready? We have to go soon,” she exclaimed.

“Uh, yeah; just about,” he replied. “Hey, buddy – talk later?”
“Sure! I love you.”
“Love you too, Morgan!”

With that gracious farewell, they hung up the phone.

Chuck placed his phone among the counter of his hotel bedroom. They had to attend Terrance Baines business party undercover as a married couple, which they now had to leave for. Kayla proceeded to ask him if he had his ‘pretend’ wedding ring with him. They needed these props of unity to make their ‘marriage’ seem legitimate.

He extracted a golden ring from the inside of his front blazer pocket. He smiled at her and held it up, validating that he had it. He had been under the impression that the ring he held in his hand was a fake – that it wasn’t the real deal. Yet he was oblivious to the fact that it wasn’t a prop given to him by the CIA – it was his real wedding ring from his real marriage with Sarah! He hadn’t received another as he believed the one he had would suffice.

Chuck glanced down at Kayla’s left hand, eyeing the wedding prop round her finger. It made him feel like the undercover relationship concocted by the CIA had some truth – that they really were married and attending a business party. Nevertheless, he knew that a large majority of being a spy revolved around fibs and travesty.

He fantasised over the idea that one day, he and Kayla might get married. A part of him wanted it to be real – he longed for a wife that he could love and that loved him entirely in return. He had always dreamed of having the ideal family – the wife, the kids, the home and the family business! In some ways, that dream of his made him appear stereotypical. Though on the contrary, it flavoured his character; making the typical nerd with the big heart more loveable. The ideology of the perfect family made him feel content and he feared that he may never live to experience that utter contentment. He was disconcerted with the idea that he may never have the perfect family he always dreamed of having. He thought perhaps with Kayla, he might still have that chance. So he latched onto her, feeling comforted by her accepting presence.

Unbeknown to him, he had had a wife before – he had the loving spouse, the family business and was well on his way to receiving the home and happy children. Regardless, he eventually lost it all. But the tragedy never lay in the fact that he lost all of his success – the tragedy lay in the fact that he forgot about his success in the first place!

“Okay, Chuck. Let’s go and crash Baines party,” she smirked.

He smiled in return, as he slid his wedding ring round his finger –

“Chuck, I’m here.”

“…But you’re not. You’re not real, this is a dream…”

“I came here to rescue you…I’m right here, Chuck…”

Another flashback?

“Chuck, please. Chuck, I love you. Please wake up!! I have so much that I want to tell you…I found your proposal plan…”

“Chuck? Chuck, are you okay?” Kayla interrupted. He immediately slipped off his wedding ring. “Um…yeah. Yeah, I just sort of zoned out for a bit! I think the chilly weather in England has finally caught up with me…” he joked, remaining flabbergasted. His mind was still a little befuddled, as he felt as though his head had just been used as a punching bag!

“Okay…Time to go.” Kayla began to make her way out of the apartment. He glanced down at his wedding ring, sliding it back onto his finger -
“No, no, no, no! This is my mind playing tricks on me. You don’t know anything about my proposal plan…”

Flashback again? Why does this keep happening?

“You were going to do it on the beach in Malibu, where we watched the sun rise after our first date…there were several race cars involved…”

“I revised that…”

“Chuck, I want to spend the rest of my life with you. I don’t care if you have the Intersect or not! Without you, I’m nobody! I’m nothing but a spy…Come back to me, Chuck…I want to marry you…”

“Chuck? Are you coming?” Kayla questioned, pulling him out of his daze. He stared one last time at his ring, continually feeling gobsmacked by the repeated flashback. “Chuck – we have to go!” she insisted. He sighed in confusion. Despite the fact that he so desperately wanted to analyse and mention this weird occurrence to Kayla, he feared she wouldn’t understand and he knew they had to leave. Thus, he decided to think about it later – right now, he had a mission to get to.

…

Morgan hung up the phone after his conversation with his best friend ended. He stared into the distance, his mind deep in thought and began to create a scenario in his head in which he was talking to his dad. He envisioned how that conversation would go - what would his dad say, how would he respond, would either party be friendly or both quite distant? These thoughts caused him to fidget with the phone in his hand, paying no attention to his exterior surroundings and only focussing on the thoughts flowing through his mind.

The phone then abruptly rang. He was startled by the jarring noise that it created, as it boomed inside his ears, probably shattering his eardrums! He answered it immediately.

“Hello.”

“Hey? Morgan, it’s Ellie. Is Chuck there? I really need to speak to him.”

“Uh, no. He currently is not home right now…”

“Morgan, sabotaging my calls is really getting annoying! I really need to speak to Chuck. Where is he?”

“Um…London…” Morgan hesitantly stated. Alex had told him to divulge his secrets to Ellie and he knew he had to do what Alex had asked him to.

“London? What is he doing in London?”

“Um…he is…spying…”

“Spying? What? Since when is he spying again?”

“Since…” He was resistant to continue. But he knew that Alex wanted him to be more honest. He had to tell Ellie! Suddenly, in a flash, everything started to spurt out, “…ever since the CIA forced him to become a spy and forget about Sarah by using this real dodge Intersect that wiped away his memory of her. But you see he had to because the CIA were all like ‘if you don’t you will die’ and so Chuck was like ‘oh no, what do I do? Well I don’t really have a choice anymore’! But he didn’t want to tell you because - you know Chuck, he was like ‘I don’t want her to worry about me’ which I thought was stupid. So then when he forgot about Sarah I then had to sabotage your calls to prevent you from accidently reminding him about her. Was so frustrating! So now he is in London with Kayla – you don’t know Kayla? Oh yeah, well Kayla is his new spy partner and well, girlfriend. But don’t worry; none of us are too fond of her either! But what makes things even worse is that Sarah is back in town so things are going to get pretty awkward around here, you
know what I mean. Ah yeah. So anyway…how are things with you?”

Silence was emitted from the other line of the telephone. Ellie was blown away by all this information. Her jaw dropped slightly, indicating her disbelief. Morgan sighed with relief, having finally removed all that stress that resided within him. Eventually the prolonged silence changed to awkward silence, jarring Morgan’s ears more than the ringing sound of the telephone. He had to shatter the glass. “Ellie? Are you still there?”

There was no reply. He repeated her name, his tone more concerned with each mention. “Ellie?” Eventually she had scrambled together a few words to say.

“Morgan, where is Sarah now? Does she know already?”
“Uh, I don’t know – I don’t think she does. Why?”
“Morgan, I know Sarah is back in town. That is the whole reason why I called! Sarah remembers, Morgan!”
“Wait, what? What do you mean?”
“She came to me to replace Intersect data with memories of her life. It worked! She’s back, Morgan; back for good.”

The roles were now in reverse – Morgan remained silent as he was blown away by this information. His jaw dropped slightly as he stood in disbelief. Sarah remembers? Sarah is back? This whole time they believed she would – could – never return. They had all given up hope (expect for Chuck) and now – now it was too late. Chuck’s memory was now gone! This wasn’t meant to happen, none of this was foreseeable. He was stunned and speechless – What do you say? What can you say or do to make the situation better?

Ellie was now the one to break the silence.

“Morgan – I need you to stay calm. Find Sarah and please, don’t tell her! At least not yet. Wait for me – Devon, Clara and myself are going to fly over and will be there shortly. Just whatever you do, Morgan, don’t tell Sarah. Morgan, can you hear me? Don’t tell Sarah!”
Morgan nodded, not realising the fact that she couldn’t see his response. “MORGAN?” This woke him up from his frozen state. “Did you hear me?”
“Yes. Don’t tell Sarah.” With that, Ellie quickly hung up the phone.

Damn it! Everything suddenly came crashing down before him, like an avalanche was about to knock him off his feet. He wasn’t completely stuck in fear until he had a thought that utterly frightened him – what if she already knew…
Marriage – what is that innate burning inside of people that draws a couple towards the altar, where they express their undying love for the other in front of a crowd of judging or accepting eyes? Why do people feel the need to prove to the other that they truly love them? Why do they need to be reassured by that promise of ‘forever’?

Views on marriage can sometimes be extremely cynical. Certain people speculate whether it is worth getting married at all. They believe in disbelieving – that just dating would suffice. They conclude that you don’t need to make that level of commitment - if things are good now, why change that?

Other people just aren’t fond of marriage entirely. They don’t fancy the idea of being tied down by another. Nor the fact that they have to express their passionate love for the other in front of a crowd whom only half of which they recognise! There are also some who foresee marriage as a beautiful promise – a contract of love. They only optimise marriage and don’t feel burdened by that level of commitment.

Nevertheless, people are seemingly under the impression that marriage is a necessity – that if you refuse to join hands in holy matrimony, you are basically telling your partner that you don’t ‘love’ them, nor believe that your relationship will last ‘forever’.

But whatever your views dictate, whether you perceive marriage to be a punishment or a blessing; it still remains an enigma. That ultimate bonding; that final promise between two different people who claim to love each other – that love remains inexplicable. What makes a person ‘fall’ for a specific other? Why are two people so destined to be together that not getting married would become a sin!? Why is there a spark; that radiant chemistry between two particular people whom remain entirely original? And why does that binding force only reside with that specific person and not with anyone else? Regardless of skin, gender, appearance and personality; people are drawn to someone for an unexplainable reason; and that is the conundrum – why them!?

Chuck and Sarah’s relationship contained that radiant chemistry from the start. They were immediately drawn to each other, touched by the other’s presence. Their entire relationship – although sparked with fire and flames – remained as more of a comforting and loving union. There was something special – something unique between them that no one could entirely understand. They were so drawn to each other that it made everyone else around them drawn to them as well. It was original, it was viable – it was an enigma! Although obstacles were placed along their path to happiness, something always seemed to bring them back together. They couldn’t stay away, they couldn’t move on and they couldn’t entirely forget. Life was absolute when they were a couple. And when they weren’t, hurricanes barred any soul from reaching the chamber of effervescent light.

Even now, when the continual relationship between them seemed unwoven, they still managed to cross paths. It seemed that for a while, the murky water in which they sank drew them further apart. But as days sped on, the countdown to their encounter drew near…

The spark between Kayla and Chuck – or Kayluck - wasn’t as vibrant as Chuck and Sarah’s was. Yes, they fancied each other, and the initial attraction was there; but Chuck and Sarah – or Charah – seemed right. Everything appeared to fit when they were together. They were best friends, lovers, companions and soul mates. And although, stereotypically, they didn’t appear as the others’ most likely candidate (him being the nerd; her being the gorgeous spy), they did defy all initial opinions.
Chuck’s relationship with Kayla was…different. Although it was the normal, typical relationship that most people had, it entirely differed from the relationship he shared with Sarah. Chuck wasn’t in love with Kayla. Yes, they had only been dating for a few weeks; but that ambitious sense of longing wasn’t truly felt by him. He really liked her and was extremely fond of her, but not in love with her, like the love he unknowingly had before! Yet, he saw Kayla as a symbol of promise – a promise that he would not be left alone for the rest of his life. To him, she was like the Statue of Liberty – giving him a chance to free himself from the claws of solitude.

Chuck and Kayla made their way through the crowd of people. They stood, dressed to impress the queen, at Terrance Baines business party. Chuck went by the alias of Charles Carmichael, where he was hoping to score a few ‘business’ deals at the party. This would surely bring him closer to the inner circle of Baines Corporation where he could take it down – from the inside!

“Thank you, Mr Bailey; we will be in touch,” Chuck stated, as he made contacts with a few businessmen. Kayla stood by his side, drawing a lot more men towards him due to her stunning features and toying attitude.

“Okay, Chuck; over there.” He glanced in the direction where Kayla was pointing, catching a glimpse of a slightly short, half-bald man. Clearly this fellow was familiar as he flashed on him. A constipated expression covered his face, as his mind filled with information about the peculiar-looking man. “That is-”

“I know, Mr Vaughn – the middle man of Baines Corporation, setting us business deals and transactions. He sells a lot of Baines Corporation’s products to the public. He is also a very close friend of Terrance,” Chuck proceeded.

“Yeah…how did you know that?”

He tapped the side of his head, “The Intersect.”

Kayla still looked stunned, but continued to explain the plan. “Yeah…so if you become friends with him, you become friends with Baines himself.”

“Got it.”

They glanced over to where Mr Vaughn was situated. He was in a crowd, talking with a bunch of influential people. They decided to wait for the crowd that surrounded him to disperse before they went to ‘chat him up’. In the meantime, they sat by the bar where they ordered a few drinks.

“Do you believe in magic?” Chuck abruptly asked her.

Her eyes kept glancing at Mr Vaughn, trying to keep focus on the mission. “Uh, what like…fairies and mer-”

“You believe in fairies???” Chuck excitedly asked, hoping that her answer would be yes.

“Huh? No. Why? Do you?”

“What? No…that’s preposterous…” he quickly lied, covering up his childhood fantasies. “What I mean is magical items, like medallions or…rings! You know…that can do crazy things to you…like mess with your mind and make you hallucinate. Or, make you foresee the future…or past! Which I wouldn’t really see the point in, because obviously you already know what has happened in the past…”

“Your point, Chuck,” she sternly replied, her eyes still on Mr Vaughn.

“You believe in those sort of supernatural things?”

“Do I believe in the unexplainable? No, I don’t Chuck. Magicians have tricks; ghosts don’t exist and Big Foot is a myth. They are just fantasies, Chuck; concocted by people high on drugs!”

It took a while before her cynical attitude sank in. “…I can’t believe you just said Big Foot isn’t real…”

She began to ignore his ramblings, “Focus on the mission, Chuck.”

This cranky attitude of hers on missions stirred from her lack of fondness when it came to messing
up. She knew that if someone distracted her, the chances of her making a mistake would increase. He continued to order another martini, as he analysed what Kayla had said. He knew he wasn’t able to talk to her and bear his feelings as she might just judge him, and he didn’t want his opinions to be trampled on. But he so wanted to talk. He wanted to analyse and explain what those flashbacks were and what they meant. He wanted to know why it only occurred whenever he would slip on his wedding ring. He wanted to understand, but was resistant to talk to her about it. He was so confused – who was this person that kept re-appearing in his mind? He never knew her name, yet she seemed so familiar to him. And why did his emotions seem to flood like a waterfall whenever he would see her face? She sparked depth inside of him that he couldn’t understand.

“Okay, the crowd is gone. Let’s go talk to him. You remember your cover story?” she asked. He nodded whilst smiling at her half-heartedly. It was time to do business. He straightened up, and made himself appear presentable and formal.

“Mr Vaughn, hi. My name is Charles Carmichael,” he introduced, whilst shaking the wealthy businessman’s hand.

“Mr Carmichael? You sound so familiar. Have we met before?” he replied, his British accent clearly accentuated.
“I used to work with Andrew Baines,” Chuck lied, following through with his cover story.
“Oh, I see.”
“Are you enjoyin-”

“Mr Vaughn!!” A British voice shouted from across the room, interrupting their conversation. The man walked to where they were.
“Good day, Terrance. A very pleasing party, I might add.” They shook hands.
“Well I do aim to please!”
“Congratulations on becoming chairperson of Baines Corporation. Your brother mustn’t be too content with that news. Though, where is Andrew? I haven’t seen him around lately,” Vaughn replied.
“He has been held up…elsewhere,” Terrance remarked. This caused Kayla to smirk as Chuck began to chuckle. He definitely had been held up! And they knew where.

Chuck’s snicker drew Terrance’s attention towards them. He felt bewildered by their presence, seeing as he never knew them. “Uh, hello. And who might you two be?” he asked.
Chuck didn’t hesitate in reply, “Hello, Mr Baines. The name is Charles Carmichael. This here is my lovely wife.” Terrance eyed her, admiring her exquisite features.
“Married but no wedding ring, Mr Carmichael? That’s a tinge bold,” he exclaimed, noticing the lack of ring round Chuck’s finger. Chuck glanced down, realising that he hadn’t put the ring back on. He took it off earlier to avoid having to deal with the constant headache that he would experience after every flashback that he encountered. Yet, the lack of wedding attire made Kayla slightly annoyed. He was blowing their cover!
“Uh, did I say married? I meant engaged. I apologise, I just cannot wait for our big day! Isn’t that right, honey?” he replied. She plastered her face with a false smile, keeping up appearances.

“Well, congratulations. But I do believe that we have never met before, and I am not too fond of party-crafters. So if-”
“No, hush now, Terrance. They aren’t crashing the party. Carmichael here used to work with your brother,” Vaughn interrupted.
“You worked with Andrew?”
“Yes. And I was hoping that I could speak to you, seeing as Andrew is no longer head of Baines Corp,” Chuck replied.
“You want to talk business? Well, Carmichael, this is a party. You don’t discuss business at a
party."
"But this is a business party, is it not?" Kayla interjected.
"That’s a quick tongue you have there…" Terrance remarked. He was quite bewildered in their presence. He had never seen them before in his life. Yet here they were, supposedly having worked with his brother.

After mentally debating what to do, he extracted his business card from his blazer pocket and handed it to Chuck. "Here. You can call me tomorrow. I will arrange a meeting for you – is 12 o’clock suitable?" Chuck took the card that was handed to him, happy that the plan was going well so far.
"Uh, yes. I do believe that will be fine," he replied.
"You know what is funny? You say you worked with my brother, but I have never seen you before…"
"Uh, private contractor…" Chuck stuttered.
"Hmm… Well I will inform my assistant about our meet. 12 o’clock – do not be late!"
Chuck nodded in acceptance as Baines went off, gesturing Vaughn to follow.

He smiled at Kayla, feeling victorious so far. "Well, that wasn’t so bad. I think I make a pretty good businessman."
"Yes you do!" she smiled in return. "Just remember the ring next time."
"Hey, I think I covered up quite nicely." She nodded with a smile. He continued, "Hmm, maybe I should have had a British accent. That would have been fun!"
"Nah, the Brits love working with Americans."
He smiled at her and leaned in for a kiss, as she leaned in, kissing him in return.

Baines continued to walk with Vaughn, appearing as though they were having a private chat. "Did that man seem oddly suspicious to you?"
"Yes I believe he did," Vaughn replied.
"Keep an eye on him, close friend. I don’t want him anywhere near our secrets."
"Will do, Terrance, will do!"
...

She slammed the door shut. Just like the motion of waves bashing against the rocks of the shore, her heart felt battered. Her watery eyes began to fill with tears as she flung her luggage onto the bed of her green hotel room. She stood, motionless in thought as she pressed her rear against the edge of her bed, wiping away her streaming tears. He doesn’t remember me? She couldn’t believe it – Chuck Bartowski had forgotten Sarah Walker! He doesn’t remember me? She didn’t know what to feel, what emotions were appropriate in a situations such as this. She felt the tables turn as she found herself stuck in the predicament Chuck had been in before – his wife had forgotten him; now her husband had no memory of her! Her heart flooded with grief, anger and misunderstandings. All this work to get him back when there was no chance of that in the first place! But she knew that she had done the right thing - she couldn’t live in a world of forgotten memory. She made the right choice in getting her life back. But only if the plan was successful sooner! Her fingers dug into the mattress of her hotel bed as her heart filled with angst. Her jaw clenched as tears continually streamed down her face. What happens now?

Her head jolted up. A knock on the door? Who could it be?? She didn’t want to be disturbed now during her whimpering state. The knocks were heard again. "Hello? Sarah?" The echoing voice from outside seemed familiar and she knew she had to let the person in.
Upon opening the door, she abruptly cleaned away her trying tears. Nevertheless, the red colour and raw texture of her face remained prominent.
"Sarah! Hi. Wow, you’re back… you are really back!"
“Hi, Morgan,” she replied, sniffing as a result of her vulnerable state.
“What’s wrong? Are you alright?” he asked with concern, still bewildered to find her in Burbank.
She placed her fingers over her face as she compressed her eyes shut, trying not to cry anymore.
“Oh… Sarah, is everything okay?”
She shook her head. No awkwardness was felt between them, besides for the fact that they hadn’t seen each other in over a year. He stroked her arm, trying to comfort her. Her inevitable tears malignantly reappeared as she tried to wipe them away. But they kept coming. “Hey, hey, hey – what’s wrong Sarah? What happened?”
The bedroom mattress of her hotel room sunk in as she propped herself among it, continually sniffing away her tears. “Is it true?” she eventually replied. Her eyes gazed upon his, so red and filled with pain. Morgan crumbled as feelings of sorrow encompassed him. He knew. He just knew she was talking about the information Ellie didn’t want her to know. Regardless, his instinctive fear had been spot on - she did know. He moved his eyes away from her lamenting gaze.
“Sarah, you - you don’t understand. The situation…”
“I know, Morgan. I know why. I know how. I just feel…” her malignant tears began to reappear once again, “…lost,” she exclaimed, jamming her eyes shut. “I came back for a reason and now… Morgan, I sto-”
“Ellie told me.”
Her jaw clenched as the seeping pain overshadowed her bright sky once again. He didn’t really know what to do. He hadn’t seen her in over a year. Then all of a sudden she had returned in the hopes of rekindling her forgotten love, unaware that her ‘forgotten love’ forgot her.
“I didn’t know – we didn’t know you were planning on coming back,” he muttered.
Silence lingered for a while before she decided to respond. “Neither did I.”
This statement prompted a response from him. He felt concerned, but he also found her state to be rather confusing. “Sarah,” he exclaimed as she looked up to face him, “Sarah… why did you do it? Why did you come back if you had decided to leave Burbank; to leave Chuck?”
She began to look even more dumbfounded. “Morgan, what are talking about?”
“The divorce papers – why come back if you decided to leave…for good?” Her eyes bolted open with shock. What? “I just don’t understand, Sarah!”
“Morgan, what are you talking about?” she repeated, her pace speeding up. “What divorce papers? I never sent any divorce papers…”
“Sarah, your signature was on the page.”
“I would never ever do that. Not to Chuck! I could never – I would never divorce Chuck!”

The pale expression among Morgan’s face displayed his fear prominently as he started to shake slightly. The entire situation seemed to morph into a giant sea urchin that slowly began to swallow them all whole. He gulped as his mouth stood slightly open. She started to pull her gaze away from him as she sat, deep in thought. Out of all the emotions that enveloped her, rage and confusion seemed to sprout out the most. Someone sent Chuck divorce papers; someone wanted them apart; someone – some outsider was behind it all. And it was looking more and more like a conspiracy to her. “Morgan, are Chuck and I divorced?”

Shock consumed him, preventing him from releasing an immediate response. The lack of reply made Sarah realise that her marriage with her ‘forgotten love’ was over. Over!? That news, above all else, hurt her the most. Like a seed, anger and frustration began to grow and grow and grow, sprouting weeds inside her heart. “Morgan, who would sabotage my marriage??”
“I don’t know, Sarah. I don’t know…” He began to whisper, “Hmph, Kayla perhaps,” he tried to joke. But her name hadn’t been mentioned to Sarah. No one wanted to break her heart further by mentioning that not only had her husband forgotten and divorced her, but he had also started seeing someone else.
“Kayla? Who is Kayla?”
“General, I know that you have something to discuss with me, but there is something that I really
need to tell you,” she frantically stated, as she made her way down the steps of Castle.
“Yes, Sarah. We can get to that in a moment. First, Casey and I have devised a plan. Now this will
only buy you some time as we don’t have enough substantial evidence.”
“We have pinned Andrew Baines as the sole suspect to have stolen the Intersect glasses from the
CIA. We have stated that he had hired a team to steal it for him,” Casey continued. Sarah stared at
both of them, trying to absorb the information that they provided. Yet her mind still burned with
desire to tell them her news.
“This will allow you to meet with him, giving us a chance to extract further information that will
help us take down Baines Corporation,” stated Beckman. “So far he has done a good job at keeping
his mouth shut, but seeing as you brought him in, perhaps you can persuade him to do otherwise.”
“Yes, General,” Sarah quickly responded. Her constant fidgeting and the biting of her lower lip
told them that she desperately had something to get off her chest.
“The meet will occur in Castle later today.”
“Yes, General,” she repeated. A lingering silence followed Beckman’s statement. Sarah anxiously
waited till it was appropriate to speak.
“Oh heavens, Sarah; fine, just say it.”
“Morgan just told me that Chuck and I are divorced.”
This made them both extremely confused. “Uh, yes. That’s because you divorced him…!?"
“No! I didn’t. That wasn’t me. Someone forged my signature!”
I don’t think I am following,” Beckman stated.
“General, I have reason to believe that Chuck and I have been set up.”
“What do you mean?”
“Someone wants Chuck and me to be apart! Think about it - I forget everything and I leave.
Someone files for a divorce between us and forges my signature without my consent. So Chuck
signs the papers thinking that is what I want, which leaves us divorced! The government then
forces Chuck to forget about me and now... ...but their plan wasn’t successful. They never thought
I would try and get my memory back let alone succeed. General, this is all a set up. Someone must
be behind this.”
“I see what you are saying, Sarah. But the government? The CIA forced Chuck to forget about you
and you can’t possibly assume that-”
“How many times has someone in the CIA gone rogue. Fulcrum, the Ring, Quinn, Decker, even
Volkoff. It is a whole big conspiracy and I won’t stop until I find out who the hell is behind it all!”
“Sarah, relax. We will-”
“Relax? How can I relax? I have just found out that I am divorced from Chuck! I wasn’t even
informed, nothing was sent my way. How is that even possible?”
“The government assumed your lawyer would inform you,” Casey remarked.
“He wasn’t even my lawyer!”
Her feet paced around the room as frustration and anger burned within her. She wanted Chuck back
but he had been stripped away from her, and she so desperately wanted to find out who was responsible. Like a Grand Prix race, Sarah’s mind charged with thought, constantly circling around the track, desperately trying to reach the finish line. She wanted to come to a conclusion and tie all the pieces together before it was too late, before she would lose the race.

“So you think someone in the CIA is purposely trying to keep you and Chuck apart? Why would they want to do that?” Casey questioned.
“I don’t know. I don’t know who and I don’t know why. But I am definitely going to find out.”
“Casey, you know this means that Sarah can’t do the meet. If the CIA are conspiring, then knowing that Sa-”
“No General, let me do it. Just tell them that Casey will. That way they will agree to the plan.” Beckman looked nervous as she puckered her lips.
“Sarah, how sure are you about this theory?”
“I know, General. I know I am right.”
“Okay… set up the meet.”

Laughter and conversation spewed from the table where the Grimes/Tucker family sat; although Big Mike appeared forlorn. “Ha-ha, so mom acted all surprised when he said he was Rain in Earth, Wind, Fire and Rain! She didn’t believe it one bit,” Morgan laughed.
“How could I? I could never believe my man was a celebrity!” Bologna giggled.
“And how did you react, Big Mike, when you stared at him with disbelief?” Alex smiled, intrigued by the story.
“Oh, naturally he was hurt. He wouldn’t talk to me for a week after that.”
“Yeah, ha-ha, I remember – that week was torturous for us employees! Hey Big Mike, tell Alex what you did to us.”
Big Mike glanced up and faced the staring eyes from his family at the table. “Oh, I’d rather not.” Everyone gestured for him to tell the story. The more he refused, the more they wanted to hear. “Come on, Michael. Tell her your story.” Bologna nudged. Eventually the blood boiling from within him sprung to the surface. “I said NO!” he yelled, as he pushed his seat from the table. He got up and left the room, leaving everyone else slightly jarred by his outburst.

“I better go see what’s with him.”
“No, mom, I will. Maybe it is work related,” Morgan replied. He assumed it had something to do with Sub More, seeing as his dad now worked there. But Morgan offered to console his stepdad, seeing as he was the one everyone lately expressed their internal issues to. He felt he had always played that role, and now he thought it was only logical that he would assist his stepdad in lifting that internal burden.

Big Mike remained in the kitchen, scuffling through the cupboards. A large racket could be heard from his rumblings. “Hey, what’s bothering you?” Morgan asked. There was no reply. “What are you doing?”
“I am looking for some Danish! Is there something wrong with that, son? Can’t a man eat some Danish!?” he replied with a fluster. Morgan shut his mouth. He knew something was bothering his stepdad and he didn’t want to say anything that could make the situation worse.

After the failed attempt at searching for his comfort food, Big Mike quietened down. A large sigh was emitted from him as he finally spoke solemnly. “Jeffster was going to be here tonight.”
“Jeffster? Jeff and Lester? You were going to invite them?”
“No, son. They wanted to throw a party in Sub More but I ain’t the manager there no more. So I told them they can’t. They then threatened to have it here.”
“And…now you are regretting that choice because secretly you wanted to party with the
Jeffsters?” Morgan cautiously replied.
“No. They had already told the whole store about the party. I had to think rash so that they would not ruin our lovely night.”
“So you killed them?”
“Boy, what is the matter with you? I am being serious here.” Morgan’s attempt to cheer up his stepfather failed, so he apologised. “I spoke to your father,” Big Mike continued, “asked him if they could rather play there, at Sub More. After all your father is the manager.”
“Oh, you spoke to him…” Morgan was hesitant in hearing Big Mike’s reply. He knew something bad was on the horizon and he didn’t want to hear it.
“He said sure, as long I make an agreement.” The conversation began to slow down. Morgan remained silent. “He wanted me to invite him to dinner tonight.”
“What? You didn’t, did you?”
“Well Jeffster ain’t here are they?” Big Mike retorted. Sweat was secreted from Morgan’s palms as he once again got extremely nervous. A chilly breeze shot up his spine as his nerves went haywire. His dad was coming; he was going to see his dad – tonight! Big Mike began to whine, “I know Bologna is going to kill me. She does not want to see him. But he was adamant, ya know. He then threatened my job and there no way I would leave Buy - Sub More.” Morgan remained oblivious. He was consumed in his own thoughts and shock. He didn’t want to see his dad either! He was even more resistant than his mom was. He couldn’t, he wouldn’t, he didn’t want to at all.

“That’s why I have been walking on egg shells all night. I have been anxiously waiting for your dad to arrive.” Morgan’s jaw hung low. One of his biggest fears, one of his biggest nightmares was about to come true and he couldn’t take it. He stood in disbelief, just like his mother did when she found out Big Mike used to be Rain. He didn’t want to have to deal with this – not now, Not ever!

“Morgan,” Alex spoke, appearing from the dining room. “Is everything alright?”
“Uh…yeah…Alex, you know, it is getting quite late. Perhaps we should-”
“Son, you ain’t going nowhere. He came to see you!”
That statement jolted him. Now his dad wanted to see him. Now his dad decided to talk to him. So when his dad was ready to meet, that’s when it was final!? An entire month had passed and only now was his dad ready to talk to his son.
“No. You know what; I am sick and tired of everyone controlling my life. He can’t just decide when to see me. He doesn’t control me, he isn’t my father! The moment he left, he stopped having that privilege. When I decide I am ready to see him that is when we will meet!” Morgan’s uproar startled Bologna and she suddenly made her appearance in the kitchen, trying to catch a glimpse of what the racket was all about. “Come Alex, we are leaving.” She look flustered, not clearly understanding what Morgan was going on about. But she figured it had to do with his dad and she knew that was a touchy subject. So she followed him, not questioning his decision to leave.
“Meho, why are you going so early in the night?” asked his mom.
“Ask my stepdad!” he fiercely interjected.

Alex took her bag and Morgan took his things as they walked with great pace to the front door. He frequently shook his head as he took one last glance back at his mom and Big Mike and swiped the door open. A shadow overburdened him and Alex as he swiftly jolted his head round, facing the darkened creature. “Morgan, my boy!” the shadow spoke.
Gulp. “Dad!”

The chair from the interrogation room in Castle started to creak as Andrew Baines began to rock back and forth. He was getting impatient – no one had shown their face. Supposedly he was meant to meet with Casey; the big, scary spy he was rumoured to be. But Andrew’s snarky attitude wasn’t frightened by the big bad wolf.
“Come on in, Casey. I don’t bite,” Andrew prompted. Still silence. “Don’t be afraid – I am more scared of you than you are of me!” he teased, using the classic spider remark that parents give their kids. Still silence. He began to whistle, droning the room in a sound of off-tuned music. Finally – the door slammed open. A grin clouded the clown’s face, “Took you a while.”

It wasn’t long before he was startled by the new presence in the room. “Ms Walker. What a lovely surprise.” She remained quiet. “You know, I heard a funny story recently. I think you will like it. The government told me – now listen carefully – that I was being tried for breaking into the CIA and stealing very special glasses from their safe. And when I heard that, I couldn’t help but laugh,” his voice began to get softer, “because we both know who really stole that unique equipment. Don’t we, Ms Walker.” She remained tolerant and stern. She couldn’t show emotion with him. She had been through his toying and annoying behaviour before and she knew how to handle it. The only problem was enduring it again – he really was a pain!

“That’s not what I came to talk to you about,” she replied.
“I figured.”
“You have been very tight nipped with regard to Baines Corporation. We would like to know about your brother, about the company itself, and how we can take it down.” Her voice remained emotionless in tone.
“Really? Is that what you wanted to talk about?”
“Why has your brother only surfaced now?”
“Those really aren’t the questions you should be asking-”
“Why has your brother only surfaced now?”
“You should be asking more personal questions-”
“Why has your brother only surfaced now?”
“Questions that are more related to you-”
“Why has your brother only surfaced now?”
“The answers you are dying for – I have them. All you have to do is ask the right-“
“Dammit Baines, could you just answer the damn question!?”
“What is it with you and yelling at me? Seriously, I have sensitive ears.”
“Baines…”
His grin was more prominent now among his face. “Why don’t you ask me what you really want to ask me and then afterwards we can discuss other matters,” he continued. She grinded her teeth as his attitude started to get under her skin. She never responded, so he decided to continue his playfulness. “Did it work? Your plan?” They both knew what he was referring to. “Did you get what…you wanted?” he winked. “What is it that you wanted exactly?”

“Baines, you can avoid my questions for as long as you like, but the more you do, the more torturous this interrogation is going to get. You got that?” She was expecting that remark to cause him to retaliate. But he remained as sly as a snake, continuing to slither, not moved by her threats.
“They set me up, you know.”
“Who did, Baines? Your brother?”
“You know that usually ‘they’ refers to more than one person,” he tittered. “But he isn’t who I was referring to.”
“Maybe they set you up because you were unreliable. Never answered a question when asked one…” she sarcastically stated.
“Nah, that wasn’t it! Your bosses – the CIA – they are who I was referring to.”

She froze. Her entire body halted in motion, stunned by his statement. Her reaction made him feel victorious. That was exactly the response that he desired.
“Oh, didn’t you know?” he continued. “I would have told you. If you had asked…”
“What do you mean?” she jittered, every word released slowly and separately.
“Ooh, do I have a story to tell you. You are going to love this one. Get the popcorn!” She remained stunned, anxious for his response. The smirk on his face made her uncertain whether to trust what
he was saying or not, so she listened with caution. “Once upon a time, in a land far, far away—”
“I don’t want a fairy-tale, Baines. Just tell me the damn story.”
“Fine. Be anal,” he proceeded to explain, “You remember Fulcrum and the Ring, right? Good, just checking. Well—”
“What about them?”
“I am getting there. Just sit back and listen. They have been working with Baines Corporation—”
“That’s impossible. We took them down.”
“Seriously, Ms Walker, do you ever let a man finish his story? Gee. Yes, you and your team took down the Ring and Fulcrum. You took down their centre and their ‘elders’, but you didn’t take down every single member of their evil society, did you? All of Fulcrum and the Ring that weren’t caught remained hidden in the CIA. Now that I have explained myself, let me carry on with my story. Now you know that Baines Corporation is notorious for our technological attributes…”
“I don’t know what you mean.”
“…We are a technical company.” She still looked confused. “We build things? So Fulcrum and the Ring – let’s call them…Fulring – joined hands and decided to make a ‘business deal’ with us. They wanted us to build them a good Intersect.”
“Are you guys able to do that?”
“Yeah, all we needed were a few blueprints and a rough idea. The men in our company are extremely talented, Ms Walker,” he winked. “So we made it. But before we could sell it—”
“They bought it—”
“Shut up! No. I, being my nosy self, found out about their ‘ulterior motives’. I found out their whole plan, their big idea. They never really needed us to make a simple Intersect for them. They were after power, domination and revenge.”
“Revenge? Revenge against who??” she interrupted again. Andrew’s smirk widened. He had all the information that he knew Sarah longed for. All he had to do was tell her, but he wasn’t going to let it be that easy.
“Let me continue with my story. The Intersect was irrelevant in comparison to what they were really after. They were going to turn on Baines Corp; just using us to get closer to one of our secrets. So what did I do? I turned on them! I went and sold the Intersect glasses on the Black Market so that someone else could get their hands on it. I thought why not make them suffer.”
“Then why sell it back to the CIA?” she asked with confusion.
“What? No. Are you that slow? Gee whiz. Fulring tricked me. We didn’t know it was a CIA agent when we sold it to them. But apparently, some of Fulring’s members are quite high up in the CIA, as they then persuaded the CIA to come after us. Me selling our Intersect on the Black Market gave them a good enough reason to pin us as a bad corporation.”
“But Baines Corp. already sell products on the Black Market. You launder and you kill and you make weaponry. Your company is already a bad corporation.”
“Yeah, but our hearts are good,” he joked. She didn’t seem pleased with his response. Her main focus was on finding out what she needed to know. She wanted to find the people responsible for messing with her relationship with Chuck and she knew that Andrew Baines had that information.
“So, they assigned you to take me in to custody, thinking that will take down Baines Corporation and bring them closer to our…secret. But they didn’t know that my brother was the real mastermind behind Baines Corp. Always in the background, not the forefront of our company. So when I got taken in, my brother was forced to show his face. Besides, it was going to be a lot harder to take down Baines Corp. than just arresting the heads of it.”
“Thank you for finally answering my question from earlier,” she snared. He smiled in response, not taken aback by her attitude.
“I know more,” he grinned. She anxiously wanted to know; wanted to know everything he knew. She just wasn’t sure if he would tell her or if she could trust him. Her lack of reply made him continue, “So your husband – oh apologies. I am so sorry – ex-husband, Charles Carmichael—”
“What do you know about Chuck??” Now things were beginning to unravel. Did he know about
the divorce and who was behind it? There was so much that she still was unaware of, and she hated being in the dark. “So I heard about the divorce. Tough luck. Ag, well there are plenty of other nerds in the sea. You should visit Baines Corporation. Engineers galore!” She couldn’t take his attitude and remarks anymore, especially when it regarded Chuck. She immediately jolted up from her seat and pressed her hands on the table that lay between them. She began to lean over it, creating a menacing appearance. Her gentle facial features suddenly morphed into a somewhat unappealing beast as her face filled with glaring rage. His remark hit too close to home. “Don’t you dare say anything about Chuck, Baines. If you make another remark about my husband, you will wish that Fulring had asked me to kill you rather than just arrest you, you got that? Now what do you know about Chuck?” she threatened. Her demure seemed to slightly startle him, but her threat sank in. “A lot of things. When I found out Fulring’s entire plan, I found out a lot of extra information as well.” “Do you know who was behind Chuck and my divorce?” The pale expression among his face received more colour as he started to grin again. “Of course, Ms Walker. I know everything.”

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She burst out of the interrogation room, her pace faster with every step. “Sarah, what did he say?” Casey asked. “I have to go.” “Go? Go where?” asked Beckman. “Go to London to warn Chuck. I have to tell him everything; be with him.” “Sarah, what happened in there? What did Baines tell you?” She never responded, ignoring them as she continued to pack guns into a bag. They remained startled by her darting movements as she quickly walked up the stairs of Castle, about to leave. “Sarah, you can’t tell Chuck. You don’t know what the government will do to you if you do!” Beckman shouted, trying to get her to stop. She would be going against the CIA’s plan if she told him. Who knows what repercussions could occur. But Sarah didn’t care. “The government? The CIA?” She replied. “Screw the government, General. I want Chuck!” With that bursting statement, she darted through Castle’s door, leaving for London.

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The blaring noise from the television could be heard as Chuck shifted through TV channels, trying to find something useful to watch. He wasn’t entirely paying attention to the television as his mind still remained elsewhere. He felt so desperate to talk to someone about his flashbacks, about what they meant and why he never remembered them. He thought about the mission, about the meeting with Terrance Baines and contemplated phoning Morgan and discussing what was on his mind. He knew that he should also ask his buddy about the situation with his father. But the whole time difference between USA and California slightly confused him. He also didn’t want to burden his friend or talk about something that Morgan preferred to avoid discussing. Ellie was another person that he thought about calling and he hadn’t spoken to her in a while and missed his sister immensely. But whenever he tried calling her home phone number or cell, there was no answer. Unbeknownst to him, was that she was on a plane on her way to Burbank! So she wouldn’t be receiving calls for a while. The only person he could currently talk to was Kayla. And he wasn’t sure if her ears were willing to listen.

“Hey. What are you watching?” she asked, as she seated herself next to him on the couch. “Nothing in particular.” He smiled at her, his welcoming expression warming her heart. But she knew that there was something that had been bothering him. “What’s wrong, Chuck?” she asked. He faced her again, acting slightly confused by her query. “I
know something has been on your mind lately. And earlier during the mission you wanted to talk
to me about something, and I disregarded it, trying to keep focus on the mission. I am sorry for
that. I know that something has been bothering you. You can tell me, Chuck.” She was trying to
bond emotionally with him – to connect and he sensed that.
“It’s just that,” he started to sit up, feeling a lot more open and happy now that she was willing to
listen to his feelings. His once despondent and crestfallen feelings began to slightly lift off his
burdened chest. “I have been experiencing these flashbacks lately and I can’t explain them. I had
asked Morgan and he said they were memories from a mission…or something. But they seem
different each time and I don’t remember any of them.”
“That is weird. Hah - maybe you can see into the future! And they aren’t flashbacks but
flashforwards!!” That made him smile, sensing her attempt at trying to cheer him up. To an extent
he was, but he still remained confused. “Chuck, I forget stuff all the time. And suddenly out of
nowhere I will remember something that has slipped my mind before. It happens. You aren’t going
insane,” she joked.
“I know. But I feel stuff. These memories-”
“Flashforwards.”
“-Flashforwards make me feel certain emotions that I can’t explain. I don’t know why. It is like I
am watching a movie and feeling so involved in this character’s life that I feel what they feel. But
that character is me, only I don’t remember why I feel that way,” he continued to explain. Kayla
listened intently, trying to act as the considerate girlfriend. “And then, there is this person that
constantly reappears in my flashbacks – flashforwards.”
As he looked towards Kayla, he realised that he shouldn’t go into further detail about the main
character of his forgotten memories. The blonde-haired, blue eyed, attractive woman caused him to
experience emotions that not even Kayla could evoke within him. That left him bewildered. But he
didn’t want to tell Kayla that. He couldn’t tell Kayla that. So he explained the minimum. “And I
don’t recognise this person, but they seem so familiar; as though I should know them. I feel so
emotionally tied with this person, but I have no idea why.”

After her considerate listening she decided to put a word in. “Maybe it is a memory that your brain
never wanted to remember. Sometimes people experience something so traumatic that they shut
that experience out of their lives in order to prevent feeling that deepened sorrow again. Maybe
these memories are from a time in your life that traumatised you, so you forced yourself to forget
these moments in order to move on.” Her words of wisdom shot through him, blazing his heart. He
never knew if what she said was true – if he really did shut these moments out of his mind. Yet he
felt so loved in the fact that she was willing to listen to his problems; be there for him and try and
find a solution. He felt closer to her, as though he could now talk to her about his emotional
entanglements and feelings without the constant fear of being judged. She smiled at him, trying to
comfort him with accepting warmth and he felt comforted and smiled in return.

Just as they both leaned in for a kiss, there was a sudden knock on the door, interrupting their
embrace. “I will get that,” Kayla offered.
“No, don’t worry. I got this one.”
As he started to feel more content in his emotions; less confused and forlorn, he swiftly opened the
front door of his hotel room. In a single glance, feelings of sorrow, love, regret, worry, comfort, joy
and longing all began to seep through the cracks of his lost memory. It was her! Her!
“Hello Chuck,” Sarah greeted.
Chapter 10: Familiar Faces

The air was muted with the howling breeze of awkward, silent mouths. Bodies lay slumped among their seats as they sat around the dinner table. No one dared to eat – their clumped throats prevented any food from being swallowed. All were fidgeting in the damp, soggy atmosphere that was drowned in perspiration. The faces of the nervous characters all remained rigid and tight-nipped. No sound radiated from their mouths as no one dared speak. Though on the contrary, one character was exempt from all uncomfortable feelings. Their mouth wasn’t shut close by anxiety. It appeared as though they were cold-blooded, leaving them unable to feel the awkward air and sweaty atmosphere that enveloped them.

“This food looks delicious, Bologna. But don’t think I should touch it. Don’t want to get disappointed, you know. You never really were a good cook!” Laughter travelled from the speaker’s voice through to the audiences’ ears. Amused by his own joke, his chuckle left all surrounding him rather unpleased. Boy was he an annoying sod.

Eventually some of the nerve-eyed victims who were caught in the ignoble character’s presence, decided to touch their food. The clanging of cutlery disrupted the sweeping breeze of uncomfortable air. As everyone ignored the tormenting creature, he continued to whir on. “So boy, I noticed you had grown a few inches. Proud of you, little man! What you do to grow? Swallow a beanstalk?” He chuckled again. “Nah, but seriously my man, how’d you get so small?”

The grinding of Morgan’s teeth left his jaw clenched with boiling annoyance. He said nothing, deciding to ignore the blazing volcano of anger erupting within his heart. Alex, on the other hand, wasn’t content with her boyfriend being picked on.

“I think his height is cute. He is perfect just the way he is,” she muttered.

“Ah boy, look at that; got your woman to stick up for you. Sweet. I remember when your mom had to do that. At least you grew up in some part of your life.”

A bang emanated from the table as Morgan knocked his hands against it. His face shot upward with vex as it shook slightly in exasperation. Everyone continued to shrink themselves in by hunching their back and drowning their faces in their food – none were in the mood for a fight. But the menacing man of Morgan’s bloodline stirred trouble.

Rick looked confused. “What is up with you?” he beckoned. It was uncertain whether this bloke had Satan as a resident in his heart or whether he was just plain dumb (most would hypothesise it to be the second conclusion, though the first seemed the most likely). But regardless, he was mean. Everything he said contained a negative connotation. How could anyone possibly like him and how could he still remain so oblivious to the fact that he was – for the sake of honesty – a prick!?

“Nothing…” his son groaned.

“Then stop going round banging things, boy! Bologna, didn’t you teach him manners?” She propped her head up from her plate of food, feeling Rick’s eyes glare upon hers.

“He grew up to be a well-mannered son I believe,” was her response.

“Ha-ha, choose your words wisely, Bologna. Don’t think he really ‘grew’ much!”

The sniggering echo of Rick’s voice reverberated within Morgan. The jokes had to stop! He was so fed up with his dad’s constant insults – it had been how many years, and his father still remained the same domineering, sordid and intolerable person that he always had been. Morgan, finally at his ends wit, drew out his weapon of attack with a blistering whip of his tongue, “Why don’t you
grow up, Rick!”
Although an immature comment, it did incur a response.
“What did you say? How dare you go around talking to me like I am some kindergartner! Boy, you better learn some manners. You ain’t getting far with that behaviour.”
The shaking of Morgan’s head suddenly became more violent as he couldn’t hold in his anger anymore. The volcano burst – “ME? My manners and my behaviour? Rick, take a look at yourself. You are a failure! A failure as a person and a failure as a father – especially as a father! All you do is hurt people. You hurt mom, you hurt me – and then you come back and try and hurt us again! I am sick of it. Sick of you!” This would have caused some alteration in considerate peoples’ approach to the situation. But with the devil’s landlord, the same attitude persisted.

“Hey! Don’t go attacking me. Maybe if you guys were worthy enough I would have stuck around!”
“Worthy? Us worthy of you?” The comment from Rick couldn’t help but make his son laugh in disbelief. How thick could his father be!?

Once his bursting lava cooled down a bit, Morgan became more solemn. “I was going to see you. I was thinking of actually approaching you and asking you why you left. I toyed with the idea that maybe – just maybe – there was a reason. There always seemed to be a reason around here...but not with me. With me, I got you.” He closed his eyes; his small body standing stern in determination.
He could feel the wound his father’s departure left him as a farewell gift, batter his broken heart.
He tightened his fists, attempting to be strong; to not shed a tear in front of the startled eyes surrounding him.

His father broke the silence, “You really are short with me aren’t you!? But that is not surprising seeing as-”
Morgan’s solemn state was interrupted by his father’s reply, reinforcing another outburst. “NO! You don’t get to speak. Shut up!”
“Hey! I am-”
“Shut up!” His body displayed the anger that exploded from within him. He stomped the ground, asserting his feeble strength over the fire-breathing dragon that was his father.

As he collected his belongings, it was made clear to everyone that he was about to leave. “Come on, Alex. Let us go. I can’t stay here another minute.”
“Boy, you can’t leave-”
“Just you try and stop me,” he replied, on his way out. “Bye mom, bye Big-Mike. Good luck with Rick!” Alex added to the farewell with a wave goodbye, and her and Morgan left the house, slamming the door behind them.

Rick glanced towards Bologna. “That is the boy you raised? No manners whatsoever! And you call yourself a mother.” Big Mike, whose silent mouth had been shut due to the fact that Rick was his boss, finally widened his lower jaw.
“Rick; that is enough. Bologna is an excellent mother. And Morgan is an excellent son!”
His wife decided to chirp in, “And besides, I would have raised him better if he at least had a father around! Where were you, Rick? Huh? You want to blame someone for my son’s behaviour, blame yourself! You are the cause of his hatred towards you, not the people who love him and were there for him!” She suddenly became more menacing, her voice more threatening, “And another thing – If you ever invite yourself into my house again and cause havoc with my family, I will make sure that you never see daylight again. Do you understand, Rick?”

His snarky attitude altered as he felt threatened. He had always been a controlling man and the moment he felt controlled, he suddenly appeared more ‘evil’. A vile expression clouded his sharp, robust face as his nose flared.
“Leave,” she continued, stern as ever. Through Rick’s arrival, she no longer appeared weak. After many years of getting over her ex-husband’s betrayal, she had finally mucked up the courage to take a stand. And with Morgan’s heroic outburst as a motivation, it wasn’t that hard to follow in his footsteps. “Leave,” she repeated.

The fire-dragon withdrew his attack, accepting the fact that he should depart. But he wasn’t going to go feeling entirely defeated. He needed to take a prize with him, back to his murky lair. “Fine,” he finally muttered. “I will go. But Mikey, you are coming with me. Got to go do my job and make sure Jeffster didn’t completely trash the place.” He then had to slip one in in order to stir trouble, “Oh and…thanks for the invite Mikey.”

Bologna’s stern, aggressive eyes slowly turned to Big Mike’s, feeling rage flood within her. “What?” she questioned him.

Upon pulling his arm tight, she drew him aside to discuss the matter, out of Rick’s earshot. “You invited him??”

“Uh yeah, baby; but you see, I had to. He threatened to fire me…from Sub More! Plus, you know, Jeffster would have disturbed our lovely night with their hormonal nerd clan!”

“When you get home, Michael, we are having a long discussion about this. I am never having that man in my house again.”

“I understand, Bologna,” he gently replied, feeling vulnerable in the shadow of her wrath.

Rick had removed himself from the dinner table and walked towards the front door, ready to finally depart. “Come Mikey, I ain’t waiting for you.”

Big Mike drew one last, giant, agony-filled sigh and left with Rick; leaving his sensitive, raging wife alone at home for the night.

…

“What did he say?” Casey asked, as Beckman left the interrogation room where Andrew was being questioned.

“Not much. He is still pretty silent. Though he did, surprisingly, confess to stealing the glasses. He said that he would agree to help Sarah out as long as his prison sentence is shortened. Seeing as he never stole the glasses in the first place, I would assume that that negotiation would be suitable.”

“That criminal deserves life-imprisonment, regardless of how much he has helped Sarah!”

“Yes, well, it is all or nothing I guess. But there is something else we must discuss. I am slightly worried as to what Andrew Baines told her and what her plan is. We tried to extract that information out of him, but he once again kept his mouth shut. I want you to visit London to keep an eye on her. I remember the last time she went without Chuck. It was not pretty!”

“Understood, General.”

…

He swiftly opened the front door of his hotel room. In a single glance, feelings of sorrow, love, regret, worry, comfort, joy and longing all began to seep through the cracks of his lost memory. It was her! Her!

As his eyes caught hers, stealing a glance at her shining-blonde hair and gleeful face, another flashback seemed to be pre-empted:

“Stop the presses! Who’s that? Vicky Vale.”
A sweet voice startled him, causing him to drop the phone that was against his ear, “I hope I am not interrupting.”
“No…not at all…that’s from – it’s from Batman!”
“Because that makes it better.”
“A-ha-ha…”

“Oh, hi – hey, I am Morgan. And this is uh – this is Chuck.”
“Wow, I didn’t think people still named their kids Chuck, or uh, Morgan for that matter.”
“My parents are sadists. And carnival freaks found him in a dumpster.”
“But they raised me as one of their own!”
“How can I help you…?”

Another unexplained flashback left him once again bewildered – a memory? Of their meet? How come he had no prior recollection of it?

Yet regardless, it appeared so acquaint. It felt as though he was reliving that day again, seeing her now currently on his doorstep. Feelings of nostalgia swept over him like a knock to the head, reminding him of that eventful day.

He remembered it clearly – the sunny skies, the beckoning headache from the fall and uncomfortable sleep he had from the night before. He remembered the email that Bryce sent him. This was all pertinent knowledge to him, nothing new and intriguing that he failed to know. He knew how important that day was – it marked the change of his entire future; as it was the day he received the Intersect. But through recollecting upon this flashback, he now understood that another eventful moment filled the early hours of that prosperous day. He recalled her face, her toying attitude and smiling eyes. He remembered his emotions, feeling overwhelmed that such a beautiful, young woman had spoken to him. That was not only the day he received the Intersect, but the day he met her – Sarah Walker.

The prolonged glance emitted from Chuck gave emphasis to the beating heart that thumped against his rib cage. The unexplainable feelings that aroused him internally left him flabbergasted. This woman – this welcoming, gorgeous woman that had caused the uplift in his recent miraculous feelings, was at his doorstep; still mysterious to his bewildered eyes. But just like Ellie had previously foreseen when daydreaming of their meet – Sarah Walker was standing in front of him; the unbeknownst love of his life! Just as Ellie once had envisioned the expression on their faces, they completed the prediction – his jaw dropped slightly as his eyes slowly filled with water; though unperceptive to these heart-wrenching emotions. The weary expression that enveloped his face immediately became overshadowed with a smile filled with utter joy. He was so drawn to her; his body language speaking louder than words as he required none. He could feel the warmth of her radiating presence consume him and cover his misty days of search with sunny skies of contentment. It was so peculiar to his rational mind – here, this woman that he had supposedly ‘never met before’ (or at least that he couldn’t remember) stood before him, evoking emotions within him that no other person had ever extracted. She was so beguiling in the shadowed glare of the early hours of morning sunrise. He couldn’t help but gaze into her sky-blue eyes and feel lost within the drowning emotions of happiness. Although he never truly remembered her, he felt the emotions that the knowledgeable Chuck would have felt. His internal search for longing seemed to slip away as he looked upon her smiling face and felt that he longed no more. The disconcerting feelings of uncertainty seemed to shatter into millions of splinters, as though a massive explosion had eradicated all misconceptions. It was incredibly supernatural how he felt all this from a person that he mistakenly believed to be a ‘stranger’.

As her eyes blazed upon his, she also fulfilled Ellie’s prophesy – sparkling with glee, her
broadened mouth released a smile of relief. All feelings of rage, anger, frustration, worry and sorrow seemed to disappear as she stared upon the nerdy features of her beloved Chuck. Her mind raced, constantly repeating the securing and relieving word, ‘finally’. To her, the search was eventually over. He was safe. Before (as she hadn’t seen him), fear constantly lingered in the back of her mind. It slowly crept to the surface, bellowing her head in the droning question, ‘what if he was hurt or in danger?’. Having always been there for him when he got shot or kidnapped, she felt in control; able to protect him. Though, with him across the globe, out of her life, she couldn’t deal with that realisation of not being able to ensure his safety. But now – with him in front of her (alive), all those worries and anxiety were flushed down the drain.

“Hello Chuck,” Sarah greeted.

As she moved her lips to release the fragrant sound of welcomes, he flashbacked again:

His head rested against his hairy, sturdy arms; sunk in the beating headache of the day as he repeatedly self-proclaimed, “I’m losing my mind.” A hand approached the desk where he rested; pinging the bell for him to awaken. He grasped the slender, feminine hand, thinking it to be his furry friend, and exclaimed, “Morgan, not now!” But as he felt the baby-smooth texture of her long, fragile hands, he knew it was someone else...

He jolted his head up, realising the hand belonged to the blonde-bombshell from before. “Hi – hi. Uh, phone trouble...again?”

“Uh, yeah. I am not sure I am able to receive calls because...I never got one from you.” Morgan’s background utter of sweet disbelief prompted Chuck to sternly face his gleeful friend. She continued, “I’m sorry I left so quickly yesterday. I had an appointment with a realtor – I just moved here.”

“Welcome!!”

“Thanks. And uh, I don’t really know anyone here...I was wondering if you would show me around...That is...if you’re free...?”

Morgan interrupted once again, “Oh, he’s free! He – he has got nothing but time on his hands. He is very available. You guys are going to have a great time!”

Another stern glare from Chuck.

“Apparently my schedule is wide open!” he smirked.

Then she smiled –

Upon glancing at her now, he witnessed the same smile – broadened with utter delight. Her gesture of joy warmed his heart, as he yearned to make her pleased and happy for eternity. With her gleeful grin at seeing him, he couldn’t help but want to embrace the happy, beautiful woman that stood before him. She subconsciously forced him to smile in return.

Although silence loitered in the sultry air that surrounded them, no awkward atmosphere developed between them. They appeared to be so comfortable in the other’s presence that gawky feelings weren’t experienced.

Until...

“Hey Chuck, who is at the door?” the feminine voice from the lounge loudly asked. The misty glass that seemed to encompass Sarah and Chuck suddenly shattered as the sound of an outsider disrupted their silent peace. Sarah rapidly released her hold of his eyes, feeling knocked by another lady’s presence. She had no recollection of Kayla, unknowing of her involvement in Chuck’s life. She thought the worst, and the worst – unfortunately – was true.

Is Chuck seeing someone? Who is the lady inside the house?

The slight widen of her voluptuous lips and elegant eyes displayed her sudden shock. The voice
jarred her. Nevertheless, Chuck still remained captured by Sarah’s presence, holding tight onto his prolonged gaze. The lack of response from him caused Kayla to make her appearance at the door. This immediately drew him back to reality by seeing her appear.

As Sarah’s eyes met hers, all of her relief and joy was replaced with shock, confusion and disliking. The familiar face of the brown-haired spy caused the clenching of Sarah’s jaw. The bulging of her eyes was not only experienced as a result of shock, but also due to the fact that she knew this woman – very well. And neither party was entirely fond of the other.

Kayla and Sarah had been ‘friends’ in spy school; until Kayla stabbed her in the back! When the day came for ‘initiation’ into the spy world, all apprentice spies had to ‘promote’ themselves to agents who would take them under their wing, acting as their ‘handlers’. But in order for them to promote themselves they had to perform an ‘audition’ where they show-cased their talents. Agents would visit and judge the candidates performance on combat, shooting skills and any other nifty tricks that they possessed.

Everyone knew that Sarah Walker would definitely be chosen. She excelled in all fields and had remarkable aim. This made Kayla jealous and slightly judge whether she would be chosen at all. Only a few apprentices were given the opportunity; and the rest that never got chosen had to stay in spy school for another year to improve their performance. So Kayla decided to mess with Sarah in an attempt to improve her chances of success. On the day that Sarah was scheduled to perform, Kayla told her that they had informed her that Sarah’s ‘audition’ was moved to the following day. She ended up missing her audition, thereby ‘failing’ and missing out on the opportunity. This remained on her track record, and also forced her to stay in spy school for another year. Kayla moved forward and was taken under an agent’s wing.

This charade continued long after spy school. All mission opportunities were stripped from Sarah and given to Kayla, making Sarah lose out on many chances of furthering her spy career. As a result, she had come to resent the brown-haired tomboy. Luckily for her though, she eventually found her way to Burbank, where she never looked back.

But now, Kayla was here too; in Sarah’s territory, seemingly having the upper hand. This did not please her at all!

The dropping edges of her sullen mouth caused a frown to form among her face. Her flared nostrils smoked the air as she let all worry and angst flood within her. Kayla was here? Kayla? With Chuck? How is that possible?

She eventually released with infuriation, “Kayla?”

On the flip side, Chuck’s current girlfriend was also left alarmed by Sarah’s presence. She never understood why Walker was here at her doorstep either. A confused reply escaped her lips, “Sarah?”

Like bolts of lightning flashes, Chuck finally recognised her familiar name. Everyone had somehow slipped it to him over the past few weeks – Alex, Beckman, Morgan, Jeffster – and every time he was left misunderstood. But now, the mystery woman of his flashbacks had a name –

He jolted his head towards her beautifully-aligned face. “Sarah? You are Sarah?”

…

The menacing sound of thumping feet caused the heads of the scattered nerds in Sub More to glance up. All were left, lying hung-over around the store. Leftovers from Subway sandwiches
stained the floors, the clothes and the edges of the drunkards’ mouths. Empty bottles of alcohol were dispersed all over the place; whilst some of the electronic equipment that the store sold, lay broken in pieces. The room was consumed in the putrid fumes of vomit from the night before. Nostrils flared with anger and disgust at the state of Sub More. Big Mike and Rick could not believe that Jeffster had trashed the place to such an extent that the store would have to be closed for an entire day. Rick knew that this would leave an imprint on his career, possibly affecting the chances of keeping his ‘prestigious’ job.

As his eyes bulged with anger, he jarred the hazy fans’ ears with the sound of shouting; agonising their throbbing heads. “GET OUT! NOW!”

A loud murmur escaped their mouths as they attempted to shut out the beating sound. Rick repeated, “LEAVE NOW! GET OUT!” An uplift of sluggish bodies charged out the store in response to Rick’s demand. As they left, his eyes blazed fire upon Big Mike’s. “This is your entire fault,” he blamed.

“My fault? Rick, how is this my fault?” Morgan’s biological father wasn’t one to take responsibility for his actions. He also knew that the outcome of this incident would affect his job, and he didn’t want to have to deal with the fallout. But due to the recent knock to his ego from the family dinner he crashed earlier, he wanted to assert his control over Big Mike. So he did – by blaming and ordering him around.

“If you hadn’t persuaded me to let Jeffster party here, then they never would have! There no way I would have allowed it.”

“But you did, Rick.”

“Shut up, Mikey! This is your doing and you are going to have to deal with it. You will clean this entire place up – make sure that it is spotless. And I know that you fat people have a habit of being lazy – but let me tell you boy, don’t get lazy. If this place isn’t perfect in a couple of hours, you are fired!” He then stormed off.

Big Mike felt furious by this outlandish command. Rick had ruined everything – affecting the state of his work and home. Like a dog, he went around peeing all over Big Mike’s life, causing the sprouting tulips of his rising happiness to be drowned in the ammonia of Rick’s fatal piss. Though Big Mike’s vex wasn’t only fuelled by the inconsiderate ex-husband of Bologna; but also by the store-crashers themselves – Jeffster! Why did they have to go so over the top? Couldn’t they have cooled it down? But then again – it is Jeff and Lester! What are the chances of them acting civilised?

He knew he should never have agreed to Rick’s negotiation. Either way the wind blew, the outcome would evolve into a storm. But Big Mike believed that the other choice – Jeffster paying his house a visit – would have been the better option.

Not awoken by the screeching voice of the store manager; Jeffster still lay, dazed in drunken slumber. The sturdy, large, African-American drew close to them; his prodigious feet pounding against the cold, tiled floor. “Get up,” he gritted. Their loud snores overlapped his grinding exclamation. “GET UP,” he yelled.

Their eyes burst open, as though they had finally awoken after millennia of deepened sleep. Lester glanced around, noticing the dire state of Sub More. He knew they were in for it!

“Morning, Big Mike,” he quivered. “How are you?” The false, sweet and concerned query never altered Big Mike’s menacing stature.

“You boys think that you can just trash this place without any consequences. Is that it?” The sleepy Jeff tried to reason with him, “We are so sorry Big Mike. We just were trying to throw a
lovely party for our fans and it seemed to get out of hand. We never thought it would come to this degree.”
“You never thought it would come to this?” he questioned, still grinding the edges of his teeth.
“What is the matter witchu?”
“Hey – Big Mike, before you get angry, kill us and then proceed to dump our bodies in the Bermuda Triangle never to be found again; I would just like to express my honest feelings to you,” after a slight pause and quick hand to the chest, Lester continued, “…We had nothing to do with this. I actually have no idea what I am doing here.” He then proceeded to look around, appearing ‘lost’ and ‘confused’. “Oh my, Jeffrey! Where are we?? How did we get here?”
“You two better shut up! You both are going to clean this all up right now…fast. And if not, I am reporting you two to the police for the obstruction of property. Understand, boys?” Gulp! “Do you boys understand?”
“Crystal clear…”

A battered knock was heard from his front door. He opened to find three stern faces glare upon him.
“Morgan!”
“Hello Ellie,” he sweetly greeted. “Hi Devon. Aw, look – it is baby Clara. Hello little one.”
“I have just switched on my phone to find a message from Sarah, explaining why she is boarding a plane to London to see Chuck!”
He pretended to be oblivious and responded in a high-pitched voice, “Would you like to come in for some tea? Coffee?”
“Morgan, did you tell Sarah??” By now, Ellie had moved forward, entering into his house. Devon followed, carrying his daughter in his arms. Their luggage dragged along, being carried by the surprise guests.
“No, Ellie, I swear! Sarah knew. I am not sure how – I think Casey and Beckman told her. But I didn’t. I promise.” Her hand cupped her face as she felt stressed with these sudden complications.

“In the message, Sarah stated that she never divorced Chuck. Where did those divorce papers that Chuck signed come from?” she queried.
“I don’t know. Sarah reckons it is a set up. That someone is behind them being apart.”
“Who would want that?”
Morgan shook his head unknowingly.

“Do you think she went to tell him? To remind Chuck?” he asked.
“There is no doubting she will.”
“But babe; is that really a bad thing – Chuck knowing?” Devon interjected.
“No, of course not. Chuck and Sarah need to be together. But with Kayla in the picture and with his memory loss – Ah, I just hope Sarah knows what she is doing.”
“I am sure she does, babe. Besides, it is Chuck and Sarah. They will always end up together. No matter who tries to divorce them.”
He gave her a look of reassurance, relaxing her nervous heart.
“I don’t understand how someone could do that – why someone would do that!”
“I don’t know, but Sarah will definitely get down to the bottom of this.”

“Yeah Ellie. It is going to be fine,” Morgan exclaimed. He continued, trying to change the subject, “Do you guys need a place to stay while you are down? I am sure you can live in Chuck’s apartment for a while. I am supposed to be housesitting while he is in London but I guess you can do that instead in the meantime.”
“Thanks, man. That would be awesome,” Devon replied.
“Hey, how come Mrs B. didn’t come down with you guys?” he asked, referencing Chuck and Ellie’s mom.
“We couldn’t really afford another ticket so quickly. But she said she might fly down at a later stage if she is needed.”
The bearded fellow smiled. That was all he could do – smile. He offered them some coffee and they accepted, forcing him to enter into the kitchen to make it for them.

Ellie approached her daughter who was perched against her husband’s side. The warm embrace of a mother’s kiss warmed Clara’s forehead. Devon could sense his wife’s worry and stress.
“Everything is going to work out, I promise. Chuck is an adult – he knows how to take care of himself. They will work their problems out together.”
She then replied with words that shot through Devon’s heart, too evil for him to even imagine, “Sarah could tell him. She could help him remember…but what if he doesn’t choose her?”
“What? Chuck would never do that. He loves Sarah, always will.”
“I hope you are right. Ag, how could I even say that!? I know, of course Chuck would choose Sarah.”

But as she allowed the wave of worry to wash away; Devon stood, feeling nerves creep up his spine. Ellie had a point – Chuck never knew about Sarah, he was dating someone new and had moved on with his life. Would Chuck choose to still be with her? Or would he decide that it is better for them to be apart? In that current moment, Devon feared the worst – not that Kayla might stand in the way of Charah happiness, but that he wasn’t certain which option Chuck would choose.

…

Ignoring Chuck’s sudden realisation, both Kayla and Sarah were left dumbfounded by the other’s presence. “What are you doing here?” Sarah aggressively questioned, entering forcefully into their hotel room.
“What am I doing here? More like: what are you doing here?”
“Believe me; I have more reason to be here than you do! What are you doing here?”
The bulged eyes of Chuck darted from woman to woman, completely flabbergasted by the sudden predicament. He was entirely confused – firstly, the woman that had constantly been reappearing in his mind showed up. Secondly, her and Kayla knew each other? And apparently weren’t too fond of the other…
The argument continued, “What does that even mean?”
Chuck decided to butt in. “Hey, hey ladies – there is no reason to fight. Let us just sort this out reasonably…with lowered voices.”
“Shut up!” Kayla exclaimed, feeling threatened by her long, lost rival’s return.
“How dare you speak to him like that? You have no right. That’s so typical of-”
“Okay guys!!” he loudly interrupted. “Now I have no idea what is going on. But clearly you two don’t like each other. So can we just talk out these issues instead of shout? Please.”

The aggressive argument quietened down. “What are you doing here?”
Kayla snobbishly responded, “I am working on a secret undercover mission with my boyfriend, Chuck.”

Boyfriend? Boyfriend? They were dating? Chuck was dating her?? This knowledge shook her within. She felt emotionally jerked by the statement – Chuck had a new girlfriend??

Kayla continued, “Sorry – but not authorised to share further details.” Her false, sarcastic smile internally irked Sarah. She really did not like this woman.
As her enemy latched hold of Chuck’s arm, a sharp knife pierced her heart. All prior thoughts and irritation was replaced with heart-wrenching emotional angst. This she did not expect. She felt so vulnerable standing there – the outsider. Her jaw tightened, feeling anxiety cloud her.

“You’re a couple…” Like a child needing rescue, her saddened eyes looked upon Chuck’s puzzled face. He felt as though he wanted to weep for her, feeling the sorrow that she internally felt. Still confused by the entire situation, he felt compelled to embrace her and eradicate all worry and depression from her heart. It was peculiar – he felt more drawn to stand on Sarah’s side than to be on Kayla’s side of the table. Not only did he sympathise for her, but he felt closer to her. He couldn’t explain it, but it was as though she was no ‘stranger’ or ‘acquaintance’ but a ‘forgotten companion’ that he lost along the way.

Kayla interrupted their prolonged stare. “Now that I have answered your question, what are you doing here, Walker?”

Walker? Her surname was Walker? It sounded so familiar, so known to him.

Jarred by Kayla’s question, Sarah took a while to respond. “Uh…I came…” She constantly stole glances at Bartowski through her reply, “I wanted…” She couldn’t go on – what could she say? She couldn’t tell Chuck what she longed to tell him; not with Kayla standing right there.

“Wait, how do you even know Chuck?” Another annoying question was directed her way. She was taken by surprise. Her eyes jolted from Kayla to Chuck, unsure of how to proceed.

With Kayla between them, she couldn’t very well tell the truth and exclaim, ‘he is my husband! Beat that’. Responding with that giant bombshell would further complicate the situation and give them the impression that she was, in fact, insane! Chuck anxiously awaited her reply, searching for the answers that only Sarah could provide. But he couldn’t receive the whole truth – Sarah couldn’t tell him everything now, unknowing of how he would respond. “I…”

“She has worked with us on missions before,” an outside voice responded. All heads turned to face the rugged man who stood outside the opened front door.

Casey had taken a jet to London, shortly after Sarah abruptly departed. He now stood outside, interrupting the trio’s conversation.

He continued, “General thought she would be valuable to have on the team. Isn’t that right, Walker?” Her eyes sternly looked upon Casey’s, feeling annoyed by the entire predicament. None of this was meant to happen – she was supposed to meet Chuck, explain the entire situation to him and they were going to gradually iron out the wrinkles of their relationship with time. But instead, Kayla was in the way. Kayla – no, not just anyone. It had to be one of the people she most despised!

“Hi Casey,” Chuck greeted, trying to remove some of the tension that resided in the room.

“We don’t need another agent. Three works just fine…” remarked Kayla. Obviously she wasn’t too pleased with the predicament either; though she did have the upper hand. At least her boyfriend remembered her!

Chuck still remained flabbergasted by everything. Why hadn’t he remembered any of the missions that Sarah supposedly assisted them with? Why was he so drawn to her? None of his questions had been answered and he struggled to understand. But he couldn’t ask these queries aloud – expressing that he couldn’t remember her would be impolite, and he very well couldn’t just exclaim, ‘I am so attracted to her’. That would leave everyone extremely uncomfortable. So he remained silent, trying to mentally put the pieces together.

Kayla’s remark caused Casey to grunt and Sarah cringe. What an annoying pest!
“General Beckman’s orders,” the robust man replied.

A snarky snare was directed towards the blonde, mysterious spy. Although Kayla felt threatened, Sarah felt even more impended. Kayla had been living her life. Kayla – AG, Kayla! Of all people! Her disgust gnawed her internally, slowly nibbling away her merriness and replacing it with repugnance and fear.

“Sarah, a word,” Casey asked, drawing her away from Kayla’s perilous glare.

“What?” she directly questioned, once Casey had pulled her outside, out of the others’ earshot.

“You haven’t told them yet, have you?”

“No, not yet. Her presence has kind of thrown me. I’m trying to figure out the best way to say it.”

“Wait a while, Sarah. Don’t completely confuse the kid, especially with Kayla present.”

Remaining displeased, Sarah began to fiddle with her bracelet again and her teeth gnawed against her gums.

“What did Andrew Baines tell you?”

“Oh come on, Casey. Not now-”

“I need to know. You have to tell me sometime and you can’t very well do that with them hanging around.”

A frown still lodged her face. She was so resistant in talking about anything. “Sarah, you stormed out of Castle. I know that seeing Kayla here is…unnerving – yeah well, no one likes her! But obviously Baines said something to you, something important. What did he say?”

Finally she responded. “He didn’t tell me everything. He talked about certain people within the CIA, made up of ex-ring and ex-fulcrum operatives – Fulring, he called them. He said that they were behind the divorce. Baines said that in order for their plan to work, Chuck needed to become a spy again. So they forged the divorce in order to motivate him to move on and re-join the CIA. They apparently thought that having me officially ‘out of his life’ would convince him to move forward and once again become a spy. But that didn’t entirely work as he couldn’t move on. So they forced him to. Seeing as they are special Fulring operatives within the CIA, they have the ‘authority’! So they threatened to kill him if he didn’t. They then had to eradicate his memory of me with Quinn’s faulty Intersect glasses in order for the Intersect to work.”

“So with you still in the picture – gone, he wouldn’t be able to flash, leaving him ineligible to become a spy?”

“Exactly.” Her voice remained more solemn, still feeling burdened by the weight of worry.

“But why did they need him to become a spy again?”

“I’m not sure. It is hard getting information out of Baines. He was quite vague – he said one of their aims was revenge; revenge against Chuck. Baines mentioned something about getting Chuck close to secrets that will eventually lead to his downfall. And then he basically threatened me. He warned that I should ‘check-up’ on Chuck but didn’t explain why. Immediately I thought something was wrong and charged to England in an attempt to make sure he wasn’t hurt.”

Sarah continually looked upset with everything. All she wanted was her husband back.

“This is big news! We can’t keep this from everyone else, ” he stated. She bit the inner gums of her lips again, feeling resistant in doing what Casey suggested.

“He is a big boy, Walker. Not to mention the Intersect.”

“I know…”

She grinded her jaw. He knew this was aided by the presence of Chuck’s new girlfriend.

“You and Kayla really seem to be hitting it off!” he joked.

“Mph… I really do not like that woman!”

A shout was heard from inside the hotel room. Chuck called out to them, “Hey, sorry for
interrupting, but Beckman is on the line.”

They knew that what she had to say would be pertinent to them, so they entered inside to listen to the General’s call. Immediately as Sarah reappeared in the room, Kayla continued her displeasing gaze upon her enemy.

All four of them stood around, listening to Beckman’s voice from the speaker phone. “Are they there?” she asked.

“Yes General,” Sarah responded.

“Good. I have just received further news with regard to the Baines mission. The CIA has informed me that Baines Corporation are building a secret super machine – Super X they call it – in collaboration with the Russians. This ‘Super X’ has the ability to control worldwide telecommunications, which in turn will give them power to take over the world. The new mission is to get close to Baines Corp; find the blueprint to this secret Super X and steal it, preventing them from further making this machine. This will then help take down Baines Corp. in the process. Chuck, is your meeting with Terrance still on?”

“Yes General,” he responded.

“Good. You distract Terrance with the meet whilst the rest of you break into Baines Corp. and steal that blueprint. Everyone understand?” They all agreed that they did.

“General, Sarah has reason to believe that a rogue CIA organisation are conspiring against Chuck,” Casey stated, revealing the ghastly news to everyone who could hear.


“They call themselves Fulring,” Sarah continued with resistance.

“Did Baines tell you this?” Beckman queried. They assured her that he did. “Okay, I will try and find out as much as I can. In the meantime, keep an extra eye on Chuck.” With that, she hung up the phone.

“Fulring? What, why would they be after me?”

“They are made up of left over Fulcrum and Ring agents. They want revenge Chuck; on you for taking them down.” A lump formed in his throat which he struggled to swallow. This scared him, regardless of how ‘special’ a spy he was.

Worry enveloped his face, clearly seen by the people that surrounded him. “Don’t worry Chuckles, at least you will have Kayla by your side!” Casey sarcastically remarked; though the sarcasm wasn’t quite accentuated. Sarah remained on edge, gritting her teeth.

Through the entire conversation, Kayla had been tight-nipped. No words had escaped her mouth. She seemed just as on edge as Sarah, if not more. Now that eyes were on her due to Casey’s remark, she planted a false smile among her face as she excused herself from the room. “Sorry, I have to make a quick call.”

As she left, Chuck turned his face, allowing his eyes to meet Sarah’s.

Eyes are said to be the window to the soul, and in this case, that remained factual. As she looked through the window to his soul, she could see the welcoming heart that longed for answers from her. Feeling the gravitational pull towards him, she sensed that he felt it too. The broadened smile that consumed his face and made his eyes twinkle with delight caused her heart to melt with anguish. She longed to hold him again, to be comforted by him and reassured that they will eventually end up together.

All through her life she never let her guard down. And the moment she did, she found Chuck, who made it seem that breaking down her Berlin Wall was a good thing. But standing there now, feeling vulnerable in the fact that the one she loved never remembered her – she couldn’t help but
start to rebuild from the rubble, adding new bricks to her broken wall.

Beguiled by her stunning features, Chuck was left gobsmacked. He fancied his girlfriend and would never cheat on her. But whenever he looked into Sarah’s forlorn, sparkling, blue eyes; he couldn’t help but feel weak at the knees. There was something about her – an enigma if you will – that drew him in. Staring at her, he felt ridiculous. He couldn’t think of anything to say. His mind begged to know why his heart felt what he couldn’t help but feel. But he knew he couldn’t just blatantly ask her.

He pulled away from her gaze as his eyes caught a glimpse of a sparkling bracelet that lay around her wrist.
“Mum’s bracelet…” he muttered. She glanced down, realising he had seen it. It had been covered by her long-sleeved shirt, not allowing him to recognise it before. But now he had…
“Sorry, I – That bracelet is beautiful. My mom had one just like it-”

As he glanced upon the silver charm that lay around her wrist, his mind frenzied, encountering another flashback –

“So, uh, Ned let everyone call their loved ones. That was pretty smart to call me…protect our cover…”
“Yeah well, you are my girlfriend…sort of!”
She smiled with effervescent joy. “So does that mean that your offer still stands for Christmas?”
“So, I knew you could be heart-warmed!” He giggled, “I actually, uh, have something for you. I was going to give it to you tomorrow…but considering the circumstances, I kind of want to give it to you today…”
“Chuck, we are going to get out of here, we’ll be fine, I-”
The extraction of a silver, archaic bracelet muted her sentence as she whispered the final word, “promise.” Stunned and unsure of what to say, she felt heart-warmed by the symbolic gift. “Wow, that’s…beautiful…”
“It’s good luck. It was my mom’s charm bracelet. My dad gave it to her when Ellie was born.” He gently wrapped the family heirloom round her wrist where it fit – perfectly.
“Oh – Chuck, I can’t take this. This is something real, something that you should give to a real girlfriend…”
He softly stroked her hand, “…I know…”

As he drew back to reality, being pulled out of the grasp of flashing memories, he caught her face staring upon his – the same expression as the one she acquired in the flashback. Though, bewilderment seemed to be the most prominent at present.

“Are you okay?” she uttered with concern.

He remained stunned. He had given the bracelet to her? The jewel around her wrist wasn’t coincidently identical to his mother’s, it was his mother’s! This ‘memory’ added to his confusion. He wouldn’t have just given it to any random person. How important was she in his life? How evident was she in his life? And why hadn’t he remembered her?

“I gave that to you…” he muttered, still focussed on the bracelet. Her intrigued face suddenly altered to express her surprise. Casey’s too. How did he know?

“…as a Christmas gift…”
Still stunned, her torn heart thumped repeatedly…harder…louder…faster!

“Chuck, how did you…” Drawn out of his daze, he raised his eyes to hers. A gawky, half-ended smile formed among his face.
“I…”

…

After leaving the room, Kayla extracted her cell from her pocket, calling an important number that remained on her speed dial list. “Hey. We have a slight problem. Sarah is back…and looks like she remembers everything!”

“What? How could that be?” the mysterious voice replied.
“I don’t know. But sir, that isn’t the worst of our problems.”
“Continue…”
“She knows about us! Andrew Baines slipped a little word in. Apparently he knew more than we thought.”
“What are you saying, Agent Hart?”
“I am saying she is onto us – our entire plan. I just pray she doesn’t know I’m part of Fulring!”
Chapter 11: You're Mine

“You see, Jeffrey, the correct way to pick up litter is with your feet. I don’t think you understand how ingenious this is – I am literally picking up these bottles with my feet,” Lester exclaimed, attempting to extract the rubbish covering Sub More’s floor with his bare lower limbs. “I bet you I can even pick up this litter with my toes!”

“No, Lester, I don’t think so. You will drop the bottles and it will break. I don’t want there to be more to clean up.”

“Jeffrey, you have nothing to worry about. I am seriously like a ninja. In fact, I don’t even think ninjas could pull this off. I am that good-” With that plundering statement, the bottle his toes were clutching suddenly slipped free from his grasp, shattering the empty glass into splinters on the floor. “Ah…oops. Well…who saw that coming!?”

A disapproving stare was smothered among Jeff’s frustrated face as he stated he would fetch a broom to help sweep up the shattered pieces.

Big Mike approached them. “You boys having fun?”

“If this is your idea of fun Big Mike, I am seriously worried.”

“Yeah, well thanks to you two bozos, my day is spent helping clean up your mess.”

“It’s a hard knock life, Mrs Hannigan.”

“Who you talkin’ bout, a Mrs Hannigan?”

“It…it’s from Annie…The musical…with the gingerbread orphan…”

From the corner of Big Mike’s eye, Rick’s figure steadily approached the front door of the store. “Rick, where you off to?” he shouted.

“None of your business, Mikey. Your only concern should be getting this place spotless. I’ll be back, and when I am this store better be squeaky clean. And stop getting your slaves to do the work for you. What, you too lazy to do it yourself, huh?” His tone was harsh and his aggression seemed to reverberate through the store. The lack of reply from Big Mike led him to the conclusion that he wasn’t going to receive a response and he left the store abruptly.

“Well you heard the boss, looks like you’re cleaning up all by yourself.” Assuming his community service to be over, Lester dropped all the trash that he had collected back on the floor.

“Hey son, you ain’t going nowhere. You are cleaning this all up with me. Don’t think you can get off scot free.”

“But that grumpy dude said-”

“Lester, we are going to help him out,” Jeff interrupted, returning with a broom to the scene of the crime where the shattered glass lay. “This is our fault after all.”

“Thank you son. Now I think I will go have me some Danish. You boys…you just…carry on.”

As he left to devour his beloved meal, Jeff continued to sweep up the glass.

“You know Jeffrey; we don’t have any fun anymore.”

“What are you talking about? We had a major party with our fans last night.”

“Yes, but that was last night. That is all in my past now. We have to focus on our present, my friend; on our future. And right now, our present involves manual labour which I don’t usually like to do for…fun.”

“Well what are you suggesting we do, Lester?”

“I am suggesting, Jeffreý, that we embark on the greatest adventure of our lives.” His friend continued to sweep, not responding to his thrilling suggestion. This made him antsy, “Are you listening, Jeffreý?”
“Yes, Lester, I have to listen. You keep talking.”
“Good. I am suggesting that we go where no Hin-Jew and fat guy have gone before. We should go
on an adventure of a lifetime. I am initiating that we – Jeffster – that means you and me; just
encase you weren’t following; go on…a mission!”
“A mission? Like with the CIA? Like what Chuck, Sarah and Casey and them do?”
“Exactly Jeffrey. I think it is time Jeffster became spies.”

…

An anxious fist repeatedly banged against Casey’s hotel front door. He and Sarah checked into the
room beside Chuck and Kayla’s, uncertain as to how long they would be staying in London. Late
morning was drawing near and the team were getting ready for their mission – steal the blueprint
whilst Chuck distracts Terrance Baines with their meeting.

Casey swiftly opened his battered door. A tall, charming bloke stood before him, dressed like a
sophisticated businessman, wearing a slimming black suit and tie. His hair was neatly combed back
and his face was seemingly freed from any blemishes, shaven and baby-smooth; making him
appear younger than his birth record would depict him to be. Between his slender fingers, he held
up a ring.

“Casey, do you believe in magic?” Having feeling let in, Chuck walked inside, continually
rambling on, “You know, magical items like medallions or…rings.”
He noticed the perplexed look upon Casey’s face and decided it be best to elaborate, “I found this
when I was packing for London,” he continued, referencing the ring in his hand, “and my initials
are engraved on the inside. Morgan told me it is from some past mission or something, though I
don’t remember. But this can’t just be some ordinary CIA prop because it does stuff…like…
magical stuff….” The robust man hadn’t responded, leaving Chuck to believe that he still never
understood. He was forced to spell out what he was trying to say. “I have flashbacks, Casey!”

Having been used to Chuck’s ramblings, he had continued to get ready for the mission, packing
important equipment and weaponry into bags. But the mention of flashbacks startled him –
flashbacks of what?
“Flashbacks? What do you mean flashbacks?”
Chuck continued, “Well I don’t know what they are exactly, but whenever I put this ring on, I
envision-”
“Bartowski, don’t get your mind distracted. Let us focus on the mission first-”
“No, Casey, I really need to talk about this. I couldn’t earlier because Sarah and Kayla were there.”
“What is so top secret that you can’t talk about it in front of them?”
After a slight anxious pause, Chuck declared, “It’s about Sarah.”

With the mention of her name, Casey immediately got nervous. Unbeknownst to Chuck, Sarah was
in the other room. She was in clear earshot of the conversation and Casey knew that Chuck would
want this to be private. He would feel embarrassed if he knew Sarah could hear what he wanted to
divulge to Casey in secret. To add, he wasn’t sure that he could tell Chuck anything just yet. If he
told him everything – who Sarah was and why he couldn’t remember her – he wasn’t sure what the
CIA would do if he did; and he didn’t want anyone to be in danger because of it. As a result, he
desperately tried to avoid discussing this issue at present.
“Hear me out, Casey.”
“Talk about this later, Bart-”
Chuck decided to ignore the weariness in his eyes and continued, “When this ring is round my
finger I have these ‘flashbacks’ of moments that… I don’t know – are memories? Thoughts?
Information from the Intersect? I’m not sure, but what I do know is that she is central in every one.
And I can’t remember her. Everyone knows her except for me and I feel like I should.”
“Not now, Chu-”
“And that isn’t all. These moments in my mind provoke emotions that are inside of me and she makes me feel…I don’t know; sometimes sad, sometimes ecstatic and sometimes I have this feeling of being stabbed in the heart. I just don’t understand – and then seeing her on my doorstep was just…I couldn’t explain it.”
“Chu-”
“I am so confused and I keep asking myself ‘why don’t I remember her’. I really don’t know what is going on…”

As he blurted out all the thoughts that were racing through his head, Sarah’s ear caught hold of his raised voice. She had been getting ready in her room for the mission, but the moment Chuck stormed into their hotel room; she stopped preparing and listened intently to every word spoken. Hearing what Chuck had to say made her long to interrupt their conversation and just tell him everything. But she understood that it would be best to just wait a while. Although she knew that if she did tell him, all the answers he had been searching for would be sought.

“…and it all ties back to this ring, Casey. I know it is important. Where is it from?”
“Sarah is in the other room, Chuck…” he whispered, finally able to release a completed sentence. Chuck’s eyes immediately bulged as his busy mouth now remained silent. Nerves consumed him as he felt he had just made an entire fool of himself. Unacquainted with the knowledge that Sarah used to be his wife and that she knew about the eradication of his memory of her, he felt extremely insecure in having accidently revealed all his inner thoughts to her.

“Hmph…?” he stuttered, appearing stunned. The expression on his face made him appear as though he had recently been electrocuted! “Ohh…”

Casey patted Chuck’s chest, “Now is not the best time to talk about what you want to discuss,” he continued to whisper. Before leaving out the front door of his hotel room, having collected all the bags he packed, he murmured one last significant exclamation into his ear, “Just for the record, you are right. The ring’s not from a mission, Chuck. It’s yours.”

With that bombshell, he left the room, on his way to pack the van with the needed equipment.

One of the answers Chuck was looking for had been found. Though he didn’t know how to react – the ring was his? When? How?

Still stunned, he remained uncertain what to do or say next. Knowing that Sarah was in the next room, possibly having heard every word released from his lips, he wasn’t sure whether he should leave, say hi or just stand there like a complete idiot stuck in disbelief. So he chose the third option.

Silence loitered, making Sarah believe everyone had left. Just like her ex-husband, she also felt awkward, aware that Chuck knew she must have heard. Having thought everyone was gone, she felt it was safe to come out of hibernation and leave her room. Though, upon opening her bedroom door, it was revealed to her that she was incorrect –

His eyes were drawn to the sound of the creaking door. Sarah’s blond locks were the first thing that caught his eye, and he hurriedly hid his ring in his pocket. Her eyes glanced up, staggered by his presence.

They continued to stare. A quirky, half-smile formed among his face as he remained uncertain as to what would be the best thing for him to say.

“Hi Chuck.”

He gulped. Although nervous and anxious, he still was so desperate to pull himself out of the black hole of confusion. He had the questions and she had the answers. She ached to tell him but didn’t
know if she was allowed to tell. He longed to ask her but didn’t know if he was allowed to ask.

After a solicitous wave of the hand as his greeting, he eventually spoke. “You probably heard all that didn’t you…?” Her eyes darted sideways, making it clear to him that she must have heard at least something.

Still jittery, Chuck felt he had to proceed forward. If she had heard everything already, why not go on?

They simultaneously exclaimed, “look,” surprising the other; leaving both parties silent. Her sudden laugh calmed him to an extent. “You first,” she stated. A welcoming smile overwrote the confused expression that had clouded his face.

“How do I know you?” he finally blurted, taking one step closer to her. “I know that sounds-”

“Where’s Kayla?” she interrupted. It was clear that, just like Casey, she wasn’t sure how much she could divulge to Chuck at present. She knew of Fulring’s presence and their involvement in her current predicament. If she informed Chuck now, they could find out and someone could get hurt. As a result, she tried to change the subject. Even though she desperately wanted him to know, she still had to remain professional.

Taken aback by her off-put query, he stammered, “Uh, getting ready.” “…I suppose we should too…”

He ignored her comment, continuing with his inquiries. Finding out all the answers was more important to him than talking about Kayla. “I know I know you!”

“Chuck-”

He drew nearer to her, “…That sounds crazy because you’re probably thinking ‘why wouldn’t you know me’…” The ramblings began again, “…but I just keep flashing back to…to-” “-memories.”

Memories? She saw them as that? Were they really memories?

With that statement, he understood that she knew something. She must have. And finding out what exactly she knew became more vital than ever. “Then why don’t I remember you?”

Her heart began to race. Her mind began to race. Her lips began to move. This was it – she was going to tell him. She was about to disregard what everyone had ordered her to do, he had to know – “Chu-”

“Van’s loaded,” Casey intercepted, appearing from the frame of the hotel front door. “Time to go.”

With her hand tightly grasped round the doorknob and with the turning of the key in the handle, the door widened, revealing to her youthful eyes a candlelit table filled with two plates containing a prosperous meal.

“Morgan?” she called out in confusion. Beside the brightly decorated table stood her boyfriend, wearing a white apron stained with the mess of food from his cooking spree. “Alex! Just in time. Would you like me to take your coat and bags, me lady?” he offered, acting the way a waiter would at a well-to-do restaurant.

Having just returned home from the shops, she had bags filled with food in her hands. She passed them to him and he took them to the kitchen to place them among the counter.

“Morgan, what is going on? It is still early in the day. Why are you making…dinner?” she
inquired, slipping her jacket off from her shoulders and hanging it on a coat rack.

“Well, I wanted to share a lovely meal with you because I know things have been extremely stressful around here lately. The situation with Chuck has been...stressful and the predicament with my dad has been, well, ya...stressful! So to take our minds off from the stress I have cooked us a spectacular meal.”

“But why now? Why not tonight?”

“You see, I would, yeah. But the only problem is that Ellie and Devon wanted to go out tonight on a romantic dinner to you know, get their minds off of everything and also take a break from baby-duty. So I sort of promised them that we would babysit tonight...you don’t mind, do you?”

“Babysit little Clara? No, of course not. That is sweet Morgan.”

“Yeah, well, I do have my moments,” he smiled.

...

The crowded van was consumed in the stuffy air that enveloped them. Parked outside, across from Baines Corporation, the spy team were getting ready for their mission. The darkened suit and grey tie made it obvious that Chuck was dressed appropriately for a business meeting; whilst the others were dressed in black, ready for their break-in.

“All right, a brief overview of the plan: we wi-”

“Casey, we know the plan, we have been through it,” Kayla butted in.

Her interruption added to the disliking everyone – except Chuck – blatantly had towards her.

“Fine,” he continued, “but we still need to decide who will stay in the van for surveillance-”

“Sarah can,” Kayla exclaimed, carrying on with her ritual of interrupting others’ sentences. “She doesn’t need to be on the mission, do you Sarah? After all, you are the newbie…”

She didn’t understand the irony – obviously Sarah was not the ‘newbie’. This was her territory, yet Kayla always seemed to find a way to rub the fact that she had recently taken over her role in her face.

Casey wasn’t too fond of the tomboy’s direct exclamation, “No, she doesn-”

“It is fine, Casey,” Sarah remarked. “I don’t mind staying in the van.”

Still annoyed, he was resistant to let Kayla win, but Sarah insisted, leaving him no choice but to oblige.

“Fine. Remember, if this mission goes off smoothly, Beckman wants us to return to Burbank. So let’s make sure this all works out.”

Just before Kayla followed Casey’s departure from the car, she handed Chuck a gun. “You might need this. You never know what Terrance could do. Remember: ‘Shoot First, Ask Questions Later!’” Upon receiving the violent weapon, it was clear that he was bewildered in being handed a gun, as it wasn’t his forte. He held it with two fingers by the tip of the handle, inspecting it as though he had never seen one before. Kayla was confused. “Have you never used a gun, Chuck?”

Although they had been on missions together, – Kayla, Chuck and Casey – the ‘gun predicament’ had never surfaced before. So seeing Chuck confound in being handed a gun left her entirely perplexed.

Feeling slightly abashed, he exclaimed, “The thing is, I have been shot at more than shot the bullet myself!” A ball of saliva formed in his throat, forcing him to swallow it down, “I am not too fond of...shooting people…”

This caused Kayla to frown with confusion. “Maybe if you had a gun with you more often, you wouldn’t be shot at so much.” She then turned her back to him and left the van.
“Here, I know you would prefer to use this instead,” Sarah said, bestowing a tranquiliser gun to him. “Besides, you’ve never needed to use an actual gun.” This gesture of hers perplexed him further as he wasn’t sure how she knew of his tranquiliser gun preferences. But taking into account all the flashbacks and her stating they were memories; the ring and the pulling emotions he experienced whenever he saw her; it began to be adamantly clear that she had been in his life. There was no doubting that. He just remained hazy as to why he could not remember her and how important a role she played.

“Thanks,” he smiled. “The Intersect can come in handy sometimes.”

He ejected himself from the van and before she closed the door behind him, he widened his mouth to speak, “Sarah, I know it can get quite lonely in the van, so I made a mixed CD that you can listen to. I know I can’t go a stake-out without listening to music.”

She grinned, thrilled in the sense that he hadn’t changed or become sour over the year that they were apart. “Remember,” he continued, “no throwing parties in the van!”

She chuckled. “All right, Chuck; if you insist.”

With a smile prominently perched on his face, he left and she closed the van door behind him.

…

“So Mr Carmichael, what would you like to discuss with me today?” Terrance Baines asked.

In the broad office of Baines Corporation, three bodies filled the air, consuming the room in transactional business talk. Mr Vaughn, who stood in the corner of the office, did not partake in the discussion, however did act as an extra eye for Terrance.

“Mr Baines, I have a few propositions that I am certain you will be interested in. These are one million dollar inventions that I am pretty sure will be to your liking. I don’t like to boast but…I came up with them myself,” Chuck stated with pride.

Baines leaned back in his chair with his hands interwoven, making himself comfortable. “I am listening.”

From Chuck’s obtuse suitcase, he extracted a long list of ideas he considered to be invention-worthy. As he held it up, it unravelled to the floor and rolled straight past Terrance’s desk. It was evident to Baines and Vaughn how extensive the list was.

“I see you came prepared…” Baines sarcastically quipped. Disregarding his remark, Chuck began to elaborate on his ideas, starting at the very beginning – “Idea Number 1: Male Bikini’s!”

…

Simultaneous to Chuck’s interview, Kayla and Casey had snuck into Baines Corporation. They reached the floor where all the ‘engineers’ worked on their extensive projects, one of which was the Super X machine. The area in which they were located was streamed with white walls and the passageways were currently left vacant. Hidden behind a corner, the two spies stood with their guns tightly grasped in their hands. Wearing black attire, they blatantly stood out from the assigned uniform that the employees who worked in Baines Corporation would wear, magnifying the possibility of them getting caught.

The slight brush of footsteps caught the two spies’ ears as young, masculine voices suddenly drew near to their hiding spot. “I am telling you, Martin, I haven’t had a day’s off in forever!”

“Yeah well, that’s the problem when working as an engineer for some badass corporation – no holidays.”
As the repetitive sound of the shuffling of their feet steadily passed the corner where Casey and Kayla hid, the intruders tranquillised them, shooting tranquiliser darts in their necks. Ensuring no witnesses, Casey and Kayla dragged the unconscious bodies around the corner, stripped them of their clothes and then put on their attire. Just like chameleons, they morphed into the appearance of Baines Corp. engineers, helping them blend into their surroundings.

Appearing from the corner, Casey’s heavy footsteps stomped the ground as he and Kayla walked through the white, vacant hallway where the two engineers came from. With his watch to his mouth, he spoke to Sarah who was in the van, monitoring their actions through surveillance. “All right Sarah, where are they keeping the blueprint?”

…

“Idea Number 22: Windshield sunglasses!” Chuck continued, rambling on with his list of ‘invention-worthy ideas’. “Haven’t you ever walked around wearing sunglasses and then it started to rain, ending up ruining the rest of your day and defeating the purpose of wearing your shades?”

“Carmi-”

“Well this ingenious idea allows you to still look cool wearing sunglasses, even while it is raining. I mean, because what is cooler than shades with windshield wipers?”

…

“Okay Walker, we have reached the room,” Casey exclaimed, having found himself and Kayla standing in front of a security-locked door.

Sarah’s fingers frenetically tapped across the keyboard, hacking into the security mainframe in an attempt to open it. The red light from this password-protected door continually flashed, indicating it to be locked. After Sarah successfully hacked into the mainframe, the flashing red light abruptly turned green. “Got it,” she responded.

Casey and Kayla entered through. Baffled faces eyed the intruders, stunned by their unforeseen presence. Garbed in light-brown overalls, the busy engineers paused, facing the ‘new’ co-workers.

For a silent second, the two spies were drowned in the fear of being caught. Though, in the following second, the curious eyes and surprised faces returned to what they had been busy with. Casey and Kayla had nothing to fear. They blended in, being dressed in engineer attire after all.

“Just act normal,” he whispered to her, painting his face with a false smile.

“Casey, There is a door that you need to reach. It is at the other end of the room. The blueprint is kept in there,” Sarah informed.

They cautiously walked passed all the engineers, steadily drawing nearer to the other door. A few whistling sounds escaped the workers’ lips as their eyes took notice of Kayla’s lustrous looks.

Successful in paying no special attention to anyone in particular, they thought they could make it through without further notice, until –

“Hey big guy,” an engineer called out to Casey, “D’you mind helping me out over here? Need an extra hand and yours look free.”

With a sharp turn of his head, Casey faced the speaker. “Uh, sorry man, I can’t. Have to run a little errand,” he responded, pointing his thumb towards the direction where he and Kayla were headed.

“And you, missy,” the speaker continued, referencing Kayla, “looking a little too cute to be an engineer. How is it that I have never noticed you before?”
“Faulty eyes?” she responded brusquely. Amused by her quip, he continued to demand, “Well, you don’t mind helping me out here, d’you? If my eyes are failing then it might be useful to have your beautiful ones for assistance.” “Sorry, I know where this is going. Have a boyfriend and some place that I need to be. You’re an engineer. Manufacture a way that will help you do it yourself!” Her direct reply immediately shut his mouth.

Back in the van, Sarah bit her inner gums. With the rolling of her eyes, it was adamantly clear that Kayla rubbed her up the wrong way. She saw her as an immensely sly and manipulative person. To add, whenever she mentioned Chuck as her ‘boyfriend’, a piercing dagger shot through Sarah’s body, penetrating her heart.

The duo continued to tread nearer to the door. As she latched on to the handle, the same engineer’s voice called out, “Hey, you two, you aren’t allowed back there!” Ignoring his advice, they opened the door and entered through.

Bewilderment consumed them entirely. They had the right room, for what they sought was definitely there. They only faced one problem – the room was stacked with blueprints! Thousands filled the shelves, all numerically coded.

Their gobsomacked eyes glanced upon each other. “Which is the blueprint for Super X?”

…

“Idea Number 51: Th-”
“…I think that is enough now, Carmichael,” Terrance interrupted, finally getting a word out.
“No, wait. The best inventions are still to come. Number 51: The Vegetable-Flavoured Chocolate. Now I know that Baines Corp. is a machine-manufacturing company that only deals with technological inventions. But vegetables are healthy and chocolate is an expanding sector which may become quite profitable for this corporation. And I believe this, because well, everyone loves chocolate!” “I don’t like chocolate…”
His once grinning face now captured the surprised look of an academic who just got word that he failed an exam! His eyes bulged and his mouth morphed into a half-quirky expression, revealing his feelings of utter awkwardness.

With a gulp he continued, looking down at his list, “…Number 52…”

…

Casey and Kayla rummaged through the blueprints, trying to find one labelled ‘Super X’. “None of them have tags. They have numerical codes! How are we supposed to know which one to look for?” Kayla freaked.
The thick door which they used as their entrance into the blueprint room swiftly opened, forcing them to quickly stop what they were doing. They had to try and remove evidence of their snooping. “Hey, I told you that you guys aren-” the same, nosy engineer stopped in his sentence, taking notice of their suspicious behaviour and dead-still stance. “Oh…I see what is going on here. This is your boyfriend and that’s why you two came here…to have some fun!”
Kayla painted her face with the look of violation, “What?”
Casey grunted. “Mph, me? Her boyfriend? Trust me, she is not my type.”
Abashed, the guy looked startled. “Oh…not your type…so she’s like…your beard…?”
“Huh? No-” “Don’t mind me; I will be on my way. You two have your privacy. Don’t worry; I won’t let word get out.” With the closing of the door behind him, he left.
Still taken by surprise, they took a moment for that weird situation to sink in, and then proceeded to search.

“Sarah, get the code for the Super X blueprint!”

…

The murmur of two engineers slowly regaining consciousness alerted two guards that were passing by. They charged to where the tranquilised workers lay who were stripped of their overalls. With throbbing heads, the engineers’ cool palms cupped their foreheads in an attempt to minimise the ache. Their eyes repeated the motion of opening and closing as they slowly woke up from their drowsy state.

“What happened here?” one of the guards questioned.

The hazy workers looked down upon their bodies and with confusion, realised that their uniform had been stripped and were now wearing black clothing.

“Do you two work here?” the other guard asked.

“I think…someone…where – my clothes are gone…” one of the victims stuttered.

“What clothes?”

“My…uniform…I – whose clothes are – what am I wearing…?”

With distress, one of the guards pulled out his walkie-talkie and held it close to his mouth. His thumb pressed down on a button which released a quick, jittery beeping sound. “Security, I think we have a slight problem. An intruder is in the building.”

…

“So as you can see, Idea Number 82 is a definite winner. Diapers are uncomfortable. Why not just use Couchie Toilet!”?

Terrance’s bored eyes strayed from Chuck’s as they fell upon Mr Vaughn, witnessing him intently listening to something being spoken in his ear. His head was faced down as his finger pressed tightly against his ear. A slight nod followed and he then looked up, facing the eyes that wearily stared upon his.

“Uh, Mr Baines-” Chuck continued, taking notice of Terrance’s wander.

Mr Vaughn drew near to his close friend and whispered to him, slightly loud enough for Chuck to catch a glimpse of. “…slight problem…”

A minimal nod from Terrance then followed the whisper. “Mr Carmichael, will you excuse me for a moment?” he exclaimed as he receded from his seat.

“Try to postpone him from leaving, Chuck,” Sarah whispered to him through his earpiece. “You have to distract him from the break-in.”

Listening to her, he entreated, “No, don’t go, stay! I was just getting started.” Unfortunately, Mr Baines paid no heed to Chuck’s plea and briskly walked out of his office as Chuck’s final shout out trailed, “NUMBER 83…”

He faced forward with a disappointed expression clouding his face. “No, it’s cool. We have plenty more to get through. So I’ll just be right here…waiting…”

“Don’t worry about it, Chuck,” Sarah reassured. “Casey and Kayla are having trouble finding the blueprint. They have reached a room where the blueprints are kept but there are too many of them and they are numerically-coded. Chuck, use Terrance’s computer to hack into Baines Corp. database to find out which code is for Super X.”
He glanced behind him, making sure no one was about to witness what he was about to do. Following orders, he went to Baines side of the desk and started hacking into his PC.

“You know, I used to have quite a reputation as a hacker back in the day. There was a whole movie based on me. Well, eh, it wasn’t really an A+ film but still. They used to call me the-”

“-Piranha.”

Her correct completion of his sentence startled him, taken aback by her surprising bountiful knowledge of all-things-Chuck.

“Yeah, how did-”

“Not now, Chuck. We can talk later. Find the code.”

“Right.”

…

Voices were faintly heard from the other side of the blueprint room. “Sarah, tell Chuck to hurry. We are running out of time. They know we are here.”

“Don’t worry, he will find it, Casey,” she responded.

The duo caught a portion of what the voices from the opposing side beckoned, “Did you see anyone suspicious come thro…” The ends of their sentences trailed.

 “…Not really. Well… two that seemed ne….”

 “…Where’d…g…”

“Found it!” Chuck exclaimed. “The code is 2765,” he reported to Sarah.

“Well done Chuck.”

She informed the others. They frantically searched for the shelf that contained the numerical code ‘2765’. Footsteps from the opposing room rapidly drew near. The thumping of trudging feet magnified in sound.

“You find it?” Casey questioned.

“Uh…not ye – wait…got it!”

All of a sudden, the rhythmic noise of the monotonous footsteps altered to pattering sweeps of fast feet scraping the ground, as the people from the other side of the door started to run. They reached closer. Nearer. With a single swipe of the door, a loud boom rippled through the blueprint room as it banged against the contiguous wall.

Guards stood, their heads like chickens, turning from side to side in an attempt to find any indication of unwanted guests. “We know you are here,” one of them beckoned, raising his gun. Others repeated the same movement. The ringleader motioned his finger in different directions, ordering some guards to inspect each corner he pointed towards. He gently took steps forward, each foot following after the other. Around them lay no trace of intruders being present, until –

A portent clattering sound reverberated behind the chieftain, as a flash grenade fell to the ground from above. In a jolt, his head revolved, facing the ominous weapon. Uh oh.

Within seconds, a blinding light filled the room, dazzling the guards. Casey and Kayla who had hid in the vents above, dropped to the ground. Casey grabbed hold of the ringleader, whose hand covered his blazed eyes, and kneed him in the gut, causing sputum to be released from his widened mouth. With an elbow to the nose and a punch from below the chin, the leader fell to the floor, beaten. Kayla fought the opponent nearest to her. Already on his knees, her swiping foot made contact with his face, briskly twisting his neck to the side. Another man had only minimally been affected and had attacked her from behind, gripping his arm round her neck. She gasped for air. To prevent her lungs from suffocating, she punched him in the crotch, forcing him to free his hold of
her. She swiftly turned around to face him, and used the bottom of her high heels to pound against his rib cage, making him fall backwards to the floor in pain.

More guards were treated as such and defeated, the grenade giving the duo an upper hand. They rushed out of the room, the blueprint still in Kayla’s grasp. Engineers were left stunned as they watched the duo pass, unable to attack them knowing they would only fatally injure themselves. More guards reached them. Casey and Kayla quickly shot them with their silenced guns.

They darted to the roof and forcefully opened the door, the strong winds from outside providing a pressure barrier against them. The door expeditiously opened and they charged to the corner of the roof. A zip line hung there that led to the side of the street opposite the Baines Corporation building. There, the van anxiously awaited their return.

Without a second of hesitation, they individually slid down the zip line and reached the other end, making it safely to the van.

…

Baines absent voice suddenly made its appearance again, forcing Chuck to exit the windows that he opened on Terrance’s computer, trying to remove all evidence of his snooping. Accidentally though, one window was left open…

As the voice of Baines heightened, Chuck nimbly returned to his seat, acting as though nothing suspicious had taken place. A masculine body appeared from the door to the office and walked in. “Apologies Mr Carmichael, but we are going to have to draw this meeting to a close. Something has come up that needs my full attention,” Baines stated.

“That’s fine Chuck,” Sarah whispered to him through the earpiece. “Try to get out of there. Mission is successful.”

Now that he was certain, he began to make his departure, all at an immensely fast pace. “Oh no, there’s no problem. I’ll just leave my list of ideas with you,” Chuck replied, placing his endless list among Terrance’s desk. “Good day Baines, Vaughn. Okay, bah-bye now.”

His fast, fishy leave caused Baines’ mind to wonder. Though, it wasn’t until he faced his desk and saw a window open on his computer that his suspicion started to prominently rise. “Vaughn, could you get the security footage for my office please. I am just curious as to Carmichael’s involvement in our current predicament…”

“Will do, Terrance.”

…

“Hello honey,” Big Mike’s voice called out, having arrived home. Fearing the dreaded talk that Bologna promised him, he plastered his voice with the sweet, illuminating sound of husbandly-love.

“Big Mike, sit down,” she ordered, appearing from the kitchen. “Yes ma’am.”

“Why Michael?” She questioned, having immediately delved into what was bothering her. “Why did you invite him?”

“I – I – Jeffster would have performed here if I didn’t. And I didn’t want them to ruin our lovely dinner!”

“So you’d rather have Rick ruin it instead?”
“No…”
“Michael, I would choose Jeffster over Rick any day.” He lowered his forlorn, bald head, feeling ashamed and treated like a little child that was being scolded.
“Yeah baby, I know. I just wasn’t thinking.”
“He hurt me. He hurt my little meho. When he left, life was extremely hard. Do you know how difficult it is to raise a child on your own?”
“I understand…”
“We got through it. Life got good and then he returned.”
“I know, babe…”
“I don’t want to go through that again!”
“But he is in our lives now. We can’t change that, Bologna.”
Her hurt filled eyes suddenly sparkled with the prospect of a new idea. “Well,” she smirked, “not if you have his job…”

…

A ‘click’ sound was heard as Chuck turned the key that he lodged in the lock of his apartment’s door. He unlocked it and pulled down on the handle, causing it to open. “Ah, home sweet home,” he sighed with relief.

He walked inside, dragging his luggage with from behind him. Like bees, its wheels created a ‘zzz’ sound as it was hauled across the floor.

With widened eyes, he stood in astonishment as he noticed Ellie and Devon’s travelling bags stacked in his living room.

“Ellie?” he called out, releasing his hold of his luggage. His eyebrows furrowed, revealing his adamant confusion.

Passing each room in his apartment, he sought for his sister, niece and brother-in-law, but none seemed to be present.

“Ellie? Devon?” No reply. Determined to figure out this strange predicament, he extracted his phone from his pocket and called his sister. It rang…and rang, causing anxiety to violently sprout from within him. Why didn’t she answer?

Relaxation began to set in the moment he heard a calming voice respond.

“Hello? Chuck?”
“Ellie? Ellie, oh you have no idea how great it is to hear your voice.”
“Chuck? Is everything okay?” she fretted.
“Yeah no, everything is dandy. Did you guys move back to Burbank, because your luggage is-”
“Oh, yeah we flew down for a couple of days. Morgan told me that you were in London on a mission so he insisted that we house-sit your apartment for you while you are gone. Are you back?”
“Yeah, yeah, just arrived home. Where are you?”
“Out with Devon. Clara is with Morgan if you want to see her. We didn’t know that you were returning tonight, but now that you are back we will cut the date short.” Before returning to her conversation with Chuck, she spoke to her husband, informing him of her quick decision. “I really missed my little brother,” she continued.

“Ellie, I can’t wait to speak to you in person. There is so much that I want to tell you. So much that I want to discuss. You always know how to make me feel better and I really missed that.”
“Chuck, I know. There is a lot that we need to talk about. We will be by your apartment shortly. Tonight, we will talk. Just talk. About everything.”
He started to smile and repeatedly sigh with sweet relief. “Oh-h, Ellie, I am so glad to hear you say that.”

“Just you and me.”

“Well I did plan a date with Kayla tonight. Oh yes, Kayla – I need to tell you about her. You don’t know. Maybe tonight you can meet her?”

“Uh…that sounds…we will see. But we need to talk, Chuck.”

“I know, Ellie. And I desperately want to. We will. Things have been so confusing lately.”

“I know. See you in a bit.”

“Love you.”

…

Expended by the cold air, Casey and Sarah were seated round the table in front of the monitor in Castle. He was working on a few papers and finishing up some reports before he drew the night to a close and clocked out. Sarah wasn’t sure what to do with herself. She wanted to talk to Chuck, but knew he would be having a date with Kayla tonight. Although she ached to disrupt their ‘date’, she didn’t want to do that to him and further confuse him.

“How are things between you and Verbanski?” she asked. “You don’t seem to talk about it much.”

“Things are good.”

“Casey, elaborate. Are things serious between you two?”

“It’s been serious.”

“Has Alex met her yet?”

“No, not yet.”

“Oh. Howcome?”

“Don’t know.”

“I see…”

His quick replies informed her that he wasn’t in the mood for a discussion. Though, sensing her need to converse and bond forced him to attempt, even slightly, to talk about this topic. He was never one to open up about his relationships but he knew that he could divulge a little without feeling uncomfortable.

“…Until recently, Verbanski and I were out of Burbank. And now that we have returned, haven’t really had a break to introduce them to the other…”

Sarah raised her head to his and smiled, pleased in his promising response. However, there was more to his brief justification; and he was anxious to continue, “…Not sure if I want them to meet though…”

Her smiling, blue eyes looked to his. “Alex is your daughter and Verbanski is your girlfriend. They are going to want to meet each other, Casey.”

“Yeah but – …ah, forget it, Walker.”

“Okay Casey, dropping the topic. But you can’t hide them from the other forever.”

“Alex…she could…well, may not like Verbanski,” he trembled, reaching a deeper level in the conversation.

“Casey, all Alex will be thinking about is your happiness. And if Verbanski makes you happy then Alex will be too.”

He released a grunt of agreement, lowering his head again in his work.

“You should take some of that advice, Walker.”

A weary and confused expression enveloped her face. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Just saying that if Chuck is happy, you should be happy for him.”

Her head tilted back in discomfort and disillusion. “You think Chuck is happy…?”

“Mph, I don’t know what Chuck wants.”
Her eyes dropped, feeling overwhelmed by Casey’s plundering suggestion. “Look, Walker, no one is fond of Kayla. She fails in comparison to you. You know that you are the best partner I had and probably will ever have. I think it is also clear that Chuck will never get over you. You heard him storm into the hotel room, talking about flashbacks and what not. All I am saying is that you shouldn’t try and come between Chuck and her just for your own gain. Make sure it is for his benefit too.”

Unimpressed, she turned her head away, gnawing her inner gums. Releasing an irritated huff, she blurted, “I just don’t trust her, Casey!”

In a momentary flash, a bright light abruptly shone upon their faces as Beckman appeared on the monitor. “I know I only told you all to return once the mission had been completed and the blueprint was in CIA custody. So why are you back?” she spoke.

Casey and Sarah shared a puzzled glance. “Because, General…the mission is completed,” Sarah responded. “If that was true then where is the blueprint?” “It was in Kayla’s possession. She was supposed to have handed it in to the CIA personally,” Casey informed. “Well, the CIA hasn’t received it.” “What?” they simultaneously exclaimed. “Phone Chuck,” he directed Sarah, “Isn’t he meant to be on a date with her tonight? Find out what is going on.” “Okay, hold on.” She extracted her phone and dialled his number.

A welcoming voice answered her call. “Hello.” “Hello, Chuck? Sorry if I am interrupting…” “Sarah? No, of course not. Never. You can call anytime. I was just on the phone to Ellie…she’s my sister.” “I know who Ellie is, Chuck.” “Oh, right…you do?” “Are you with Kayla, perhaps?” “Well, supposed to be. But she currently isn’t here.” “Oh. Do you know where she might be?” “Actually no. And I am not too sure why she is late-”

A thumping knock on his front door interrupted his sentence. “Wait, hold on. Someone’s at the door. That might be her now.”

As he opened it to let the ‘visitor’ in, his eyes widened, leaving him standing stunned by the unforeseen presence. “Chuck, who is it? Is it Kayla?” she asked. Before him, stood a masked man, holding up a gun to his face. “Hang up the phone,” the man aggressively demanded. “Chuck?” “Well, that’s kind of rude. I mean, you can’t just hang up on someo-” “Hang up the phone!” “Hanging up.” Following his immediate reply, he quickly hung up on Sarah, leaving her gobsmacked.

“Chuck? Chuck?” she fretted, her face drowned in worry. “Sarah, what is it?” She turned to face her two confidants who took notice of her frightened expression. “Chuck’s in
trouble!”

Chuck’s footsteps drew back as he stumbled over his feet. His hands were held up in front of him as though he were under arrest. The masked man walked forward, his gun directly pointed between Chuck’s eyes.

“Who are you?” he asked.
“Sent by Mr Baines.”
“Mr Baines? Well if this is his way of doing business, then you can tell him he can keep my ideas. Take the credit. They weren’t that good anyw-”
“Shut up! You hacked into his PC and stole the blueprint to Super X.”
“What? That is preposterous. I would nev-”
“Saw the video.”
“Photoshop?”
“Where is the blueprint, Mr Carmichael!”?
“I… I don’t know.”
“Stop lying!”
“I don’t have it. I don’t know where it is.” The pitch of his voice began to rise as saliva kept forming in his throat, forcing him to continually gulp it down.
“If you don’t tell me I will be forced to shoot you!”
“Well you were probably going to do that anyway…” No response. “…I was hoping you would say no…”
“One last time, Carmichael; where is the blueprint?”

Luckily, a stammering noise was heard from outside. The armed man turned his face in response to the sound, giving Chuck a chance to attack. He flashed, drawing on the combat skills that were programmed in the Intersect.

With a single 360° turn of his leg, Chuck knocked the gun out of his enemy’s hand, where it landed and slid across the floor. Surprised, the masked man launched his attack on Chuck, starting with an attempted punch to the face. Chuck deflected the assault and kneeled him in the gut. As the man bent over, feeling a numbing sensation, Chuck elbowed him in the back of his neck, resulting in him falling forward. He stumbled, unable to fully catch his balance. As Chuck reached in for another punch, the man moved out of the way and grabbed hold of the Intersect’s arm, twisting it. With the back of his fist, Chuck knocked him in the face, causing him to be freed from the man’s twisted grasp. Pushed forward and with a single kick to his side, the intruder’s aching body slammed down, falling against the floor.

Feeling weakened by the repeated blows, he was just about to give up hope and surrender to the indestructible Intersect’s power. But just before accepting defeat, in the corner of his eye he saw his gun sprawled beside him.

Just before Chuck was about to assault him one last time, the masked fellow reached for his gun; turned to face his maker and smirked as he released the bittersweet words: “You’re mine.”

As the gun-wielding man pulled the trigger, a loud, ill-omened bang rippled through the apartment. Silence followed.

Blood dripped from Chuck’s cold lips and on to the floor as his hands tightly wrapped round the wound. He fell to his knees as his hazy eyes slowly started to close and blur the picture that had formed in front of him. His hand reached forward as he lost all consciousness and fell, with a single
knock to the ground. With his back facing the ceiling and his blood seeped across the floor, Chuck was drowned in Sarah’s own worst nightmare.
Chapter 12: Red Door with a White Picket Fence

Delicately, her blood-stained fingers compressed against the sunken carvings on the door frame of her dream home, outlining the coarse texture of the names engraved into it. She wasn’t entirely sure whether to feel nostalgic or ashamed. After all, the last time her heels set foot on this property, she had a gun held to Chuck’s face, and fled the scene once a bullet penetrated through his bullet proof vest. That was a memory she preferred to have forgotten.

The colour of red blemished her crystal-white t-shirt, marking her encounter with her fallen hero. Small circles of blood smirched her dark, slimming pants, and formed spherical drips on the surface of her heels.

With droopy eyelids, Chuck slowly began to gain consciousness. As though boulders rested upon his eyes, he struggled to keep them open. But eventually, the hazy picture displayed before him soon gained focus, leaving him befuddled as to where he resided. Her eyes caught hold of his silent awakening. Finally! Thank God he’s all right.

“Chuck,” she rushed towards him, “Hey. Hey, how are you feeling?” Her palm gently cased his heated forehead, checking his temperature.

Clogged saliva tickled his throat and he coughed in an attempt to clear it out. “Uh, where – where am – I?” With dazed eyes, he felt an overwhelming sense of confusion as to his current predicament. The thought of being shot hadn’t fully registered yet, let alone the thought of surviving the blow.

“Everything’s okay, Chuck. You are safe here.”

“Wh – what happened?” he murmured.

“You experienced a shot to the chest. It just missed your heart, thank God. Devon, he uh, he had to operate on you in your apartment. Taking you to the hospital seemed too risky. There might have been further threats on your life. We didn’t know who the shooter was.”

His face corrugated in anguish. “Baines…They want the blueprint.” With grinded teeth, he attempted to keep the tormenting pain of his aching body to a minimum.

Her expression was smeared in worry. “Are – are you all right? What hurts, Chuck?”

“Where’s Kayla?” The discouraging mention of her name silenced Sarah’s lips. It was as though an electrical current shot through her veins.

Of course he would ask where his girlfriend was. She despised that word: ‘girlfriend’. Surely ‘wife’ trumped that? Even ‘ex-wife’ trumps ‘girlfriend’.

“Have you check – check on her, Sarah. Baines might be after her as well-”

“Calm down, Chuck. Everything … everyone is fine.”

His tantalising cough plagued his throat once more. “My chest is sore.” His fingers latched round his upper chest, feeling an internal boom against his rib cage.

Her eyes glinted with panic and concern. She feared being useless in this situation, seeing as she wasn’t the skilled surgeon in the family. However, she wasn’t going to leave his side. And no one
objected to her being the one to look after him. “Do uh, I don’t know, do you need some water?” He shook his head. “Where’s Ellie?”
“They will be back shortly.”
Disorientation clouded him. He attempted to sit up, but Sarah advised him not to move. Devon’s orders. “Ensure as little movement as possible,” he stated.

“Uh, Chuck,” she continued, “everything is going to be all right, okay? I’m going to be looking after you.”
Even though she remained uncertain as to whether he wanted her help, she felt comforted by the knowledge that she was taking care of him. It felt like eons since they were alone in each other’s company. Not to mention, her heart continued to pump with relief. Encountering the possibility of his death frightened her more than reaching the finish line of her own life. She couldn’t comprehend the possibility of losing him. At least before there was always someone to return to. But if he passed away, it would be like removing and burning a perfectly-fitted picture from the frame of a family portrait. She’d wander aimlessly through life; like a crooked, hollow shell; empty on the inside, longing to find the correct picture to fit the frame and only finding that nothing will ever fit perfectly again.

“Please, just check…everyone – Casey, Mor-”
“Chuck, I promise you. No one else has been hurt. You need to trust me. Protecting you is my main priority.”
“Why?”
Her heart started to speedily patter. “Because you’re special, Chuck.”
“Because I have…”
“No,” she smiled. “Not because you have the Intersect.”

Approaching the metal desk before her, she placed her phone among it, proceeding to press ‘play’. “Kayla, where the hell are you?” a female voice reverberated. The crackling sound of the speaker echoed through the cell phone. “Get your manipulative ass over to Castle now! Chuck has just been shot.” Voices trailed in the background as hysteria emanated through the speakers. “I swear to God, Kayla, if you had anything to do with this, I will find you and I will ki-”
The recording stopped.

A stern, masculine voice, seated behind the desk, seemed impressed. “Hm. Dead?” he inquired.
“I would assume so, sir.”
“Well, Agent Hart, quite effective work you have achieved here. Ensuring the plan runs smoothly. You have earned my respect.”
“The blueprint, sir.”
“Yes?”
“I’m afraid they’ll be asking about its whereabouts.”
“I’ll inform General Beckman that the CIA has received it. I must say, Agent Hart, you have shown tremendous commitment. Fulring thanks you.”
“My pleasure, sir. What will you have me do next?”
“Return. Act like nothing strange has happened. Appear in the dark. We need to ensure that the bullet directed Bartowski’s way did the job.”

Sarah’s truculent heels rapidly hammered against Castle’s steel floor, creating a rhythmic clangour. “General, I want immediate authorisation to immobilise Agent Hart and hunt down this bitch!” Her fingers curled into tightened fists.
“Which I would grant had you enough substantial evidence of her involvement in Chuck’s
attempted assassination,” Beckman replied.
“She’s gone off the grid! What more evidence do you need?”
Casey sat drenched in the dense air surrounding the underground base, taking note of Sarah’s aggressive attitude to the General present on Castle’s monitor. The fumes escaping Sarah’s nostrils and the rage evident in her eyes made everyone feel slightly on edge.
“I do agree, Agent Walker, that her sudden disappearance has generated some suspicion; but Agent Hart has completed the mission. Major General Lee has informed me that the blueprint has already been handed in to the CIA.”
“What makes you so sure you can trust him any more than you can trust her? She is involved. Somehow!”
Casey interrupted, “General, any news regarding Fulring?”
She sighed. “Unfortunately, no, colonel. They are doing a very good job at keeping their existence a secret.”
“She is working with them. You cannot trust her,” Sarah announced, her frustration tarrying inside her tone.
Just like clockwork, the entrance into Castle opened as Kayla’s footsteps trailed down the stairway. Sarah’s ears adhered to Hart’s anticipated entrance and, just like a lioness about to launch her attack, she charged towards Bartowski’s girlfriend, signalling the impending threat of danger.
“Where the hell have you been?” she interrogated; her stomping heels nearing her foe’s presence.
Kayla appeared clouded with shammed bewilderment. “Whoa, what’s with the aggression, Walker? Scowling does not suit you.”
“Nice of you to finally join us, Agent Hart,” Beckman remarked with frustration. “And the next time you decide to complete a mission on your own, make sure you respond when your General attempts to make contact with you. Is this understood?”
“Yes, ma’am.”
“So why not respond to any phone calls?” Casey chirped.
“Battery died. Guys, what is with the interrogation? It’s been two days.”
“Kayla, I swear to you, if you had anything to do wit-”
“Walker, you seriously need to chill. I don’t generally respond well when someone sticks their nose in my face.”
“Get used to it.”
Releasing a sigh of boredom, she continued with her ignorant charade. “Where’s Chuck?”
Beckman knitted her brows. “Agent Hart, do you not know?”
“Know what? What’s going on? Is he all right? I left him a voicemail last night saying I won’t be able to ma-”
“Casey, hack into Chuck’s cell. Check his missed calls,” Sarah insisted.
Kayla raised an eyebrow to her enemy’s blunt command. “Uh – why?”
“Checking if your story adds up. You know. Just in case.” Her lips widened, forming a phoney smile.
An arrogant smirk soon replaced Kayla’s defensive expression, as a female voice echoed from the PC Casey used to hack into Chuck’s cell. ‘You have 2 missed calls’.
“Hey Chuck, babe, it’s Kayla. Not going to make it tonight. You know; mission stuff. But I will definitely make it up to you. See you tomorrow. Love you.”
Oh. So she had left a voicemail. She wasn’t lying.
Hearing her converse in such a conversational manner with Bartowski meddling with the tectonic plates of Sarah’s internal lithosphere, provoking an eventual earthquake.
“Now was that really necessary?” Kayla quipped.
“Isn’t it a little early in the relationship to be saying ‘I love you’?”
“It’s never too early when you know they’re your soul mate.”
That clichéd remark couldn’t help but plant an irritated smirk across Sarah’s glaring face. She snickered in annoyance. Kayla was toying with her emotions.

“You really have no clue, do you?” she retorted.

“You’d be surprised.”

Her ominous look of arrogance tickled Sarah’s instincts, repeatedly advising her not to trust this woman. Yet, there was no incriminating evidence against her. All she had was her gut instinct. And that seemed more than enough to convince her.

“So where is he? What’s happened?” she continued.

Sarah gulped. “He’s been shot. Baines…they…he wants the blueprint back.”

Kayla was smothered with apprehension. “Is he–”

“Mph. No. He’s not dead,” Casey informed; however now leaving her aware that Bartowski still continued to breathe.

“Thank God! Where is he? I have to see him.”

Sarah’s vexation increased. “What? No. There is no wa–”

“Excuse me?” Kayla’s copper hair fell over her face, sheathing the dishonest emotion that captured her eyes.

Sternly, Walker stared at her with unveiling austerity. Nonetheless, regardless of her position in Chuck’s life, she currently had no authority over Chuck’s visitors; nor control over his relationship with Agent Hart. She had no power to decide whether or not they could meet.

“We can discuss visiting hours later,” Beckman stated. “Right now, we need to resolve this issue with Baines Corporation. They won’t stop at nothing until they find what they are looking for.”

“But they think Chuck is dead.”

“They know others were involved.”

“Me…” Kayla muttered. “They will come after me next. I was with him at Baines’ Business Party.”

Sarah shook her head in disagreement. “No. They’ll be after the CIA. Fulring was conspiring with Baines Corp. before Andrew Baines double crossed them. They will assume Fulring are involved and hold the CIA responsible.”

Casey’s eyes wandered towards Kayla’s presence. “Mph. So as long as no one here is part of Fulring, then none of us have anything to really worry about…” Dramatic irony sullied his tone.

“General, I request a meet with Andrew Baines. Perhaps he has further Intel that could be invaluable,” Sarah petitioned.

“Good idea, Agent Walker. Speak with him, find out everything he knows. Whatever is going on, we need to get down to the bottom of it. We nearly lost one of ours. I don’t want to make that loss permanent. Oh and Sarah, advise Bartowski that we are all thinking of him. This incident has come as quite a shock.”

As Walker smiled with appreciation, Beckman’s face departed from Castle’s monitor.

Kayla’s eyes glared with exasperation at the blonde superspy. Why wasn’t General Beckman’s endearing statement directed her way instead of Walker’s?

An unexpected phone call blared from her pocket, and she left the room to answer it.

…

Following her footsteps, Sarah’s intrusive ears caught hold of her phone conversation. With crossed arms, her slender body leaned against a passageway wall, listening in.

Detecting her unwelcoming presence, Kayla abruptly hung up on her mystery caller. “Do you usually intrude on people’s phone conversations?” she remarked.

“No.”

“So just this once then?”

Sarah’s lips widened into a disconcerting smirk. “You just seemed extremely upset … about Chuck. I came to see how well you were coping with the news.”

“Yeah… I would be too if my boyfriend was shot and – conveniently – I wasn’t there to help him.” Hart gleamed with smug arrogance. “That would probably mean something if you actually had a boyfriend.”

Walker dug her canines into her inner gums. Bitch, bitch, bitch, bitch, bitch. With truculent feet, she slowly crept closer to her nemesis. “Listen. I’m going to be straight with you. I don’t like you; I don’t trust you and I don’t want you anywhere near Chuck. Not now, not while he is vulnerable.”

“Oh. What Sarah? Scared I’m going to shoot him? Hurt him in anyway? Dig a knife through his wound? Watch him bleed to death?” The auburn-haired spy chortled, “You seriously need to catch a wakeup call. This whole ‘jealous girlfriend’ routine has got to stop. You are not his girlfriend. I am. In fact, I have no idea what point there is to you even being here. Maybe you should find a new spy team to latch onto. That seems to be your forte anyway.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Don’t act confused, Walker, you do it all the time. You latch onto people. You’re such an insecure person it’s quite pathetic; clinging onto people in the hope of finding someone that will love you because deep down you know that no one truly does.”

“What? Who the he-”

“There’s no need to be hostile towards me, Sarah. Just because I beat you in spy school and now date the man you currently are attracted to does not mean you have to resent me to such a degree. It’s quite immature. Spies aren’t meant to be clouded with such emotion. They probably should have failed you another year. You clearly require more training.”

The capacity to which Sarah despised Hart once rivalled Hart’s capacity to despise Sarah. But now, with the ever increasing venom sprouting through Kayla’s lips, Sarah felt more anger and hatred towards this foe than ever before.

“I think it’s wise, Kayla, to understand that I am not a person you want to mess with.” She grinned with repugnant delight. “Okay listen, Agent Walker. I will be checking up on my boyfriend. And do you know why? Because he will want to see me. He’ll ask for me. And there is nothing you can do about it.” A grimacing expression overshadowed her face. “Now doesn’t that sting. The man you love doesn’t reciprocate your feelings. Aw. Have I come in the way?”

Concealing the poison from Kayla’s words of venom, Walker remained superficially nonchalant. “I think you’ll find, Kayla,” her words spit through her lips like the spitting tongue of a cobra, “that Chuck isn’t under some ‘spell’ you’ve concocted or regard as love. If he is your soul mate, then perhaps you should be asking if it’s me that’s come in your way.”

For a passing second, the scowling expression evident on both spies’ faces reflected off the others. And during that passing second, it seemed as though a physical fight would break out, leaving one female victorious, and the other defeated.

Agent Hart was the first to back down. She retreated; knocking her shoulder passed Sarah’s in a bellicose manner.

“Where do you think you are going?”

Swiftly, she turned to face her enemy, her eyes shooting daggers towards Sarah’s heart. “I do not have to answer to you!” she screeched; her volume towering over each syllable.

“You need to inform us of your whereabouts. We can’t have you going off the grid again-” Kayla’s hooves stampeded towards her. “You think you are intimidating, huh? Well, you don’t even know what I am capable of.”

“That goes both ways.”

“Chuck is not yours, miss Walker. And you better get used to not having him around.”

“Is that some threat?”

“Perhaps.” Noticing how her words sank in, her piercing coercion helped her feel more secure upon
her pedestal, feeling victorious over the threatening blonde spy. “All I am saying, Sarah, is you might want to get used to calling yourself a widow instead of Chuck’s ex-wife.”
The menacing glower shrouding Walker’s face soon lifted, being replaced with an unwavering mien of astonishment. “Since when were you aware that Chuck and I were married?”
Silence lingered.
Acknowledging her slip of the tongue, Kayla hurriedly departed. “I really don’t have time for this.”

…

“Chuck, this place is so spacious,” Morgan called out, his voice trailing from one of the other empty rooms of Sarah’s dream home. Chuck remained huddled in the same spot where he lay for two days, only able to move minimally. The delicate pillows and blankets resting against his back gently brushed against his skin, paralleling the warmth and comfort he felt with the inconvenient and incommodious position he remained stationary in.

“Yeah. I’m still not sure why everyone chose to hide me here,” he responded. The sound of Morgan’s distanced feet slowly slapping against the wooden floor continued. “Why did Sarah bring me here?” Silence responded. Grimes had ventured into the back yard, too far away to hear Chuck’s question.

Silently, Chuck extracted his wedding ring from his pants pocket. Light, shimmering through a window, reflected onto the gold colour of his ring, tinting it with a twinkling sparkle. The ring provided him with slight relief, straying away his mind from his current predicament. He also anticipated Sarah’s return to his resting place, awaiting a confrontation regarding its significance.

“My precious…” His eyes stared at the engraved, golden jewellery that he clutched between his fingers. “Bend to my will. Give me a flashback. I swears to serve the master of the Precious.” He slipped his wedding ring on once again, hoping for a similar outcome as before –

“I like it here,” she announced, holding a glass of wine in her hands. A calm, romantic atmosphere enveloped the dim room of Sarah’s dream home.

“Me too.”

“You know, I – I really want the life you imagined for us, Chuck. But if we go back to the CIA it’s just going to be missions and secrets that we have no control over.” Attempted persuasion lurked in her eyes.

“What are you saying?”

“I gave my life to the CIA for a very long time. And I chose it over my family, my friends…and that was the right thing for me to do at the time, but…I’m different now. You know, things have changed, you’ve changed me…I don’t want to go back. I want to turn down Beckman’s offer…”

His head lowered, contemplating his response. She gulped, anxious for him to oblige with her request.

Soon, a comforting smile perched upon his face. “Okay.” She grinned. “Okay. We don’t need that bonus…and,” he gasped at air, glancing at the reminiscent space they currently occupied, “we don’t need this house… because all we need is each other.”

Her legs uncurled as she walked passed him. Startled, he exclaimed her name in confusion.

“Sarah?” His eyes noticed the kitchen knife in her hand carve something into the door frame.

“Hey! Hey, hey, hey, what are you doing?”

“I’m carving our names into the frame.”

He followed her. “Honey, you know we don’t own this home.”

“I know. But we will. One day. It might not be tomorrow or the next day, and it might take us months or years of hard work, but one day…this will all be ours,” she gleamed. “And when it is I would like to always remember this moment.” She handed him the kitchen knife. “So what do you say? You still in?”
With the knife in his hand, he kissed her affectionately on the head and inscribed his name into the door frame, so that forever, no matter who would own this house in the future, the carving ‘Chuck + Sarah’ would forever be engraved in the walls and in their hearts…

“Hey, Chuck, you say something?”
He pulled out of his flashback; his head feeling the pangs from his mental journey; and slid the ring back into his pocket.
Morgan’s face made an appearance. “Whoa…that was…super weird. I could swear I just heard Sméagol’s voice calling out to me.” An amused grin captured Chuck’s face. “I can’t believe I’m going to say this… but this place is haunted. There is a ghost in this house…”

Chuck chuckled. “A ghost? Really?”
“Yeah…a Sméagol ghost…did you not hear it?” Chuck shook his head. “Oh. A non-believer. My mom warned me about your kind.”

Bartowski giggled with enjoyment. Though, the movement of his body sent sharp pains through his side. Morgan jolted towards him. “Chuck! Hey, you okay? Where’s the pain coming from? What do you need?”

“Buddy, it – it’s fine…”
“I’m going to get an icepack – No! More bandages!” He charged towards the emergency kit that Devon had left behind. Returning to Chuck, he played ‘doctor-doctor’ with his best friend.

“Morgan, has Kayla come to visit yet? I might have missed her while I was unconscious.”

Grimes hid his eyes from his patient’s gaze. “Uh, no…Chuck…but there’s something I need to tell you…”

“Oh no! She’s been shot? Worse? What’s happened? Tell me! Did Baines get her? Is she – oh my word, she is, isn’t she? She’s—”

“No, Chuck…nothing like that.” Bartowski released a sigh of relief. “Since your incident, Kayla’s gone off the grid. We think she’s gone rogue.”

“…What…?”

“Sorry man.”

“Why would she do that? Wait, do you think she is working with Baines?”

“Oh, no. We think Fulring…well, that’s what Sarah suggests.”

His eyes lamented. “Sarah…”

“Chuck, I need to ask you.”

“Yeah, buddy.”

“Do you love her?”

Rapidly, his heart began to patter.

Love Sarah?

He began to question – did he? Through all his flashbacks – or memories – it became transparently apparent that he had loved her. She was in his life. He was smart enough to determine that. But he failed to recall why he couldn’t remember her presence in his past. And if it was just like Kayla had explained – undergoing a painful experience to such a degree that your mind forces you to forget, so you won’t have to live with the burden of heart-wrenching memories – then something must have happened between them that forced his mind to remove all data regarding her existence.
However, she was here now, in his present. And regardless of the fact that he possessed a girlfriend, he still felt overwhelmed when around her; even when he failed to recall her significance in his life. Was it love that he felt? Was it confusion that beguiled him instead of the person herself? How could he possibly answer Morgan’s question honestly if he wasn’t certain.

“Because, Chuck, I don’t like her.”

What?
“I mean…I’m not trying to hurt you, man, but I never really have liked her. I just didn’t say anything before because – well, for many reasons. But if you…look, I don’t want to control your life, Chuck, but I don’t feel Kayla is right for you.”

Oh…wrong woman…

“And maybe,” Morgan continued, “in the beginning I wasn’t sure, but I am sure now. If you’re looking for the one, she’s not it…”

Chuck nodded with contemplation. “Is it because you think she’s gone rogue?”

“Well…that doesn’t necessarily paint the prettiest of pictures; but, Chuck, it’s because I think – well, I know – you don’t love her.”

He clutched the wedding ring in his pocket tightly, having the skin of his palm compress firmly against its round edges. His fingers stroked its smooth texture as he fiddled delicately with his magical accessory.

“I’m sorry I had to say this to you whilst you’re in the state that you’re in…”

Bartowski pulled his mind away from his thoughts. “No, buddy. I’m glad you did.”

Halting all conversation, the entrance into the house abruptly opened, and familiar faces appeared from the unlocked door.

“Ellie!!”

“Hey guys. Look who is finally awake,” Morgan spoke.

Ellie grinned with relief, whilst baby Clara remained held in her mother’s arms. “Hey, Chuck, glad to see you conscious. How you feeling?”

Dr Woodcomb inquired. “Well, considering that a bullet penetrated through my chest, I’d say I’m feeling fantastic!”

Devon smiled. “Glad to hear it. I just need to do some further checks, make sure your speedy recovery is a good sign.”

Concern lurked in Ellie’s eyes. “You really scared us, Chuck.”

“I know. But thanks guys. If it wasn’t for you I probably wouldn’t be here right now…alive that is.”

“Don’t you dare,” she shrieked. “Don’t you ever say that. We have all suffered a great shock. Especially you.” She shut her eyes, reliving the moment in her mind. “And I don’t ever want to go through that again. Do you understand?”

Her brother smiled. “Yes. I understand.”

“Good.”

Tears cased the brim of his hopeful, comforted eyes. He was surrounded by so much care and love in the world that it was difficult not to get emotional.

…

“Sir, we have a slight problem. Everything isn’t going according to plan.”

“Why? Is Bartowski still breathing?”

“I believe so.”

“Hm. That’s not the update I was expecting, Agent Hart.”

“Don’t worry, sir, I will resolve the issue.”

“No, Agent Hart, rather not finish the job. We need Baines Corporation to be held responsible for his death. You firing the bullet might raise some suspicion.”

“Very well, sir. But there is also something else you need to be informed of.”

“What is it now?”

“Agent Walker knows.”

“Excuse me?”

“I think. Well – she must. She knows Fulring is involved and is on her way to meet Andrew Baines
for further information. And although he is very talented at not revealing much, he may be more open when speaking to her.”
“I see.”
“Sir, there’s more. She might be on to me.”
“Are you suggesting that she is knowledgeable of your association with Fulring?”
“Yes, sir.”
He drowned his sigh in frustration. “Fine. I’ll resolve the problem. She won’t be an issue for much longer.”

…

Just like the arctic feel of the cold, steel seat she sat on, the atmosphere of the prison’s visiting room had a chilling presence. Inmates gathered, meeting loved ones – or supposed loved ones – though very few had smiles stained across their faces. All lawbreakers were decorated with a bland orange uniform, wearing labels that replaced their identity with numbers. It wasn’t the most welcoming of places for a CIA agent to visit; however a ‘friend’ had resided within these prison chambers. Andrew Baines’ swollen face appeared from the room’s entrance, being accompanied by two guards. With every shuffling step he took, the rattling sound of clanging chains reverberated through the walls. A purple gush rested round his right eye and scratches scarred his left cheek. His reddened nose – now skewed – had made an acquaintance with many a prisoners’ clenched fists.

“What happened?” Walker asked sincerely. Slowly, his aching body lowered onto his chair, feeling its cold touch shiver up his spine. The guards left his presence.

“Apparently, I’m what my fellow prisoners would call ‘The Little Drummer Boy’.” Perspiration clutched hold of his orange uniform, forming darkened, circular stains round the pits of his arms.

“Why?”

“Because with every beating they bestow upon me, they make a drumbeat to it. Yeah, they’re quite musical.” Crossing his legs, he rested his entwined fingers against his bent knee. “So needless to say, I am having an absolute blast here in prison! Everyone’s super friendly.”

She flouted his remark. “Baines, I need to talk to you.”

“Oh, is that why you are here? I thought we were just going to stare at each other. Make a competition out of it, you know? See who blinks first. The loser has to endure the rest of my prison sentence.” Her eyes lowered, escaping his riled gaze. Sighing, he continued. “Have you come to fulfil your favour?”

“I need more information.”

“Ah, of course. How silly of me to assume you would be here to check up on me. No, no, your life is far more important.” Her expression captured the look of frustration. “Have I not done enough for you? By the way, how is your little quarrel going? You win yet?”

“Uh, no. Not exactly. There are some things I still need to…prove.” Appearing more intrigued, he dropped his pessimistic attitude and leaned in, anticipating her update.

“How’s the hubby? Well, ex-hubby. Oh, I’m sorry. That’s still so confusing.”

She gnawed her inner gums. “Well your brother’s quick to pull the trigger…”

He grinned, snickering in amusement. “I heard about that. I suppose Fulring have the blueprint now?”

“That’s kind of what I wanted to talk to you about. I need to ask about your knowledge regarding Fulring members.”

“Shoot! Oh wait – my apologies. Too soon?”

Her eyes snarled in his direction. His ‘playful’ attitude wasn’t exactly comforting. “Does the name Agent Hart mean anything to you?” she continued.

“Agent Hart? Oh yes, I know Kayla Hart. She’s a lovely woman. A real double-crossing bitch, but other than that, she is an absolute delight. Why the need to know? Ooh, and why so specific? Who is she to you?”
“Her association with me is irrelevant, Baines. But I would like to know of her association with Fulring.”

He giggled. “But why?”

“That does not matter.”

“Well who says she is even affiliated with them?”

“You said you know her.”

“So?”

“Baines, does she work with Fulring or not? The answer is simple. Answer my question.”

A nostalgic smile covered his face. “There’s the snappy spy I know. Oh, Agent Walker, you have not changed one bit.”

“Clearly, neither have you.”

He grinned. “So you want to know of her Fulring motives. Well ding, ding, ding; you are correct. She is associated with that foul organisation. But she is just an agent receiving orders. Irrelevant in the whole grand scheme of things. Easily replaced.”

Sarah’s eyes wandered. Her instincts were correct. “I know Terrance ordered Chuck’s shooting, but would she have been involved in anyway?”

He chuckled. “Bloody hell, woman, you really are clueless.”

“I don’t take insults lightly, Baines,” she threatened; feeling exasperated with his bothersome behaviour.

“Oh, I am so sorry. Please don’t arrest me. I would hate for a pretty boy like me to be picked on in jail.” He then continued with his consistent chuckle.

“Okay, if I’m so clueless then how about you fill in the blanks.”

He leaned back in his seat, feeling dominant and secure in the conversation. “Hart never fired the bullet, Walker, but she was part of the plan to ensure it would happen.”

“Fulring’s plan? They wanted revenge on Chuck. For defeating their organisations?”

He nodded in agreement. “Yeah, now you’re getting it. Revenge, domination and power: Three extremely motivational motives.”

“How would the other two be achieved?”

“Well, revenge would be achieved through the murder of your hubby.”

“We have established that.”

“Domination would be achieved through taking down Baines Corporation. Shooting a CIA agent would have provided them with that opportunity. For instance, your spy team are coming after my company now, aren’t you? And power – well, that’s where the blueprint comes into play. The power of the Super X machine; to control worldwide telecommunications. Ah, bless our engineers. They really do make me proud. So smart. We truly should give them a well-deserved holiday…”

But back to the point, can you believe that this all would have been achieved right under your ignorant CIA noses if it wasn’t for me? ‘Thank you very much, Andrew Baines.’ Oh no, don’t mention it. You don’t have to reward me in return. ‘Oh nonsense. Here, how does freedom sound?’”

She released an infuriated sigh. “I knew you would bring that up!”

“You still owe me that favour…”

“Only once Chuck is safe and Fulring defeated, then freedom will be granted.”

“Wait, hold on love. Your honey-boo-boo is still alive?” She retracted. “Ooh, Terrance won’t be too pleased.”

Her teeth grinded. Her slight slip of the tongue wasn’t the smartest secret to reveal. “Will Terrance be a problem?” she uttered, adopting a browbeat tone.

“Uh, well…duh. He hasn’t got the blueprint back yet, has he? Terrance doesn’t give up that easily. My brother is kind of like the playground bully in that way. Forcing people to give him what he wants and punishing those who don’t. Clearly, his punishment failed this time because you are not in mourning. You know, I was wondering why you weren’t all dressed in black. But then I remembered. You aren’t married. Silly me, only wives wear black for a while after their husbands die.”
An ominous expression clouded her face filling her eyes with glaring dissatisfaction. “You really are a pig.”

“Ah, yes, but a handsome pig!” She grimaced in repugnance. “Look Walker, right now, you are stuck in the middle. And the only way out of the middle is by choosing a side; otherwise you are going to get caught in the cross-fire. So Agent Walker, what’ll it be? Whose side are you on? The side of the man who shot your guy, or on the side of the organisation that motivated not only his attempted assassination, but orchestrated your divorce as well? Time’s running out, darling. Tick-tock.”

…

As Sarah departed, a masculine shoulder accidently knocked against hers. “Oh, I do apologise,” he affirmed, his British accent clearly audible in his voice.

“Oh no, it’s fi-” Her jaw dropped. She recognised the black frame of his rectangular eyeglasses. The man standing before her was none other than Andrew’s brother, Terrance Baines. Anxiety charged through her like an electrical current, heightening all her senses. He passed on towards his brother, thinking nothing of the encounter. Alarmed, her head darted in Andrew’s direction. His attention caught hold of her bulged, distress-filled eyes, and acknowledged her acknowledgement. In that fleeting moment which seemed to extend for an eternity, Andrew’s tongue slowly brushed against his upper lip as his face adopted the devilish ‘Cheshire Cat’ grin. In that moment, his eyes beheld the look of absolute dominance. His fingers dangled in the air, waving her goodbye.

She was not cognisant to the fact that the Baines’ brothers still kept in contact. And she had just disclosed information to Andrew that, if discovered by Terrance, would be calamitous. If he revealed to Terrance what she revealed to him, then he would know exactly who to be after. And the most frightening revelation that accelerated Sarah’s thumping heart was that he knew Chuck was still alive. Though, not only did he know, but he also acquired the sibling responsible for hiring Chuck’s shooter. And the ‘Cheshire Cat’ grin upon his face warned Sarah that the perilous road leading to danger wasn’t that far up ahead.

Hastily, her quivering fingers dialled her partner’s number. “Casey, call Beckman. We have a problem.”

…

Unlocking the entrance through the white picket fence, Sarah’s black, peep toe heels sunk into the rich soil of the front garden. Healthy, emerald grass surrounded her feet, providing her with a smooth, soft pasture to tread upon. Clean-cut shrubs gently rested against the white walls of her dream home and evergreen bushes slithered through the gaps between the fence; merging its white shade with the colour of mother nature. A butterfly flapped its translucent amethyst wings passed the shimmering golden locks that sheltered Sarah’s face, as it settled on the woodened, coarse texture of a tree branch, illuminating timber with radiant purple. A petite sapphire bird melodically chirped to the midday sun as beams of light gently caressed Sarah’s skin, heating her body up with warmth.

Reaching the red door, her slender fingers curled round its dusty, grey handle and passed through. As she glanced up, shock shot through her, bulging her eyelids and halting the repetitive thumping of her heart.

“Chuck!”

Sprawled on the floor, his feeble body had moved from its original resting place. His hands wrapped tightly round his chest and his face convulsed in pain.

“Oh my God, Chuck.” She charged towards him with panic lurking in her eyes. “What happened? Are you okay?” Her arms frantically removed the cotton blanket wrapped round him, hoping to get
a closer look at his wound. She inspected the injury. Her cold palm pressed against his heated chest, chilling his aching body. His stitches hadn’t been torn or stretched and his bandage remained intact. The pain he was experiencing had to have been internal.

“I’m okay, I – I just,” he grinded his teeth attempting to minimise the ache, “it’s just sore to move.” She glared with concern. “Then why did you?”


His eyes began to water. The emotion he felt could be heard in the trembling quiver of his voice. “In the flashback, we – we had dinner. And you were talking about how you wanted to leave the spy world; to tell Beckman you didn’t want to be a spy anymore but rather live a new life, start a family. With me.” Her heart started to flutter. “And you marked your name into the wall, Sarah. And I marked mine. Because we vowed that one day this house will be ours to own. Where we could start a family and have our kids run around in the front garden, playing spy-spy and not pick up on the irony.” The tears that captured his eyes soon became contagious, capturing hers.

“You got all that from a flashback?” She laughed.

He stared solemnly in her direction. “Sarah, you left.”

Worry stared back at him. “What?”

“On the engraving?”

“On – on the engraving?” He nodded.

Hazily, her eyes opened, witnessing him seated before her. “Hi.”

She fidgeted in her tied up position.

“Look, I know you don’t remember me, but I thought maybe you’d remember this. Our dream home. The one you always told me that you wanted.”

“Our relationship was a cover, Bartowski. It always has been. You are just an assignment.”

“No. I was an assignment. And then you fell in love with me.” An unrelenting gaze of disbelief cloaked her face. “And I know that sounds crazy, and, and if I didn’t know any better, I’d say it’s crazy too. But the fact remains, you fell in love with me, Sarah, you did.”

She smirked. “My job is to make you think that I feel something. That’s what I do best. I lie.”

“Actually, you’re not as good a liar as you think you are.” Tears watered his eyes. “It’s true, okay?”

His heart ached for her to remember; pleading for the refresh button in her mind to be triggered so that somehow, the shroud covering the truth would be removed. “Our first kiss, not our – not our first cover kiss but our first – our first real kiss, was when we were trying to defuse a bomb and we thought we were going to die and… I closed my eyes… I felt you grab me… and kiss me. You kissed me. And then there was a lot of pretending that it didn’t happen, awkward back and forth and even dating other people. But one day – one day when I was sure… that you could never love a nerd like me… you came over… and I asked you if you loved me. And you, Sarah Walker… said yes.”

The whimper of his voice became more prominent. As he leaned closer, she retracted, fearing his approach. “And when I asked you to marry me, you didn’t even have to say yes because we both knew… we both knew we’d spend the rest of our lives together.” He lost control of his waterfall.
“So please remember this house and the red door and the white picket fence and the family that we were going to raise together and remember me...because if you remember me, then you’ll remember...that a nerdy guy like me who works at the ‘Buy More’ could make you happy.” She gulped, lacking a response to his soliloquy. “So I’m going to give you a choice. Right here, right now. It’s up to you.” He untied the rope round her wrists. “You can either take a chance on me and we can start over,” tears cascaded down his weeping eyes as he placed the Intersect shades upon a table, “or you can take these glasses that you came for and never see me again.”

Her brows creased as confusion overshadowed her emotions. His poetic tale of love seemed genuine. She got up and stood before him. “This is real? You really love me?”

“With all of my heart,” he sobbed.

She acknowledged the truth in his eyes, however stated, “I’m sorry I did my job too well,” splintering his forlorn heart. “I have a mission to finish and I need those glasses.”

She reached for them and he grabbed them away from her grasp. “No! You can’t.” Her fists collided with his face and the bottom of her heel kicked him, where his back shattered the mirror he fell against.

“Why won’t you fight back?” she exclaimed.

“I’m not going to fight you.” She continued to attack him. “I’m never going to hurt you.” She jammed her elbow into the side of his face. “Sarah, you’re my wife!”

Irate, her heel jammed into his face, forcing his body to tumble into the sharp edges of the stair’s steps, falling down the stairway. He lay on the floor, crawling away. Her domineering body sternly towered over him. As he managed to get himself up, she searched his pockets for the glasses. Once found, she reached for her gun and pointed it in his direction. She stared at him with an emotionless expression, darkening the room with an ominous mood.

“You can kill me,” he announced. “I will never hurt you.”

As her hands tightened round the gun, ready to pull the trigger, her eyes glazed over, falling upon the ‘Chuck + Sarah’ carving in the wall. In that moment, she knew.

“I wrote that...”

“Yeah...you did.”

“And then Quinn arrived...and he told you the truth.”

By now, Chuck’s face was scarred with the cascading of his tears. Sarah remained guarded. Her restless heart silently pounded.

He continued to whimper. “He fired the bullet in your direction and–”

“And you jumped in front of me and saved my life,” she interrupted. “And then I ran.” Her expression remained lugubrious.

He continued to cry. “Later that night you came to tell me how much you didn’t love me. That you just didn’t feel it.” The internal ache he experienced could be heard through the delivery of his words. Being informed by the love of your life that they no longer love you is the raspiest sting a person could ever suffer. And Chuck now had to be reminded of it. The wound was fresh. “Then you said goodbye.”

The wringing of Sarah’s hands indicated her anxiety. She fiddled with her charm bracelet. Recollecting this memory was a grieve punishment to endure. “Chuck,” her voice began to quiver, “you need to understand,” red cased her eyelids, “that I don’t feel that way...anymore.” Her bottom lip trembled. She had kept it strong until now. “But I understand if you feel – if your feelings have changed. I know, with Kayla it’s...but what happened then is just a memory. And I–”

He smiled with endearment. “I know.”

Her reddened, watery eyes looked up to him. “What?” she sniffed.

“I know you came back. I just don’t know why you left. I don’t understand how you forgot. Why I can’t remember – why I forgot. I mean, Sarah, we were married. We must have been,” he extracted his wedding ring, “because that explains this. And Casey told me, he said this is mine. And if that
is so, then you have one too. You must have one. Because you said to me, you told me that these flashbacks are memories. Of my life. Of our relationship!” Hope returned to her eyes. “And through remembering these memories today, everything fits into place. Everything makes sense. It all seems logical. flashes of memories seeped through the cracks and the more I flashed, the more I remembered. You were the spy this nerdy Intersect fell in love with; protecting me from danger before I – well, before I learnt how to be a spy. But you taught me. You were there this whole time. I just couldn’t remember you; as if you were Photoshopped out of my life! Why?” The sobbing returned. “Why would – who would—”

“Chuck.” Her heart filled with anticipation, ready for him to know, ready to tell him, “Remember Quinn. Remember the faulty Intersect glasses that Morgan uploaded?” He nodded. “Well that’s what happened to me, Chuck. Quinn took you. He took you from me. He needed you to fix the Intersect. And so I had to – I,” her voice quaked, “I had to upload the faulty Intersect so I could save you.” He felt the tears pour through, breaching his eyelids. Overcome with conflicting emotions, he felt uncertain as to what to feel. He was shot. He was married. He was loved. And that was stripped away from him. However, she had returned, with her memory intact. And the only obstacle in his way was his acclaimed ‘rogue’ girlfriend and his faulty memory. So much had been revealed to him – had occurred over a short period of time – and the bottled emotions he wasn’t used to burying now rose to the surface, erupting like a waterfall. “And so I forgot you. I forgot our five years together. I forgot everything…and I left.”

He sobbed his heart out. “But you came back,” he blubbered.

She leaned in. “Yes. Chuck. I came back.” The corners of her lips widened into an elated grin, feeling her evanescent joy rise to the surface. “Because I chose to remember. I found an Intersect that could restore my memory and returned to you.”

“But why did I forget?” he cried. “Why couldn’t I remember you?”

Her palm wrapped round the back of his neck. “Because the same thing happened to you. Fulring wanted me out of your life. Out of their way. They needed the Intersect in your brain fully functioning so they could achieve what they wanted to gain. So they made you forget me.”

“But I could never agree to—”

“It’s okay, Chuck,” her lips trembled, “it’s okay.”

A tsunami broke through his barrier, streaming down his cheeks. “I’m so sorry.” The more emotional she became, the more tears drizzled down from his eyelids. “I didn’t – I can’t believe I would ever do that to you. If I –”

She shook her head frantically. “No, Chuck. It’s okay.”

“I hurt you.”

“You remember me now, and that is all that matters.” He gazed into her heartfelt eyes, trying to absorb all revealed to him. “Chuck, I know you are confused and this is a lot to take in. And I know not everything makes complete sense. But you need to understand that the emotions you feel, they are real. And the memories you recall, they happened. And I am here, Chuck. I’m never leaving you again. And until you feel ready to…talk or…remember or…anything, I’ll be waiting.”

He smiled, absorbing the comfort. This gorgeous woman loved him? It was still so much to concede as fact.

Her heart relaxed in its pace. Finally she was freed from the tight grip of silence.

“Sarah. Why me?” Her eyebrows furrowed. “I mean, you are this beautiful woman who can have any man you desire. Why choose me?”

“You’re more special than you realise, Chuck.” Her words passed through her lips like a delicate breeze brushing against the placid petals of a tulip.

The soothing sound of her harmonious voice calmed the raging waves inside his heart. Like The Little Mermaid, love was waiting for him to acknowledge its existence. His Ariel too was muted by the wicked sea witch who spellbound her voice and prevented her from preaching the truth. And now that she had broken the spell, danger was bound to stir havoc on the mighty prince’s ship, leaving everyone in jeopardy. Nevertheless, Ariel could now sing freely and Eric’s mind remained
a little clearer, not being tainted by the magic charms of his manipulate ‘girlfriend’, Ursula. And most importantly, true love had been rekindled, and Ariel no longer felt like a fish out of water. She had found where her heart belonged.

Chuck’s hand, still cupped against his chest, slid up to meet hers. He delicately wrapped his fingers round her palm, startling her.

“Thank you,” he released. Her eyes penetrated his, staring at him with honesty, compassion and slight uncertainty. His thumb tenderly stroked her hand as his eyes fell onto her voluptuous lips. The silence that enveloped the room was soon accompanied by the fluttering beat of Sarah’s heart.

What was he thinking?

Her thumping heart was soon complemented by the pulsating of his. Nerves jolted through his veins as he leaned in. Closer. “Chuck.” He didn’t retreat. Her unwavering gaze faltered as her crystal-blue eyes lowered, falling upon his lips. His hand draped round the back of her neck. Her heart beat faster. His heart beat louder. “I’m going to kiss you,” he gulped. A silent smile slowly enwrapped her features and, appeased by her smile, an even broader grin covered his face with an enthusiastic expression. As he leaned in, she joined in and her body inclined towards his. Just as their eyes closed and just as their lips were about to finally meet, Sarah’s phone brusquely shattered the mood, thwarting their desired kiss. Both were caught off guard.

“Hello,” she answered, exasperated.

“Agent Walker, report to Castle immediately.” Beckman’s voice could be heard on the other line. “This is important.”

“Oh. Okay, I – I’ll be right there, General.” She tucked her phone away.

“What’s wrong? What did Beckman want?”

“Uh – I don’t know. But I have to go.”

“Well right now? Is it serious?” Sarah’s muddled eyes stared into the distance. “Should I go with you?”

“No, Chuck. No. You are staying right here. Where you’re safe.” She got up, ready to retreat.

“Maybe you could use my help. I could flash on–”

“No, there is no way I am risking your safety.” He frowned. “Don’t worry. Everything is fine. It’s probably just new information regarding Fulring.”

“Okay,” he simpered.

“I’ll be right back. I promise.” She smiled with delight, prompting his. “Don’t move. I’ll be back soon.” Her fingers latched hold of the door’s handle. “Stay in the house, Chuck,” she ordered. As she departed, she left him with the final words, “see you soon,” closing the red door behind her.

The entrance into Castle opened. Sarah charged through. “General, you said you needed to–” The moment she saw Kayla’s presence in Castle her blood ran cold. “What is she doing here?” she yelled. “I told you what Baines said. She is a Fulring operative!”

“And what is Fulring exactly, Agent Walker?” a stern man’s voice questioned. She turned to face the speaker. “As I recall, the only evidence you have of their existence is the word of a felon, Andrew Baines. Who, also happens to be one of the heads of the very organisation we are trying to take down.”

Bewilderment clouded her. The excessive badges pinned to this man’s military uniform informed her that he was of high importance. But she failed to name the face. “Agent Walker,” Beckman spoke from the monitor, “this is Major General Lee. You both haven’t been formally introduced yet.”

So this was Major General Lee. The mark trailing down his right eye told of his battles. He had
succumbed to bald-headedness, and the grey colouring of his eyes represented the emotionless dull nature of his relentless ways. Definitive nasolabial folds creased the skin of his face. Time kidnapped his youth and tormented it with the scourging wrinkles of age.

Sarah scowled. His attendance here in Castle definitely indicated something ill-omened was on the horizon. And the inexorable leer prominent on Kayla’s face reaffirmed this. “General, what is going on?” Sarah asked firmly.

“There is no need to be alarmed by my company,” Lee continued. “General Beckman knows as much as you do at this particular juncture.”

Sarah’s eyes directed Kayla’s way. Clearly, she knew what was about to befall.

“First of all, Agent Walker, I was not aware of your uninvited presence here with this operation. You never reported back to your General and disobeyed orders so that you could return here to Burbank. Ordinarily, an agent would be severely reprimanded for such actions; however, you are fortunate enough to be a talented spy and were the one responsible for bringing Andrew Baines into CIA custody. That links you to this mission…to a degree. Yet, your actions do come at a price and regardless of who you are and your worth to the CIA, these actions are not to be tolerated.”

She listened intently, her notable glower never diminishing. “It has also been reported to me of your emotional instability on miss-”

She frowned. “Wait, emotional instability? In what possible ma-”

“Don’t interrupt, Agent Walker. I find it extremely rude. As a spy, emotions cloud judgement. They can be the barrier preventing the team from achieving success. In this team’s case, you have proved to be emotionally unstable.” Her jaw dropped with disbelief. “Especially with regard to the living Intersect, Charles Bartowski. And clearly, your entrance into Castle and tone towards me has confirmed this.”

Her brows furrowed with incredulous shock. “This is ridiculous. I have been nothing but professional since my arrival back in Burbank.”

“Define professional.”

“General Beckman, refute his assumption. Show him that I have done nothing to jeopardise the well-being of this team.”

“Major General Lee, what Agent Walker says is true,” Beckman stated. “She has been nothing but valuable since her return.”

“I am not looking for an opinion. The facts remain. My sources have also informed me—”

“And who are your sources exactly?” she attacked, knowing full well who had provided him with such information.

“Agent Walker, lose the aggression. It’s not helping your case.” His deep, domineering voice was so blunt and unmoved, as though no emotion resided inside the walls of his heart. Bored, he sighed with ennui. “It has been reported to me that you have been conspiring with the enemy. Tell me, why exactly would you need to meet with Andrew Baines?”

“In all fairness, Major General Lee,” Beckman interjected, “I was the one who arranged the meet, in the hopes that she could extract further information from Baines that would be invaluable in helping take down their corporation.”

“And why would you possibly assume that the enemy would conspire against his own organisation and divulge the correct, necessary information to you?”

“He tends to be more open with her and has spoken freely to her before—”

“Oh? He has?” Beckman froze. “Listen, I am not here to stir up an argument. My decision has already been made. Agent Walker, you shall be reassigned effective immediately. New team, new asset. Pack your bags. You leave for Washington straight away.”

Her heart stopped beating. “What?” The sentence of her exile struck an ominous chord within her.

“Major General Lee, you don’t have to do this,” Beckman pleaded. “This isn’t necessary. A war has been ignited with Baines Corporation and we need all the help we can get.”

“You have all the help you need.”

Gobsmacked, Sarah stood firm in her position. “Then I resign. I resign from the CIA.”
Amused, he chuckled. “Don’t be ignorant, Agent Walker. As if it is ever that easy.” Gravely, her brows remained knit and her glare never faded. “Agent Hart will be your escort, just in case you try anything reckless.”

Frustrated and fumed with anger, her pounding feet stormed out the room. Kayla eagerly followed her.

“Hey, Sarah,” she called out.

A glaring face turned to meet hers and bellicosely charged towards her. “What? What do you want?” she howled.

“Looks like I won,” Kayla smirked.

Subjugated, Walker’s wallowing eyes stared into the windows of Kayla’s soul, trying to determine what type of beast resided within. “Why? Why do you even care?”

“I enjoy taking happiness away from you. It really warms my heart seeing you suffer. Thanks for that.”

“Screw you, you manipulative bitch.”

“Whoa. Calm down there, Walker. Looks like it’s a good thing you’re being reassigned. I would hate for you to be a constant threat on my life.”

Sarah sneered. “It’s no wonder you work for Fulring. You are just as evil and delusional as the organisation you work for.”

“Fulring? Does that even exist? Or is your mind going hazy again? It’s just like what Major General Lee said. The only proof you have of Fulring’s existence is the word of a felon.”

A false smile conquered Sarah’s lips, widening its corners into a phoney smirk. “You know, Kayla, you’re probably right. Maybe it is best for me to leave Burbank. I was a brilliant spy before. I really want to be that amazing again.” She began to walk off.

“Where do you think you’re going, Sarah? You know I have to escort you. Or are you trying to break orders again? Going to pack your bags, charge to Chuck and run away together? As romantic as that sounds, it’s also fantasy. Because it won’t be that simple. Right now, you’re regarded as ‘emotionally unstable’. Who knows what kind of threat you could impose on the Intersect’s life.”

“That’s not true and you know it. Everyone knows I would never hurt Chuck.”

“Do they?” Hart grinned, amused by Sarah’s plight. “An escape won’t be so easy. Not only will you have me monitoring your every move until departure, but guards are also surrounding Chuck’s resting place. Nice house, by the way. Clever thinking hiding him there. If you attempt to make contact with him in anyway, then I have strict orders to take you in to CIA custody, where you can spend some time with your dear friend, Andrew Baines.”

“Do you seriously think Casey, Chuck and General Beckman will ever be okay with this?”

“Humph. As if they have a choice.” Infuriated, Sarah grinded her teeth. “Just remember, at any given time I could be in close proximity with him. If you try to make contact with him in anyway, I’ll know. And if I am working for Fulring like you say I am, and if you do know their true motives, then you will also know that me ‘paying him a visit’ may not be in his or your best interest.”

Fumes escaped Sarah’s nostrils. She resented being pushed into the dilemma she found herself in. “You will never get away with this.”

“We already have,” she snickered. “Pack your bags, Sarah. Fly to Washington. Be assigned your new spy team. And even enjoy the rest of your life. But most importantly,” Kayla slowly treaded closer to her nemesis, feeling dominant and powerful over her, “hold the memory of today close to your heart. Because this is the day you leave your world behind.”

Muted in the spacious room where he rested, Chuck excitedly anticipated Sarah’s return. Although confusion mounted his thoughts and clogged him from reaching rational thinking, he knew one thing was certain – he and Sarah were meant to be. The sound of chirping crickets echoed through
the windows. Night seized day and replaced it with darkness, filling the sky with stars and the moon. No guards surrounded the premises. Kayla had lied. He lay alone, waiting. Repeatedly, he dialled her number, hoping to hear her voice on the other line. But as the night dragged on, no one answered.

... Her thumb brushed against the surface of her cell phone as she contemplated answering Chuck’s call. However, Kayla seated beside her would not permit it, and Sarah wasn’t sure whether she was willing to test the validity of her threats. She ignored his call one last time.

Indignantly, Sarah sat aggravated in her seat. The smooth motion of the sleek, black car she sat in attempted to calm the raging, forlorn thoughts that charged through her mind. As she fiddled with her bracelet – the one Chuck gave her all those years ago – her thoughts began to distract her from her current environment, drifting her mind down memory lane... Rapidly, she charged through the courtyard. Fear blazed through her eyes. “Chuck!” she screeched. Casey was close behind her. He inspected the scene, seeing if the perpetrator was still close by. The entrance of Chuck’s home was wide open. Blood seeped over the threshold. “Chuck!” She dashed to where he lay, with his back to the ceiling, completely unconscious. “Oh my God!” Her frantic body shook with frightful terror. She turned him over, identifying the entry wound. Her quivering hands compressed against his chest, struggling to minimise the outpouring of blood.

“Chuck, please.” Tears streamed down her cheeks. “Please wake up.” Casey reached for a cloth. She hysterically wrapped it round his wound. Her fingers were stained with the gruesome colour of violence. Blood seeped underneath her nails, between her fingers and smirched her white shirt. She held him close, clutching hold of his body for dear life. “Call Ellie – the ambulance – somebody – anybody!” she ordered. “Chuck, please. Please stay alive. Please...I came back! You’re not leaving. Please don’t leave me...”

“...sure they’ll be just as boring as your friends and family in Burbank,” Kayla spoke. Sarah’s mind had trailed off and only caught the end of her rambling. She continued to stare into the distance, watching the cars pass by. She couldn’t care less what Kayla said or thought. She just wanted to figure a way out of this predicament...

“Oh my word, Devon, I can’t. I can’t do it. Help him. Help my brother!” Her husband charged to get his emergency kit. “We need to take him to the hospital. He needs extensive medical care!”

“No, bad move,” Casey exclaimed. “We don’t know who fired the bullet. The hospital might be too risky.”

Devon’s surgeon-hands began to work on Chuck’s wound. “I don’t know how much I can help him here.” Sarah quaked. “Devon, what are you saying? Will he –?”

“No! Not on my watch.”

“Oh, Agent Walker, you know it is rude to not listen when people talk,” Kayla remarked. “Then don’t talk...”

“Will that do?”

“For now. But like I said, he needs the hospital’s equipment. It’s risky to operate on him without it.”

“Casey, we need to take him. He needs better treatment. My brother can’t die, okay! It’s my job to protect him. He can’t die.”

“Ellie, he won’t. Trust me,” Sarah affirmed, although the tremor in her voice told a different story. “If we take him to the hospital then there might be further threats on his life.”

“And if we keep him here he might not stay alive!”

“Ellie, listen. There’s an organisation called Fulring. They could be after him. If they suspect he is alive, the first place they’ll look is the hospital.”
“Babe, I promise you,” Devon stated, “I won’t let Chuck die.”

“…is all it took, really. Besides, with you out of the picture, he reverted back to thinking he was some lame nerd. It was like taking candy from a computer-geek baby…”

“Chuck. Please. You need to wake up. I’m worried.” She sat close by him, waiting for his unconscious mind to slip back into consciousness. The quiet sound of solitude relaxed her slightly. No one – who wasn’t meant to know – knew where he was. Hiding him in their dream home was the correct choice to make. “You know, it’s…funny…I spent a whole year away from you…and as lonely and lost as I felt, I never experienced anything as painful as this…maybe funny is not the right word to describe it…but the thought of you never waking up, it…terrifies me…” She fiddled with her bracelet once again. “I’ve lived a life without you before, Chuck…before I met you…and when I…forgot. And I was never happy. I never could be, because I couldn’t comprehend how much I was missing in my life. But knowing…fully aware of what I am missing and still never being able to fill in the absent pieces…I don’t think I could live with that. Though, losing you – losing you is exactly that, Chuck…losing you is losing a piece of myself. Life feels…empty…and that’s what my life was like without you…I don’t want to ever feel that way again, Chuck…So you need to wake up. If not for yourself; if not for your family and friends…wake up, Chuck…please…wake up for me…”

“Seriously, Walker, you need to stop staring into the distance and feeling sorry for yourself. Snap out of it. You’re a spy. Get over it. Spies aren’t meant to fall in love,” Kayla exclaimed, pulling Sarah away from her train of thought.

Bothered, she rolled her eyes in annoyance. “You know what Kayla, no one cares. No one gives a damn about your opinion.”

“Hah? Well guess what, Walker, I have had enough o–”

BANG.

An ominous crash echoed from Kayla’s passenger side door. Metal clashed with metal. A truck slammed into the sleek, black car, jamming into Kayla’s back. Her body went flying through the window. Glass shattered, shearing passengers’ flesh. Splinters scarred Sarah’s face. The car toppled over with a thud. A loud thwack soon followed. Sarah’s head whacked against the roof, knocking her out cold. Blood painted her blonde locks with the colour of red, as it trickled down from her hairline, cascading down the side of her face.

Footprints trailed in the distance. Glass cracked as shoes stepped upon the shattered glass that covered the tar road. With blurred vision, Sarah’s dazed eyes slowly awakened. The dead surrounded her. Her teeth had bit into her lower lip, cutting the surface. Blood drained through. A deep scratch rested just below her left eye. Her head hung. She struggled to sustain its weight. Her body managed to feel weak and heavy at the same time. Dangling before her droopy eyelids, a loose seatbelt swayed left and right, maintaining a calming motion. Startlingly, a masculine hand firmly grasped hold of the seatbelt, pushing it away from her face. His arm breached through the shattered window and heaved her passenger door open. Her mind failed to fully register the presence of another, though the black, rectangular eyeglasses shielding his eyes drew her attention. He extended his hand for her to take. A British accent harmoniously escaped his lips. “Come with me.”

…

The atmosphere of Castle was drenched in anxiety. Worry covered the facial expressions of the three characters who resided there.

“Mph. This sounds fishy to me,” Casey grunted, wrapping his fingers round his fist.

“This has Fulring written all over it,” Morgan remarked emotively.

Beckman nodded in agreement. “Sarah had informed us of her meeting with Andrew Baines. Kayla
is definitely involved. She cannot be trusted.”
“Yeah, you know, I never liked her. She always seemed a little suspicious to me.”
An unveiling scowl glared through Casey’s eyes. “I think it is clear that she is a Fulring operative
but we haven’t addressed the possibility of Major General Lee being one too.”
“He must be,” Morgan chimed. “He went out of his way to purposefully reassign Sarah. Any
ordinary General – Major General, sorry; not really up to date with the logistics – but any Major
General wouldn’t care less about Sarah’s involvement with Chuck. They’d focus on the mission at
hand and realise we need all the manpower – well, in this case, womanpower – that we can get.”
“What do you suppose we do, General?” Casey asked.
She shook her head, disillusioned. “To tell you the truth, I have no clue. From now on, we have to
tread very lightly. Major General Lee is an extremely powerful man.”
“And scary, let me tell you. When Chuck first uploaded the Intersect, he approached me and
threatened to end all our lives if I ever reminded Chuck about Sarah. Even Alex, who has nothing
to do with–”
“What?” Casey scowled. “If he comes near her–”
“No, he wouldn’t. He is a very big fan of your work.”
Growling, he felt his protective-paternal instincts take over.
“Men, focus!” Beckman announced. “We need a plan. Not only are we up against a powerful
Corporation, but against our very own as well. Not to mention, we are two men down.”
“Right, sorry, General. What do you suppose we do? And how do we get Sarah back?”
Silence accompanied the dampening anxiety that drowned the atmosphere of Castle. Beckman
hadn’t the answers. She was just as clueless with regard to their next plan of action as they were.

Unexpectedly, a brief clang resounded through the chamber. “Guys, what was that?” Grimes
asked. As their eyes darted round the room, searching for the origin of the sound, more extensive
noise followed as a portion of an air duct fell to the floor, caging two bodies inside. Jeff and Lester
escaped through. Lester brushed off the dirt that clung to his ‘rock star’ outfit.
With bulged eyelids, Beckman grinded her teeth in shock. “What in heaven’s name are you two
doing here?”
Lester smiled at his company. “Hi guys. We came through the air pipe thingies.”
“–Air ducts.”
“Air duct…thingies,” he pointed.
“Yes! But why?”
“Oh. That’s simple. We have come to be spies.”
“Lester wants us to join your spy team,” Jeff added.
“Excuse me, I’ll have you know, you are in the presence of royalty!” Lester nodded frenetically.
“Okay, maybe not royalty. But we have met the queen, and that counts for something.”
Morgan’s jaw dropped in astonishment. “You two…met the queen?”
“He means the Queen of Holland…” Jeff remarked. “He bumped into her…at a funeral she
attended…which he crashed…to meet the queen of England…but found her instead… He got
confused.”
“How did you two get in here?” Beckman questioned, directing them all back to the matter at hand.
“Uh…who are you?” Lester asked, perplexed. Fumes escaped through her nostrils.
“We already knew one of the entrances from before, the one in Sub More’s lounge room,” Jeff
informed. “But that was locked. So we tried the air ducts.”
Lester grinned. “Make us.”
A smirk took hold of Casey’s face. He cracked his knuckles and the muscles in his neck, ready to
take on Lester’s offer. The Hin-jew acknowledged this. Fearful, he retreated. “I – I take that back.”
The domineering spy neared him. “Please! No! The world needs my beautiful voice–”
“Wait!” Beckman ordered. Casey stopped in his tracks. “Aren’t they a famous German band now?”
“Yes!” Lester shrieked.
Morgan frowned. “Well I think ‘famous’ is a slight exaggeration…”
“Why…?” the robust colonel asked.
She smiled. “This might sound crazy, but I have an idea.”
Humidity hung in the air. The shadowed night and howling trees tantalised Chuck’s skin with its chilling breeze. Clutching desperation in his eyes, he cowered under Montgomery’s authoritative stare, though intoxicated as Roan’s physical state appeared to be, emotionally he remained level-headed. “Roan Montgomery is not the man you see before you,” he claimed, turning his back to his comrade. “My life may be boring and cowardly, but I’m alive. That’s more than most in my line of work can claim.”

Bartowski didn’t hesitate, “But you’re a legend, Roan. Don’t you understand that? So how can you just sit there and watch them die?”

“Because I’m not in love with one of the agents.”

Bartowski’s mouth gaped. “I’m not...” he swallowed. Roan’s eyes stared knowingly at the scrawny boy who stood before him. “I care about them – about both of them. Besides, we heard what she said, okay? To her I am just an asset.” His heart solemnly dug its grave.

Montgomery smiled. “No. You’re not.” Hope briefly dangled in Chuck’s eyes. “Trust me. The lady doth protest too much.” His heavy body tumbled with drunken haze as he steadily approached the Intersect. “But Charles, you have to ask yourself.” Bartowski listened with intensity, his eyes drawn to the world-renowned spy, his ears adhering to Roan’s acclaimed words of wisdom, his mind beckoning for the answer – or even the question – to all of Chuck’s plundering problems, “Is she worth dying for?”

…


Awakened by the morning light, Chuck yawned as he grubbed away the eye-crust the Sandman left for him over night. His arm reached out, searching blindly for his cell phone. A black screen stared blankly at him.

She hasn’t called.

He slid it across the floor where it adopted its prior position.

Why hasn’t she called?

He swiftly reached out for his phone again.

Check call log. No missed calls.

He slid his phone across the floor again.

But why hasn’t she called?

Desperation clutched hold of him and he swiftly reached out for his phone again.

Still black. Still no new message. Still no new missed call since a second ago.

He sighed relentlessly. Tears pushed through his eyelids and he shut his eyes immediately, clenching his phone tightly in his fist.

“Buddy, she’s not going to call.”

His head rotated to the speaker who had appeared from the kitchen. Leaning delicately against the door frame, Morgan’s keys clanked as he dangled them in his hand. A solemn look shrouded his face.

Chuck’s eyes bulged, glazed with fear. He gulped. “What happened?”


…

The dry texture of printed words smudged against the grazed grain of his skin. Headlines reflected off the tinted glass that sheltered his eyes, and as he lifted the delicate page up, reading the sentences that formed below, the paper curled over his fingers, like a feeble baby wrapping its youthful palm round its father’s thumb.
“She is waiting for you, sir.” His associate and most loyal friend’s face peeped through the narrowly opened door.
His eyes lifted, still hidden behind his spectacles. “This list that Charles Carmichael left behind, have you had a chance to glance at it?”
His friend tittered. “Why, when he wasted so much of our time elaborating on each invention during his interview?”
“Do have a look at it, old friend. I am interested in its potential.”
The associate dunked his head with a diminutive nod. “She is anxious, sir.”
His attentiveness fell back to the lengthy page clutched in the palm of his hands. “I am aware.”

A tall, slender female superseded the space his comrade occupied before and he lifted his eyes to her in acknowledgement. “Male bikinis?”
She stilted her movement. “Excuse me?” Her voice was raspy. Her throat was coarse.
Ignoring her befuddled reply, he gestured for her to enter. As her bare feet, scarred by the wounds of an accident, treaded through the threshold of his gloomy office, he sipped a portion of his black coffee, briefly sharing eye-contact with her eye’s guarded glare before sliding his mug back onto his desk. “You are affiliated with Carmichael, correct?” A gust of British eloquence breezed through his teeth. He licked the brim of his upper lip, removing the layer of aquatic coffee that moistened it.
“I am not aware of what Andrew has told you, but my personal relationship with Chuck has nothing to do with you.”
She coughed. He grinned. “I am not talking about your romantic entanglement with the illustrious Intersect, Walker. You were involved in the scandalous break-in of my corporation, were you not? I would hate to be mistaken.” She kept her lips bolted. “Agent Walker, do elaborate won’t you? Silence is rather a bore.”
“I don’t quite know what you are hoping to gain from kidnapping m–”
“–rescuing you seems the more appropriate verb.” Tickled, he clutched his mug once again before leaning back comfortably in his leather chair. “Tell me, was it Carmichael who devised these Invention-worthy Ideas?”
Her brows knit. “Why?”
“Rather ingenious ex of yours.”
“Well firstly,” she remarked, staring him down with amused degradation, “not an ex. And only someone with a few too many screws loose would regard the obviously risible inventions Chuck devised to be – as you say – ‘Invention-worthy’. ”
“Harsh.” He dropped the papers onto his desk, their corners descending into the spaces between his keyboard.
“I see you have cut the list down a bit.”
“Some lacked potential.” He sneered, dashing forward in his seat. “Did you sleep?”
She flouted his query. “What exactly has Andrew tol–”
“Did you sleep?”
“I don’t appreciate you toying wi–”
“Walker, it is quite a simple question. The answer is simple too, let us see if you can find it. Now did you sleep?”
She snarled. “Like a baby.”
“I did not ask how it was I simply asked if you had slept. Did you eat?”
“I don’t see the point in all these irrelevant questions.”
“No irrelevant. Did you eat?”
“I’m not willing to try your poison, if that’s what you are offering.”
“No, of course not, our poison tastes horrible.” She stared with disconcerted caution. He playfully stared back. Silence lingered.
His gaze soon fell upon his PC monitor. Seemingly losing all interest in his new guest, he focussed his attention towards work and immediately tinkered with his keyboard. “Ask Mr Vaughn to put
something together for you.” Begrudgingly, she began to retreat. “And get yourself cleaned up, will you? You look like a grubby prostitute.”

She dipped her icy toes into the boiling water, watching the steam rise from the tub. The liquid sizzled against her grated heels, and she grit her teeth, masking her internal pain with the face of an inexorable warrior. Frailty evinced a variant face to the Sarah Walker the world had held on display. Her corroded muscles clanked as her rusted arms weighed her ponderous body into the half-empty tub. She slipped. Her back slid against the floor of the bath, dunking her cumbersome head below the water’s surface. Water flooded her nostrils and, with depleted strength, she pushed her weight aloft, gasping for air. A raspy tickle seized her throat and soon a booming cough escaped through. The room was mute, except for the occasional splash of her hands making contact with the water.

She pressed her finger delicately against the mushy bruise that rested below her eye, her whole face feeling tender and fragile to the touch. She could hear the shrill ringing sound of deafening silence stun her right ear. Slowly descending down her cheek, her finger fell upon her fissured lower lip where a deep cut had rested. The tang of blood still tantalised the taste buds of her tongue, as though it malignly tormented her with the memory of her accident.

Clasping her arms round her bent knees, she dropped her gaze, allowing her grave eyes to inspect the murky water her lower body remained submerged under. Her mind too felt submerged. The weight of her relentless and unmerciful life smothered her in its suffocating cushion, and, with a single tear sinking into the water below, she demolished her emotional blockade and silently wept as it crumbled.

Pompous as he was, he entered with a stride, knowing that from work he could no longer hide. Though his eyes danced around and inspected the scene – Where are my handymen? The store was looking lean. With a strong stomp to the ground, Rick clenched his fists. Vacant again, his employees were amiss. He bellowed out, “Hey now, you losers get to work!” But silence spoke too loud. No one would answer this jerk.

As he entered further into the store, a tiny rumble burst into a roar. With haste, he charged vehemently towards the booming sound, and by the cage, found his employees gathered round. As though a tournament would occur, the crowd booed and cheered. Using their words to whir and slur, at Rick their eyes all leered. “Nice of you to finally join us,” Big Mike said with a smile. “But you are not one of us, so it is time to walk a mile. I cannot take any more of your manipulation and deceit. You are a bad man, so through a battle, it is you I shall defeat.”

Muddled by his statement, he replied with a grunt. “What do you hope to gain, Mike, from pulling this stunt?”

A distorted guitar soon thundered in his ear, and a chair swirled round, revealing to him Lester. Right beside him the rock star, Jeff was in sight, both ready to take down the mighty Rick Grimes. “He has challenged you to a duel,” the Hin-Jew did repeat. “Lose and you’ll resign your rule. Now will you fight or retreat?”

Rick gnawed his inner gums, feeling vex sprout within. “And what do I stand to gain if I am to win?”

Lester chuckled and snorted, “You won’t go unrewarded, but it is unlikely you will win. Big Mike’s determined you won’t beat him!”

“If I win, he packs his bags and must leave.”

“The store?”

“And also Bologna,” Rick grieved.

“You cannot have my wife,” Big Mike cried. “The bet’s unjust and the price too high.”

“So then how about we make things fair,” Jeff announced. “The winner will get to stay. The loser has to bounce.”

Both glared at the other, standing firm in their stance. A lot was at stake and they only had one chance.
“What might be the duel?” Rick inquired, his fists tightly clenched. “Nothing too cruel,” Lester replied. “You fight to the death.” Silence accompanied his outburst so insane, that only the sound of chirping birds did remain. Mike soon relieved the awkward air they all felt, “It is time to hand out the cards you have dealt. If you are so determined to stay, you’ll have to fight Buy Moria’s way! I understand that the way we do things here are a little bit insane. But you’re an imposter, and in Buy Moria no imposter shall reign. Spin the Wheel of Misfortune and it’ll come to a halt. That will be challenge one. So are you game or will you bolt?” As if Angel Eyes had Rick possessed, he snickered with delight. “Your challenge I accept. It’s time to leave, you fat parasite.”

“Mr Vaughn, do check up on our guest. She is clearly running late to dinner. Perhaps she has slipped in the tub and drowned herself.” Baines’ assistant nodded and left the room. “Though won’t be quite a tragedy if she has,” he murmured. The clock kept ticking. Walker’s persistence with resistance to attendance drew on. Vaughn returned, peeking his ostrich head through the opened doorway. “She says she wants to rest, sir.”

“She has rested long enough.”

“She insists she is still tired.”

He sighed. “I have very little patience, Vaughn.”

“She is probably still bruise–”

“I would not care if she had third degree burns, she is merely a guest.”

“Yes, sir.”

“All I ask for is a little respect. You understand, old friend?” He reciprocated with a nod. Terrance sighed and announced in a whisper, “If it was not for me, she would not even be alive,” forgetting it was his truck that played devil’s advocate with her life. “Tell her I refuse to wait any longer.” Impatiently, he stabbed his meal with a fork, digesting the food on his plate. Vaughn left the room again.

He returned shortly, lacking a blonde female by his side. “Ahem.” Baines’ eyes peered up, determinedly stern and unamused. Swiftly, he leaned back in his seat, wiped away the food that bearded his face and threw his serviette onto the table. “Your food is getting cold, Miss Walker,” he bellowed, holding austerity on the tip of his tongue. “Whilst I admire your courage, I titter at your stupidity. This is not a game.” Silence. “I repeat. This is not a game. It did not take long before I knew of the missing blueprint and found your beloved thief of a man and it will not take long before I force you to sit down and share dinner with me. Now my patience has officially run dry. My well of generosity is empty. Sit and eat. Options are not optional.”

Silence – the conductor to the prolonged nauseating sound of the ticking clock.

“Miss Walker!” He roared. The floorboards creaked. Her footsteps were close. She swiftly burst the door open, allowing it to hammer against the adjacent wall before briefly recoiling. “I’m not hungry.” She folded her arms with the attitude of an insolent teenager.

He smiled. “Ah, nice of you to finally join us. As I pointed out earlier, your food is getting cold.” She gritted her teeth, synthetically smiling. “And as I pointed out earlier, I am not hungry.” Amused, he lifted his brows, “Well what about the starving kids in Africa then?” Walker frowned. “They are always hungry.” Sarcasm dripped from his tongue.

“Then feed them,” she retorted, still glinting her eyes with loathe.

“I do.” He smiled, feeling thrill in her agitation. “Eat up. Do it for the kids in Africa, will you? They would not waste food.”

“No.”

“Now.”
“Make me,” she snarled.
“Oh I will.”
“I am not your slave here, Terrance.”
Laughter chortled through his lips. “Well that would be like calling Mr Vaughn my butler.”
Annoyed, her glaring eyes continued to burn into his. He soon concluded with his feelings of hilarity – picking up his knife and fork and ploughing into his food – and forced his focus to come hurdling back. “Sit down, Walker. I am no longer amused.”
“No.”
“No.”
“Make me.”
“I am no longer amused!” he yelled, his cutlery clanging against the wooden dinner table.
“I never asked you to feed me, Terrance,” she exclaimed, her anger reaching the brim. He failed to respond, though also failed to diminish his psychotic, enraged mien. “I never asked you to run a bath for me.” She swallowed.
“Gratitu–”
“And I never asked you to ‘save’ me!”
He dropped his cutlery, allowing it to clatter. His gaze lowered and he bit his inner gums, tapping his finger frenetically against the dinner table. “Have a seat, Walke–”
“And you expect gratitude?” Her heart beat faster. “Fuck gratitude! You ordered a bullet to spear through Chuck’s chest and almost killed him. And you want me to share dinner with you?”
Frustration rumbled within him, though he attempted to contain it. “What is it you want, Terrance? Spill.”
His face started to twitch. “Vaughn, do take my plate away. I believe I have lost my appetite.”
“So screw the starving kids in Africa then?”
He flung his napkin onto the table. “Fine. Don’t eat. But I have called you here to discuss why you are here so if you are so desperate for an answer I suggest you take a seat,” he grinded his teeth like they were coffee beans, “Miss Walker.”
Their raging eyes locked onto one another, holding each other’s eyes hostage. Infuriated, she panted profusely, puffing air through her nostrils, however – with resistance – finally gave into his persistent demands, taking a seat across from where he sat. “What?” she gritted.
Slowly, a cheeky smirk started to emerge across his face. “Apologies Vaughn, but do you mind also informing our other guest that dinner is ready?” He returned his stare to the blonde spy.
“Seeing as Walker refuses to accept my hospitality, they can have her meal. You know, since she apparently is on a much needed diet.” Sarah failed to respond to his witticism.

The door behind Terrance Baines started to creak, its handle gradually turning. Bare feet – grated and stained with dried up blood – were the first to enter through, following which was long chestnut-hair. The newcomer stumbled, their body too weak to sustain its weight. Scars disfigured the sculptured face of the once brazen woman, and as she lifted her scab-ridden countenance to the blonde spy before her, Walker’s eyes bulged with foreboding trepidation.
Terrance leered. “Have a seat, Agent Hart. We three have a lot to discuss.”

Pattering to the beat of a disheartened drum, Chuck’s heart quietly symphonised with the melody of The Little Drummer Boy.
“I am so sorry, Chuck,” Beckman sympathised. His jaw hung low. Didn’t wobble to and fro. He couldn’t tie it in a knot. He couldn’t tie it in a bow. “I know Kayla was your girlfriend.”
Lights ignited in his mind, awakening his concentration. “Wh – what?”
“Well, she is clearly respons–”
“Kayla? No. Sarah – where is Sarah? It is her I am worried about.”
Pa rum pum pum pum.
“We will find her, Chuck,” Casey interjected, “don’t you worry. Fulring cannot hide her forever.”
Beckman’s perplexity smeared her face with puzzlement. “Wait – Chuck, what is going on? Are
you and Kayla no longer an item?"

“Well… no. We have not officially broken up yet. I mean, I haven’t really had the chance to talk to her. You know… she has clearly been quite busy. Destroying the world and all. I wouldn’t want to interfere in all of that. She’s quite personal about her work.” Now Beckman’s jaw hung slightly low. Casey grunted. “Plus I haven’t got around to changing my Facebook status yet. And everyone knows nothing is official unless it is Facebook official! Right buddy?”

“That’s right, Chuck,” Morgan announced, tiptoeing with caution from the kitchen of Bartowski’s resting home, carrying Chuck’s beverage in his hands. “Green tea, my friend. Drink up. It is really good for you.” Gripping his fingers delicately round the heated mug, Chuck’s lips slurped the herbal mixture into his mouth, grimacing with repugnance to the taste. He coughed. “Ergh. That’s horrible.”

“Drink it!” Grimes ordered.

“All we know is that a truck smashed into the vehicle, killing both the front seat passenger and driver, and resulting in the disappearance of both Agent Hart and Walker,” Beckman explained. “Since Major General Lee was so determined to remove the obstacle that is Sarah Walker from Burbank, we have no other choice but to believe it was Fulring who captured her.”

Grimes fluffed his fingers through his spiked hair. “The real question is what do they plan to do with her?”

“Or what have they already done.”

Chuck darted his head in Casey’s direction. “Guys, listen to yourselves. This is Sarah we are talking about. She is invincible, okay? She can get herself out of any situation. I believe in her. She will be all right. She has to.”

Beckman was once again puddled with baffled confusion, her face expressing senility. “Would someone please explain to me what is going on? What happened between you and Sarah, Chuck?”

“Uh –” He unsteadily placed his mug upon the floor. “I just …”

“His memory is coming back,” Casey informed.

“How is that possible?”

“Love,” Morgan interjected. “Love makes anything possible. Love lifts us up where we belong. Where eagles fly. On a mountain high … you know that kind of stuff. Because Sarah is his lady, and he is her man. Whenever he reaches for her, she does all that she can.” Blank faces stared back at him. “They found love in a hopeless place. So this is that fresh, that fresh feeling. All he wants is to know what love is! He wants her to show him. He wants to feel what love is. He knows she can show him. I mean, no one’s ever gonna love him more than she do. And he can’t live if living is without her! He can’t give! He can’t give anymore! I mean, can you feel the love tonight? Near. Far. Wherever they are. Their hearts will go on. Rivers and roads, y’all. Rivers and roads, rivers till she reaches him.” Birds chirped in the background. “To him, her milkshake brings all the boys to the yar–”

“We get it, Morgan,” Casey snapped.

Beckman sighed. “Well, Chuck. All I have to say to that is,” he held his breath, fearing disapproval would smear her cracked lips, “It is about time. Thank God you both found each other again. You had us worried for a bit.”

“Thank you, Beckman. Some things are still a little fuzzy, but Morgan has helped fill out the blanks.”

She smiled tenderly. “Now back to the matter at hand. Our plan to take down Fulring will commence this evening. Casey, call Jeffster, tell them to start getting ready. Whatever they are doing right now is not as important as this.” Casey agreed. “Chuck, you will need to remain as safe as possible tonight. We will not be able to come to your rescue since we have disconnected any signal from the Concertina. No one will be able to make or take any calls or texts. So perhaps you should ask Ellie and Devon to watch over you tonight.”

“If – if I may ask, why disconnect the signal?”

“Well we wouldn’t want Fulring operatives contacting Major General Lee or each other, warning
them. If one suspects something, our plan may fall through the cracks.”
“So that means stay safe, Chuck. Don’t do something foolish. Stay in the house,” Casey ordered.
Bartowski saluted, his movements slightly less restrained now by his stitches. “Got it. It is like stay
in the car, only it’s a house. Not a car. Bummer there is no mixed CD to listen to!”
“I am being serious, Chuck.”
The Intersect smiled disconcertedly. “Just bring her back safe, okay?”
“We will, Chuck. I promise.”

Tick-Tock.
The lion, hyena and leopard remained seated round the dinner table. Mistrust clung to the leopard’s
heart like a bullet proof vest and the cackling of the hyena overshadowed the snarl of the large,
patterned cat. But the lion remained calm, king of the jungle that was his dining room. His eyes
lacked patience, screaming danger, which diminished the threatening view of the other two
predators.
Hunger seized the hyena’s stomach, growling like a baby to be fed. Her fangs gobbled up the food
on her plate, and before anyone had a chance to speak, all the food that had been offered to the
leopard was already consumed by her foe.
“You were flung out of the car,” Sarah spoke. Gluttony omitted the hyena from producing a
response. “I thought – I thought you had died.”
She grunted. “Hmm, you would have liked that, wouldn’t you?” Tentative as a leopard, Sarah
chose to use no words. “Sorry to disappoint.”
Authoritatively, Terrance interposed. “Her body was quite horrendously damaged. A lot worse
than yours, Walker. But we healed her up. A bit like magic, I suppose. One could even say a
 miracle.”
Sarah stared. “One should say a miracle.” Hart’s eyes were droopy, but not tired. And her facial
scars were more momentous than Scar’s scar itself, especially where it accumulated on her
forehead. Feeble was she, though more stubborn was her nature than weak, which resulted in her
pushing through the pain and wearing a veiling façade of strength.
Taking a break from her feast, Hart glanced up with a naughty smile. “If Chuck gets a second
chance, so should I.”
Walker’s nostrils flared. “Why are you even helping her, Baines? She is Fulring.”
“And you are CIA.”

Tick-Tock.
“Let us not worry about semantics, no one likes anyone here anyway. Andrew informed me of your
needled relationship, which I found quite beneficial since I will be using your bountiful hatred for
each other to gain what I want.”
“Is that so?”
Kayla frowned. “And how do you plan on doing that?”
“Simple. The CIA has my Super X machine blueprint. I want it back.”
“Correction,” Sarah uttered. “Fulring has your precious blueprint.”
He snickered. “I do not care. All that matters is that my belongings are returned to me, and the two
of you are going to make sure that happens.”

Tick-Tock.

“Have you both heard of The Hunger Games?”
Their eyes squinted in confusion, though captured uncertainty. “Yeah.”
“Well this is nothing like that. Except that just like in the series, my game also only allows one
winner.”
Things failed to line up in Kayla’s head. “That’s how all games work, idiot.”
“Sorry. I mean … only one survivor.” Now their full attention had been caught in his net. “You
have to compete with each other for the blueprint. Think of it as a race. The first one to steal it and bring it back safely home to me is the victor. The other dies.”

“How?”

“The winner gets to kill them as a reward. That should be enough motivation. And I am sure you are both dying to pull the trigger on each other. Is that not right, Agent Hart?”

“But that doesn’t make any sense,” Sarah exclaimed, worry tarrying in her voice. “I would never allow her to shoot me.”

“I could, you know,” Hart smirked.

“Oh please, Kayla. This isn’t time for one of your jokes. Besides, what is stopping either one of us from killing the other first, even before the blueprint has been stolen?”

“Well that is called cheating.” Sarah rolled her eyes, allowing Baines to continue. “Walker, you are aware that my company built a fully functional Intersect.” She listened. “If either of you cheat, i.e. kill the other before the blueprint is in my possession, giving you refuge to abort the mission, then what is stopping me from killing you?”

“I don’t under–”

“My engineers are more than capable of building another Intersect and trust me, I will have plenty of volunteers. So how about you try and take on an Intersect? Intersects? You think you could win?” She gulped. “I thought so. I want my blueprint back, Miss Walker, Miss Hart. Don’t doubt the extent I would go to get what I want.”

“Sounds like a clever plan,” Kayla stated, lacking sincerity.

“The mission will begin this evening. The CIA is having a celebration tonight at the Concertina so majority will not reside in the building – except for a few occasional guards of course – which means tonight will provide the greatest chance of this mission ending successfully. This also means that the only real obstacle in your way is each other.”

“Sounds like a piece of cake,” Hart retorted.

“With regard to communication, I have your cell phones in my possession. So no contacting anyone to inform them of your whereabouts or warn them of anything. No back up. Also I will be providing you with my personal cell phones so that I can keep in constant contact with you. I will need to check up on the mission to ensure everything runs smoothly. To monitor your progress. Well, also monitor your whereabouts. One mishap and there will be consequences.”

Kayla eagerly took the phone he handed her. The chance to end Sarah’s life seemed like an opportunity she would hate to miss out on. Though, Sarah was drenched in resistance. “I refuse. I am not going to play your sick game, Baines.”

He sighed, lacking emotion. “Miss Walker, you know I do not have a sense of humour for these things.”

“Right, because I am totally pulling your leg.”

“I shot your beloved once, do not force me to do it again.” She froze. “I hear he is badly wounded. Tough break. Poor fellow. It would seem almost impossible for him to run away. Or fight back.”

Her predator instincts overwhelmed her, and like a leopard seemed ready to pounce, unafraid of the fearsome lion. Her paws heaved her body up from her seat, where her daring face towered over his.

“There is nothing stopping me from killing you right now.”

He smiled. “Except this.” Swiftly, his arm lifted from below the table where he clutched a gun and, as fast as the speed of light, fired a bullet through the air where it pierced through her right shoulder. Her arm shot back. Her eyes bulged. She collapsed on her seat. She clenched her jaw. She cupped her wound. Blood outpoured, staining her hand with velvet-red. “Well now at least the playing field is evened out. Physically, you had an advantage over Hart anyway.” Walker couldn’t speak. She gasped for air. Her throat felt like sinking sand, caving in on itself. Hart’s jaw just hung low, slightly gobsmacked, slightly amused. “That is your throwing arm, correct?” Her body started to tremble. “Just making sure. Mr Vaughn, do bandage her up. I would hate for her to bleed out before the mission even began.”

“I can’t believe you just did that,” Kayla announced, her nerves shot.

“I am serious about this game, you two. I suggest you take it very seriously.” He placed his
weapon cautiously on the table. “It is not only a means to receive what I once lost, but it is also a battle. Fulring verses the CIA. Hart verses Walker. This is your chance to end it all. To put an end to chasing down Baines Corporation. A chance to end the rivalry between foes. It is not hard. The rules are very simple. You win, you win it all. You lose, you lose it all. Now, Agent Hart, Agent Walker, are you ready to play?”

“Spin the wheel!” the large crowd vociferously announced, knowing full well misfortune was bound to cast a spell. It turned and turned, seemingly never coming to an end. Soon, sweat trickled down Rick’s shirt, drowning him in the suspense.

The wheel stopped, leaving Lester with a grin. “So diaper clean-up is what the wheel spins! You will each have a bin in which a diaper you must score. Throw it in and you win, a little bit like basketball.”

Round 1 was mighty tempestuous to say the least. The room smelled foul, as though the babies had laid a beast. Big Mike was swift, for he had done this chore before. Though, Rick remained determined to still win this war. 50 was the countdown for 50 had been given to each. Big Mike scored in all, with only 15 left for him to reach. “You are so going down, Rick,” he aggressively boomed. “You have missed so many, you are definitely doomed.” Though, he spoke too soon, for his nemesis pulled a rabbit out his hat. One diaper. Two diaper. Three diaper. He was scoring in the whole batch. Thrown off guard, Big Mike missed a couple few.

“Whoa, Mikey, what has gotten into you?”

The scores were pretty close – 39 and 33. The winner of round 1 was difficult to foresee. Though, the helper called Jeffster rigged the game in Big Mike’s favour. Rick’s final few diapers were full and a whole lot heavier. A couple fell short, Big Mike won the race. Round 1 had ended with him in 1st place.

The wheel spun again, “Break room clean-up is next for you to do. The fastest to clean the room will be the winner of round 2.”

Mike came in with a whopping 36 minutes on the clock. However, Rick cleaned faster, allowing less time to surpass.

Round 3 shortly commenced. “Customer service seems to be the one to break the tie. The winner is determined by the amount of merchandise your customers buy.” Big Mike chuckled, knowing experience was on his side. But Rick was confident and had a charm he could not hide. So many customers fell into his whim, spellbound by his laugh and charismatic grin. Big Mike soon felt weary, for this battle he could not lose. So sought for Jeffster’s help, knowing they’d plan some sort of ruse.

Jeff and Lester made a very special call. A few more customers soon entered the store. Intentionally, they ignored Rick, refusing service to his tricks. Mike’s scoreboard soon plummeted high, leaving his foe shy of the prize.

“Looks like the scores have now been made. Game, set, match – I must say, well played. But only one victor is able to stay. Time to leave, Rick. Pack your bags and walk away.” Angry, he grimaced and puffed his way out of the store, smashing the merchandise, cracking it against the floor.

Though, nothing could wipe away the broad smile on Big Mike’s face. “Thank you, boys. Without him, life is a much happier place.” His enemy had departed, and “good riddance” smeared the tip of Mike’s tongue. His wife would be jubilant and so would his son, for he – at last – had won.

Casey soon phoned Lester and spoke with a derisive sigh, “It’s time to go, bozos. Are you ready to be a spy?”

He turned to his friend with a twinkle in his eye. “Pfft, what is up with Casey lately and his rhymes? Gee, it is like talking in riddles to this guy!”

As silent as a ghost, she cautiously stepped through the seemingly vacant hallway of the CIA headquarters, tranquiliser gun in hand. Her eyes shot daggers at her surroundings, her senses heightened to any threat of danger. Her bandaged shoulder still felt numb, weakened by the blow of a bullet, and occasionally she cupped her wound, feeling security in holding it tightly.
The disconcerting ring of a phone caught her ears’ attention, and she turned her head round the corner, glancing into the office adjacent to her, whose dim light bulb had been the only one still switched on. The only other breathing person present in the CIA building was in that office. Though, despite the light, darkness sheathed their face.
The ringing stopped the moment the stranger picked up the phone. “Hello.”
She slowly reached for the knife gripped beneath the back of her shirt.
“You know that this ‘concert’ does not pay heed to any interest of mine.”
Major General Lee?
The voice was familiar. Suddenly, the caution she approached the situation with seemed to slip away, for his presence and vulnerability in this predicament tantalised her taste buds, knowing she’d give anything to pierce a dagger through his icy heart. But Kayla’s whereabouts were unknown to her. She could have a head start, and Sarah could not afford to jeopardise her life for the sake of taking his. His blood on her hands – on her dagger – would add unnecessary complications.
“I have no recollection of that.”
Despite the glaring facts, she still tightened her grip of the knife.
“Washington DC.”
Without warning, a sharp internal pain sliced through her wounded shoulder. She clasped it in agony, clenching her jaw, and let go of the stringent hold she had of her weapon, allowing it to clink and clatter as it made contact with the floor. She collapsed onto her knees. Her body quaked. Only slightly. Her teary eyes could see her hand quiver with Multiple Sclerosis. Though, it was merely the unbearable pain that was responsible for her shudders.
“Thank you for informing me.” Evidently he failed to hear her.
Finally gaining strength, she wiped her pitiless tears away and lifted her body up. She tucked her knife beneath the back of her shirt and, rolling her eyes, glanced one last time at the devilish manifestation of a man and inconspicuously departed.

…
Blinded by his emotions and fear, lonesome Chuck desperately attempted to dial Sarah’s digits another time. It rang and rang, the sound as loud as the thumping of his heart. His anxiety continued to build.
Until, “Hello, Carmichael.”
He recognised the British voice. “Terr – Terrance Baines?” His once overwhelming anxiety was soon replaced with distressed terror.
“That is correct. How may I help you, Charles?”
His bottom lip quaked. “Where is she? What have you done to her?”
“Nothing.”
“Liar.”
“Oh, yes. No, you are right. I did save her life.”
“Leave her alone. It is me you want.”
“Well actually, no. No. I do not want you. I really could not care less about you.”
“If you hurt her –”
“My word, do you ever keep that mouth of yours shut? Her safety is entirely up to her, really. Now good day, Charles. Do get some rest. I hear you were terribly wounded recently. You know, it is important to rectify your health.” Chuck’s blood sizzled with rage. The intensity of his puffing breath could be heard through Baines’ speakers. “Oh and Charles, just before I go-go, we really do have to discuss some of your Invention-worthy Ideas you approached me with. I am really starting to see their potential. Give me a call when you have a chance. We must talk business. Anyway, I have to depart now. Warm regards.” He hung up the phone.

In this moment, the expression ‘frozen in fear’ had never been more true to life. Worry conquered Bartowski’s thoughts, seizing his rationality and diminishing his ability to approach a situation with logic rather than emotions. He knew his body was too weak to fight – to try and even lift a
tranq. gun – but he was making steady progress. Wasn’t he? Perhaps… Should he? His heart beat faster.

Montgomery smiled. “Charles, you have to ask yourself… Is she worth dying for?”

If he did this, he would have to go it alone. Beckman and the gang were out of reach. Out of contact. Could he? Physically, was he able to? Or would his next move be a foolish attempt driven by a foolish heart? Should he?

“Charles, you have to ask yourself… Is she worth dying for?”

He knew this decision could be his final. The outcome might be fatal. But it was her. He had only recently found her again. He wasn’t willing to lose her again.

Her enticing image flew into his mind – crystal blue eyes melted his heart, a melodic laugh comforted his ears, a welcoming smile soothed his soul and her words to him, “see you soon” poisoned his veins with the venomous thought that those words to him could be her last.

“Is she worth dying for?”

He inhaled deeply, catching his breath. “Yes.”

…

Three anxious bodies remained seated in the back of their van. Morgan smiled nervously. “Okay, just to be one hundred percent clear – run through the plan again …?”

Casey grunted.

…

Step1: Get Major General Lee to admit to the existence of Fulring and his involvement. He doesn’t usually attend these types of functions and so most definitely will be present in his office in CIA headquarters. Since he is such a fan of Casey’s work, Casey will visit his office – recording the whole conversation – and convince Lee that he wants to be a part of Fulring. Maybe he will have better luck convincing the Major General. We can only hope.

There was a knock on the door. Lee glanced up. “Come in, Colonel.”

Recording.

Casey’s face was plastered with the broadest smile known to man. “Evening, sir. I was wondering if I could have a word?”

Lee’s attention had returned to the stacks of papers on his desk, seemingly unobservant to his visitor. “Shouldn’t you be at the Concertina, Colonel?”

“Nah. Those functions don’t really interest me. Rather boring.”

He lifted his stare. “I have to agree.” Casey smiled. “It is nice to know someone shares my opinions. Now why the visit? Are you here to discuss my decision to deport Agent Walker from Burbank?”

“Well actually, quite the contrary, sir.”

Lee raised his brow, pleasantly surprised. “Oh?” He inclined in his seat and entwined his fingers, showing interest in Casey’s words.

“I think you are well aware that I have always been a fan of your work. And the moment you assigned yourself as head of our spy team I was filled with pride. Which explains why I felt outraged when Agent Walker decided to return, for she clearly defied your authority.”

He smiled. “A pretty flippant remark, Colonel. I know you and Walker have been good friends, despite your profession dictating that your relationships should remain purely professional.”

“Correction, Major General Lee. Walker and I were good friends. But she has changed. Become delusional. I am afraid I cannot trust her. I refuse to trust her. You had my full support in deporting her to Washington, sir. I would never doubt your command.”

A twinkle caught Lee’s eyes. “Why are you really here, Colonel Casey? Your respect for authority and the law has always been admirable, though the past few years have left your record slightly
tainted. So if what you say is actually factual, then what is the point to all this flattery?”
“I want to join Fulring.”
Lee’s eyes bulged. He held a defensive shroud. “I thought we had cleared the air on that matter. Fulring is fiction.”
“I don’t want to defy your word, but there is proof of its existence. No need to feel apprehension, I would never go against you and show this proof to General Beckman or Walker – or even Bartowski for that matter. The mere reason why I have come here, sir is to inform you that I want to be a part of Fulring, not to take it down.”
Lee gulped. “Show me this ‘proof’.” Casey handed the Major General a fictitious transcript to a phone conversation Kayla had with a ‘friend’.
A cautious glare veiled his eyes as he examined the dialogue. You could tell his mind searched for a way out of this flytrap. “Well this is rather interesting.” He grinded his teeth. “How do I know this isn’t made up?”
“Don’t mean to be disrespectful sir, but why would I devise an entire transcript to ‘catch you out’ if my aim is purely to join sides with your organisation?”
“Yes … that is the question.” His fangs gnawed into his bottom lip. Disbelieving, he flung the transcript onto his desk, the pages spreading across the wooden counter, a single staple being the only thing preventing the pages from departing. “I find this to be a little suspicious. Colonel, were you not part of the team that took down The Ring? Fulcrum? Why change sides now?”
“Why do agents go rogue? The old way isn’t fitting anymore. My loyalty is to my country, to my superior. You are my superior. I want to express my loyalty to you through joining your side.”
“What about General Beckman’s side? She is also your superior.”
“I believe she has gone the same way Walker has. The same way they all have. Our spy team is slacking. We can’t defend our country the way we are now. We were good with just Agent Hart. I want reliable partners like her. Not like the ones General Beckman assigns to me.”
“This is all very flamboyant.”
“It’s also all very true.”
Graciously, he sighed. “So you want to be a member of Fulring?”
“Well not if it is ‘fiction’, sir.”
He simpered. “I suppose it isn’t.” Now Casey simpered. “I am their leader after all, I should know.” His simper grew.
“It will give me great honour to serve you. Fulring has an impressive record. Fabricating Chuck and Sarah’s divorce and then legitimising it, stealing of the Super X machine blueprint –”
“And Bin Laden.”
“Excuse me?”
“He was a Fulring member. Why do you think he was so well hid?” Casey cringed. “Now are we having second thoughts?”
“No, not at all,” he spoke through grinded teeth.
“Hmm. Well I cannot deny I am impressed.”
“My loyalty is to you.”
“We will have to see about that, Colonel, won’t we? However, you will need to complete initiation which I am sure you will successfully. Though, if you fail to we will have to kill you.”
“Yes, sir.”
“Oh and Colonel if you are – as the expression goes – ‘pulling my leg’, I will personally kill you myself. And I will. Trust me.”
“Of course, sir.”
“I am not bluffing.”
“Neither am I.”
Send.
…
She treaded lightly, holding onto her caution as tightly as she held onto her tranq gun. The
overwhelming silence tinkered with her thoughts, heightening her trained senses to be more alert for unprecedented danger.

Kayla must be in the building somewhere.

Despite Kayla’s obviously noticeable fragile state, she still adopted the mask of a ferocious spy who felt no pain, no sympathy – not even for herself – and thus wouldn’t be restrained by her ‘fickle’ wounds. Though, Sarah’s pains were fresh – emotional and physical. She had a lot more at stake than Hart, who solely had to secure the safety of her own life. Walker had other worries – other people to worry about. And although traditionally this would be perceived as a weakness, to Sarah it gave her strength – something worth fighting for – someone worth fighting for. And that, above all, kept her going.

“I would drop that if I were you.”

Walker dashed round, her tranq gun face to face with her enemy. “You cannot shoot me, Kayla.”

“He truly doesn’t care, as long as he still gets his beloved blueprint.”

“Do you really think that if you never had me for competition, you’d still betray your beloved Fulring and hand over that blueprint?”

She held her stance. “How’s the arm?”

“Fine.”

“Good. I would hate to subjugate a cripple.”

“That’s if you win, which is unlikely.” Hart snickered. "Kayla, listen. It still is not too late. I know we have our obvious differences, but we can throw that all away for just a moment and join sides to take down Baines together.”

She smirked, “Go screw yourself,” and fired her tranq pistol, forcing Sarah to dart out of the way. She ran, turning a corner. “Let’s be partners? Oh please, shoot me now.”

“Gladly,” Walker mumbled. “Should have known you’d be too pitiful to accept the offer.”

“You just suggested to joining sides with your opponent. That’s what is pitiful.” She started daunting her way towards Sarah’s hiding place. “Running is the coward’s move,” she whispered into her ear, catching her off guard.

“I’d rather be a coward than a traitor!” She raised her gun again, it now making a target out of Hart’s heart.

“You want a fight?” Walker held her stare. “Then let’s fight, bitch. I have got a few minutes to spare.”

“Minutes? Taking you down will merely take seconds.”

Kayla winked. “Bring it on.”

…

Step 2: Catch all the Fulring operatives hiding within the CIA by convincing them to leave the Concertina. After Casey has sent the recording, Jeffster comes on stage to perform a number that will be dedicated to Major General Lee. The song will be sung in German. Lee’s father was German and apparently it is the language often adopted between Fulring operatives. That’s the first clue. Thanks to the assistance of Andrew Baines, we have acquired specialised Fulring “code words / sentences” which we will include in Jeffster’s lyrics. These codes will warn Fulring members to leave the Concertina, helping us identify and capture them.

Recording sent.

The gang unloaded themselves from their van and headed into the Concertina, ready to initiate Step 2.

“All right, Jeffster. Time to get on stage. Do not mess this up,” Beckman warned.

“Pfft, please. We are professionals,” Lester remarked.

“I will believe that when I see it.”

Silence accompanied the Concertina as the audience anxiously awaited the next performance. Jeffster walked on. A loud cheer rumbled through the crowd.
“Jeffster! Jeffster!”
“Oh my God, Jeffster, we love you!” – A horde of praise for the primarily German rock band.

Beckman sliced her head in Morgan’s direction. “They know Jeffster? What is this madness?”
“What? What is it, Grimes?”
“Kayla! Kayla Hart was a huge fan of Jeffster when she first met them at the airport. It seems only likely that the rest of Fulring is too! Everyone shouting – they must be Fulring.”
“Big supporters of Jeffster? That would explain a lot,” she derogatorily exclaimed.
“Why?”
“Because anyone who listens to Jeffster must be delusional and anyone part of Fulring clearly is!”
Morgan grinned, “General Beckman, you female dawg, you!”
She smirked, enjoying the admiration. “Perhaps this mission will be a little easier than we previously predicted.”

Relishing in the praise, smug arrogance overwhelmed the Hin-Jew and he pulled the mike from the mike-stand, ready to say a few words. “Thank you, thank you.” The crowd eventually quietened down and listened. “It means a lot to us when people acknowledge how amazing we truly are. So thank you. For recognising true talent.” Beckman rolled her eyes, cringing. “Our first song goes out to big ol’ Major General Lee. That man is absolutely legendary.” He laughed. “See, I’m rhyming already. Man, the magic’s just flowing within me.”
“Get to the point, Patel,” Beckman whispered, pressing her finger against her ear.
He continued. “Anyway, shout out to my main man, MGL. May his shadow never grow less. Here it goes, our new song, Yoga Club. Or as we say in German, ‘Yoga Club’, only with a little more pizzazz than in English.”
The General sighed, slumping with embarrassment in her seat. “Oh, God.”

Music began to play. Jeff could be seen rocking it out on his Kitar. Though, Lester’s image was far more morbid to say the least. He flung his hair like he was a blonde lifeguard on Baywatch, and he danced like he was a 40 year old virgin who had recently found his body again. Things were not looking pleasant in Beckman’s eyes, and she began to doubt any level of authority she had acquired in her life, since this decision – to her – was so monstrous it belittled any triumph she had achieved in the past.
And then he sang.

“Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit [Unity and justice and freedom]
für das deutsche Vaterland! [for the German fatherland!]
Danach lasst uns alle streben [Then let us all strive]
brüderlich mit Herz und Hand! [Brotherly with heart and hand!]
Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit [Unity and justice and freedom]
sind des Glückes Unterpfand: [are the pledge of happiness:]
Blüh im Glanze dieses Glückes, [Flourish in this happiness]
blühe, deutsches Vaterland!” [flourish, German fatherland!]

His singing did not make things any better.
“Is that … the German National Anthem?” Morgan murmured to Beckman. “That is not part of the lyrics we gave them.”
Nevertheless, some of the crowd sang along, cheering and clapping, delusional in their deranged happiness.

Jeffster continued.
“Gehst du zu den Yogaklub in Deutschland?” [Are you going to the Yoga Club in Germany?]
The cheering crowd suddenly became more solemn, as if someone said something daunting. A
man across from them quietly departed from his seat.  
“In Deutschland sind wir die ganze Nacht wach um Glück zu erhalten.” [In Germany, we’re up all night to get lucky.]  
“aber wenn etwas verrücktes passieren würde,” [But if something crazy were to happen.]  
“Dann müssen wir wie Cascada die Tanzfläche evakuieren.” [Then like Cascada, we must evacuate the dance floor.]

A few cell phones were extracted – their bright lights shimmering in the darkened Concertina – where they attempted to send a text. Though, instead of weary glares and making any form of disconcerting eye-contact, befuddled expressions smeared their faces and crinkled their brows.

Suddenly, a few more seated tried to discreetly – like the lyrics put it – evacuate the dance floor. Though, their mysterious departure caught the two spies’ eyes.

“That’s our cue,” Beckman announced, and they too departed from their seats.

…Like any violent match you would see in a boxing or wrestling arena, these two foes circled their enemy, each eager to pounce first, each anxious to do so.

Kayla made the first move. She flung her gun to the side against the wall, it slightly fissuring upon impact. Hart charged towards Walker, who soon nimbly crouched low, allowing her cheek to miss Hart’s potent punch. She spread her leg and swept Kayla off her feet – literally. Her back knocked against the cold, tiled floor, allowing her body to recall the agony it had recently experienced from the unfortunate car crash. So early in the fight and she had already felt weak.

Sarah head locked the sprawled out female, holding ultimately her life in her hands. If she would, she could kill the chestnut-haired spy right there and then by simply twisting her head till it cracked. “I told you it would merely take seconds.”

But Kayla was an indomitable sod. Not letting go of her clenched fist, she thrust it into Sarah’s injured shoulder, causing Walker’s eyes to shoot out in agony. She loosened her head lock and instead cupped the wound.

Kayla bounced to her feet and finally secured her untimely punch from earlier, this time her knuckles successfully clanking against Walker’s face. Her head hurled, and now her body had collapsed against the floor. Hart chuckled. As Sarah hurriedly lifted her body up, feeling her weight weigh on her damaged arm, Hart lifted her heel and struck it against Walker’s chin, and like a slingshot, flung her head back. The potency jammed Sarah’s teeth into her tongue, biting it. Her jaw felt numb and bruised.

Feeling triumphant, she walked nearer to the blonde spy. However, Walker wasn’t downtrodden yet and she locked her feet round Hart’s ankles and twisted, hauling her to the ground again. Now Walker bounced back. Her fingers latched hold of Kayla’s lustrous auburn curls and pulled, forcing her to scream for her to let go. The infuriated spy dragged her nemesis across the floor, watching her squirm and wriggle, trying to loosen Walker’s sturdy grip of her hair. With adrenalin-triggered strength, she lifted Kayla’s heavy body and heaved her against the wall, choking her.

“Who the hell do you think you are? You have officially messed with me through all walks of life and now – now, after everything – you want to actually take my life away? And for what, Kayla? Why? Why the hell have you chosen me as your target?” She attempted to speak, though with Walker’s arm still rammed against her throat, only piteous sounds escaped. “I have done nothing to deserve this!” Her face started going blue. Her arms reached out, trying to free herself from Sarah’s choke. Her eager hands nearly caught hold of blonde locks, though it was Walker who released her grip first. “You’re pathetic.” Hart inhaled deeply, gasping for air and stroking her raw throat.

“Your parents must be so proud.”

“Yeah?” she coarsely replied, her voice strikingly arid. “As opposed to yours?” Walker frowned. “Golden girl, adored by both parents, world-renowned spy, perfect precision.” She coughed hoarsely. “Beautiful, smart, admired, envied, and then later – loved. Has a family, a husband who would do absolutely anything for her.” Sarah held onto her frown, not coming to grips with Hart’s
point. “And you still believe you are undeserving of all this – this ‘hardship’ I inflict on your life? You are more deserving than anyone of my hatred. You clubbed me with your talent and punched me with your beauty. You humiliated me with your better life and speared me with the requited love you always had, but I never received.” She fell to her knees, giving into the acceptance of her depleted strength. “I was so tired of being clubbed, punched, humiliated and speared. So I fought back.”

Her chilling words silenced the deadly blonde. She had never glanced through Kayla’s looking glass before, but now that Kayla had revealed it to her she saw that it – far worse than hers – was cracked.

Nonetheless, “I never asked you to hate me, Kayla.” Hart grunted, recognising that her rival had missed the point. “You were my friend. Well, the closest thing I ever had to a friend. And you stabbed me in the back. Your betrayal stung. And I never asked for your betrayal either.”

“Oh, fuck off! It is not always about you, Walker! That is your problem. Your life revolves around you, and the moment someone hurts you, you shut them out completely.”

“You didn’t just hurt me, Kayl–”

“It took you so long to get with Chuck, so much so that your constant rejection must have stung a hell of a lot worse than any betrayal from me, I can tell you. But yeah, let us forget about how much of a bitch you can be and let us focus on your feelings. My word, woman. Chuck finally finds his balls and rejects you and what do you do?” Walker failed to reply. “You cut him out. Your dad hurt you, so you don’t even invite him to your wedding.”

“How do you know so much about my life–?”

“You are so quick to cut others out of your world that you fail to realise – or even acknowledge – your part in it.”

Walker laughed acerbically. “Oh, hah, I see now. So my part in our quarrel is that I didn’t want to be friends anymore with a manipulative bitch.”

Hart shut her eyes. “So dumb.” Dismayed by Sarah’s ignorance, she shook her head emphatically, almost as if she lacked control of its movements.

The CIA spy inhaled deeply. Hart had subdued herself to the underdog position and opened up almost unassumingly, to which Walker dismissed all these tells and approached her with the same kilograms of loathe she had carried with her before. So she took a deep breath, finally acknowledging the elephant in the room. “I am sorry.”

The Fulring member persisted with her vehement shake of the head. “For?”

Walker started to smile, she couldn’t help it. “I – I don’t know. For something. For whatever made me your enemy. I am sorry.”

Seemingly hard-hearted, she snubbed her apology. “So what now?”

“What do you mean?”

“Who will be the first to reach for their tranq gun?”

Sarah’s mouth gaped, lost for words. For a fleeting moment, the predicament that caged them seemed to evaporate, though unbeknownst to her fooled eyes, it had merely become invisible. It had never departed.

Hart’s Terrance-phone beeped. Shortly after, the other spy’s phone followed the same pattern. They opened their message:

“Two spies jumping on the bed. One falls off and knocks her head. Which one will it be, ladies? Tick-Tock.”

Frantic eyes shot Sarah a determined look, and Hart sprinted for her tranq gun.

“Don’t!” Sarah screamed. Alarmed by the noise, a guard turned the corner and was left gobsmacked by their presence. Hart quickly shot him in the neck. By that time, Sarah had reached for her tranq pistol. Kayla kicked, knocking Sarah’s gun out of her hands and darted, sprinting towards Floor Level 18, ready to be the victor in this race for the blueprint.

Full of rage, Walker soon followed her hasty footsteps, though just before she was able to fire a tranq bullet into the back of her enemy’s neck, her phone rang, catching her off guard. She continued to run, even while pressing the green button on her phone.
“Hello, Miss Walker. How is the mission going?” She turned a corner, following Hart’s trail. Another tranquilised guard lay sprawled unconscious on the floor.

“It just started to pick up. What do you want, Terrance?”

“Well guess who decided to pay me a visit today?”

A mumbled grumble cracked though her speakers. “Sarah – Sarah, don’t listen to what he says–”

Her sprinting feet halted.

Chuck.

“Oh my God.”

The friendly voice had departed, being replaced by the British eloquence of a blacklisted felon.

“Now I do not know how hostage situations work in USA, but in my corporation we tend to make use of all the benefits having a hostage may bring. I would hurry if I were you. He has not got much time left. I desperately want that blueprint, Walker. Do not for a second think that I will not kill him to get it.” He hung up. A droning beep blurted though the speakers following his departure from the call.

She stood quietly, frozen in the accumulating ice of fear that would soon suffocate her.

She had to make a quick decision – return without his prize, though possibly return in time to save Chuck? Or keep on charging for that blueprint with Kayla already acquiring a head start, and conceivably returning to an already deceased Chuck?“

Her mind spun.

If she returned empty handed, she would lose and Kayla would win. That would leave Kayla (dear old nemesis Kayla) the opportunity to collect her prize – Sarah’s life.

Think.

Is Chuck worth dying for?

Feel.

Is Chuck worth dying for?

Phew.

She shut her eyes, lowered her tranq gun and turned her back on Kayla’s trail.

Is Chuck worth dying for? It’s not even a question.

Yes.

…

Step 3: Arrest all Fulring members and find out where they have kept Walker captive. Then plan to save her.

Like a stampede, the rogue spies charged into the hallway out of the Concertina, trying to be as oblivious as possible to cautious eyes. Before any could reach the exit, Beckman’s heels made contact with the hall’s red carpet, and the clearing of her throat signalled her lack of amusement to the predicament. All heads turned to face her. “Where do you think you are going?” she questioned, her foot pattering against the ground.

General Frank stepped through the crowd. “General Beckman, this matter has nothing to do with you.”

“Hmm. You would think so, wouldn’t you?” He looked flustered. “However this does link me to whatever is going on here.” Her cell phone was clutched in the palm of her hand, where she held it up, visible for everyone to see.

“Beckman, you know there is no signal at the Concertina. How could a cell phone possibly help?”

Play.

“So you want to be a member of Fulring?”

“Well not if it is ‘fiction’, sir.”

“I suppose it isn’t. I am their leader after all, I should know.”

“It will give me great honour to serve you. Fulring has an impressive record. Fabricating Chuck and Sarah’s divorce and then legitimising it, stealing of the Super X machine blueprint –”

“And Bin Laden.”
“Excuse me?”
“He was a Fulring member. Why do you think he was so well hid?”

Pause.

Ire stewed in their pot of rage, and – almost in unison – all rogue spies raised their guns, pointing it in Beckman’s direction.

“I wouldn’t do that if I were you,” Morgan appeared from the Concertina, capturing a smug expression.

General Frank now aimed his gun in Grimes’ direction. “Tell me, how do the both of you plan to get out of this situation? Almost all CIA spies are located right behind those doors, listening to loud booming music that may just drown out the sound of silenced gunshots? Give us that evidence, General Beckman. Just encase you still want to live.”

“I really don’t think that will be necessary.” With the click of her fingers, a pandemonium of black-attired troops surrounded the Fulring spies, bursting through the doors into the Concertina hall, charging through the entrance, some even gliding down through air ducts, each with a gun in their hands. This large crowd of trained spies cocooned the rogues, almost like a Venus flytrap engulfing their prey.

The hall entrance door opened once more, this time Verbanski made her way through. “Tie ’em up, boys!” she exclaimed, and the horde of independent spies latched hold of a suspect.

Beckman smiled with delight at their quick and simple victory. “Thank you, Verbanski. We will hold them in interrogation until they divulge any information regarding Walker and Hart’s whereabouts. Then the prisons will have to deal with them.”

“All right. Let Casey know. To Castle, boys!”

Walking with haste through the corridors of the CIA headquarters on his way out of the building, Beckman called Casey and he steadfastly answered his phone.

“We have secured the Fulring members. Come back to Castle. Verbanski has already sent troops to arrest Major General Lee.”

“General, there is something you need to know. Fulring don’t have Walker. They don’t even know where she is either.”

“What do you mean?”

“Lee gave me my ‘initiation’ into Fulring – it was to find Walker and Hart. And then kill them.”

Casey was so close to the exit, he could smell the repellent odour of petrol that whiffed from the adjacent gas station through the CIA doors and up the nostrils of the Colonel.

“What are you telling me? That no one knows where Walker is?”

He neared the entrance doors. “Nor Hart either. I think–” Charging feet sprinted through the passageway across from him, silencing his lips. “Wait.” He hid behind a corner, though peeped his eyes round to catch a glimpse of the person whom those rushing feet belonged to.

“Casey, what is going on–?”

“Shh. Shh.”

The sound amplified as the sprinter neared the exit. Auburn hair slashed through the air. Her clenched fist held onto a blueprint so firmly that it seemed if she had let go, her whole world would come crumbling down around her. As she reached the entrance, she turned round – almost as though she was bidding the building a farewell – and, with a broad smile pulled across her face, she raced passed those doors and fled the scene.

“Colonel? What is happening?”

“General, who won’t believe this, but I just saw Agent Hart exit the building with the Super X machine blueprint in her possession.”

“What? Why would she steal the blueprint from her own organisation?”

“I don’t know.”

“And Walker?”
“I don’t know.”
“Stop her, Casey!”
“I have a better idea, General. How about we see where she goes?”

Dreary darkness captivated the puddled, murky underground chamber she found herself treading through. Mud tarnished her heels and she could hear the droning drip of water splosh against the minute ponds that accumulated on the grubby ground. Mould stuck to the walls like a mushy bruise that would never heal. Sweat dampened her tranq pistol and occasionally she smudged her clammy palms against her denim jeans, trying to remove the moisture. Every movement made her impaired arm feel like rusted metal, and she ached to remove the ponderous weight of the gun in her hand, though understood that without it, defenceless she would be. So she impelled through the throbbing discomfort, attempting to ignore the piercing jabs.

There was a lack of wind in this underground compartment. Time appeared to depart for the solitude and disturbingly quiet veil of this corridor she walked through made her feel as though time was merely a concept that remained purely fictitious, as though a ticking clock’s duty was solely to tick and tock, not to place a timer on life. However, the dripping roof was her metronome. Her heel sank in the mud and she heaved her leg up in an attempt to free herself from its thick grip. Though she succeeded in freeing herself, she failed to leave the felonious mud empty handed. Her heel was stuck. Frustrated, she removed the other and continued to tread along the dark pathway – barefoot.

“What the hell is this place?” she questioned the air, lifting her soiled feet from the murky mud that painted them brown.

Patrolling further down this secret pathway, her ears caught hold a whisper. Gossiping voices could be heard from the end of the passageway leading right. Her hands snug her weapon tightly, despite the sore clench of her shoulder, as she strode faster down the darkened lane, seemingly more determined.

She reached the end of the corridor where she was met with a king-sized room that had fallen into a pit of shadow.

Vacant?

Perhaps utter darkness led her to believe this chamber was empty. However, as she stepped further, her feet slapping against the stony, wet ground, a blinding light electrocuted the room, and her eyes caught hold of the alarming horror.

A large cage – sheltered by shatterproof glass – captured Chuck inside. But he wasn’t alone. Terrance’s gun had been pressed heavily against his brown, greasy hair, filling Walker’s heart with dread. Her body felt the chill of a cat that had been puddled with water, and this was expressed through her swollen, irate eyes.

She stepped forward. “Chuck!?” Her voice quaked.

She heard a single footstep from behind her. Before she had a chance to react and respond, a masculine man bashed a plank against her head. Her body knocked against stone, where her eyes were exposed to utter darkness once more.


“Let her go, Terrance.”

Slowly, her eyes awakened, barely able to sharpen the blurry image before her. She inhaled the
damp residue of sweat as it settled in the air and subdued the room in its deterring odour.

Air whiffed through his nostrils, keeping in time with the fast rhythm of his throbbing heart. He gulped, moistening his dry throat. Fossilised tears had scarred his cheeks. “Listen to me, Terrance. This is all my fault. Please! Just let her go!”

“Chuck,” she minutely murmured, her mind focussing solely on his distressed voice. “Chuck?” “Sarah! Sarah, are you okay?” Her mind soon recalled the fall. All the throbbing agony of being smashed in the head returned, as though a pounding ball beat against it. “Your shoulder … what happened to your shoulder?”

“I fired a bullet through it,” Terrance remarked. “Now please stop with the frantic shouting.”

“Chuck, I – I am going to get your out of there, I promise,” she proclaimed, pushing through the pain by grasping hold of some internal strength. Though, hope appeared to have retreated, almost snickering scornfully at her exclamation as it departed. With a dismissive snigger, Baines and his men disregarded her ‘courageous’ interjection, for a muscular guard had cuffed her wrists and, like Terrance’s method of captivation, held a gun to the back of her sweat-drenched blonde hair. Any retaliation would have resulted in Baines’ pull of his trigger, blasting a bullet through Chuck’s head.

Terrance lifted his brow. “As a corpse I presume?” He then sighed. “A deal’s a deal, Walker. Miss Hart informed me that she is on her way with the blueprint, not you. Looks like she wins the prize.”

She bellowed in reprisal, “Chuck was not a part of this sick game of yours!” Fear lingered in the croaky resonance of her abrupt outburst. “It was me or Kayla. Chuck had nothing to do with this!” “You are absolutely right. But he had stolen my precious blueprint before, and then tried to break-in a second time … Looking for Walker, I assume?” Bartowski gulped. “Who is to say he won’t break-in again?” His eyes fell to the Intersect, “Especially since it has become such a habit of his.”

Air puffed through Sarah’s nostrils like a hungry dragon about to engulf its feast. “Let Chuck go, Baines,” she commanded, emphasising each syllable.

As though the sun scorched his skin, Chuck’s face dripped with sweat, melting like a plastic mannequin inside the caged interrogation room where Terrance Baines kept him captive. Rope hugged his chest, his legs and wrapped itself round his wrists, gruffly grating the hairy texture of his skin. He could feel the ominous presence of Terrance’s gun lean heavily against the back of his head and his pounding heart throbbed against his cage of ribs that restrained it, almost begging for freedom. The unbreakable glass that separated him from Sarah and kept him gaoled inside, held the occupation of a 4th wall – as though she were watching an action movie unfold and, regardless of how loud her trembling voice quaked against the indestructible glass, she had no say in how the action would proceed.

Suddenly, dashing footsteps darted through the passageway, getting louder and louder as they neared the torture chamber. Sarah’s head darted in the direction of the sound, her heart palpitating more forcefully, knowing gloom was about to befall.


Her shoes skid across the floor as she ceased her sprint. Her eyes bulged at the scenario – Sarah was tied-up with a gun to her head, and Chuck (caged inside indestructible glass) had also been tied-up with Terrance’s gun to his head. Hart had the blueprint gripped tightly in one hand and grasped a tranq gun in the other. Lacking cuffs around her wrists and lacking weapons directed her way showed the completion of her ‘initiation’ into Baines’ illustrious inner circle. “Did I miss something?” she uttered.
Baines smirked. “Game over.” He slanted his head in Kayla’s direction, “Markus, if you will.” As though an elephant pounded through the hallway, Terrance’s robust guard neared Agent Hart and grabbed the blueprint out of her palm.

Chuck’s pattering heart pumped more fervently. “It doesn’t have to be this way, Terrance. No one has to die today,” He quivered. “Maybe if we just talked, let out all our feelings, we would find that we all have our insecurities. I know I have trust issues. I mean, both my parents left me at a very young age and sometimes I still cry at night. But I know it is okay … because I know I am not alone. It’s like that song from Liquideep – you don’t have to be alone. I am always here for you. You don’t have to be alone. All you have to do is call. You don’t have to be alone. Alone. Alone. Alone. Alone. Alone. Alone. Alone. Alone. Alone. Alone. Alone. Alone. Alone…”

Terrance snubbed him. “Well done, Agent Hart. As promised, take your kill shot.”

Bartowski’s eyes bulged. He became more frantic. “Wh – what I am trying to say, Terrance, is that it is okay to let out your feelings. Violence doesn’t always have to be the answer.”

“Was it not Stalin,” Terrance retorted philosophically, “who said that ‘Death is the solution to all problems’?”

He puffed with apprehension. “Well he also said communism was a good idea and look how that turned out.”

The female spies shared eye contact. Uncertainty and unparalleled fear lingered in Sarah’s eyes, whereas supposed excitement, yet slight disbelief loitered in Kayla’s. Walker lowered her gaze, feeling as though sinking sand had sunk her six feet under from where she could never return.

Ignoring Chuck once more, Terrance lifted his brows to Agent Hart, signalling his approval of her murderous shooting. “Miss Hart, as I remarked to Walker, a deal is a deal. The first to return with my precious blueprint is awarded with life and given permission to take the other’s. Sarah is unarmed now. Do as promised.”

Chuck gulped. “No, Kayla don’t. I know you truly do not want to do this. You don’t have to. Please, please don’t.”

Kayla’s fingers began to itch. She gradually lifted her gun until her arm paralleled the floor, though surprisingly, doubt seemed to plant its seed. “Walker’s one to retaliate…”

Terrance smiled. “And risk a bullet penetrating through her beloved’s head? I don’t think you have to worry.”

Kayla gulped. The anticipation had accumulated inside of her. All her life her nemesis had been the better, and now, defenceless with pleading eyes, Sarah stood cowering beneath not only the gun held to the back of her head, but also beneath the gun Kayla held to her face. Finally, Agent Hart stood triumphant over the Texas Walker Ranger that choked her life with bitter jealously. Now, all that was left in order to taste the sweet nectar of accomplishment was to pull the trigger.

“I am waiting,” he continued.

Exhaling one final sigh, she smirked, winked in Sarah’s direction, and with hasty excitement, pulled the trigger.

“No! Kayla, DON’T!”


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